

Armagh City, Banbridge &
Craigavon Borough Council

Local Development Plan 2035

Draft Plan Strategy

TECHNICAL SUPPLEMENT 9

Landscape Character Assessment

September 2026



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Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council

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1.0 Introduction

This Technical Supplement brings together the evidence base that has informed the preparation of the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council's 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 and other relevant Technical Supplements to understand the rationale and justification for the approach within it. It forms part of the wider Countryside Assessment which also includes a Strategic Settlement Evaluation, an Environmental Assets Appraisal and a Development Pressure Analysis¹.

The countryside of Northern Ireland is an important and vital resource for its social, economic, environmental, scenic, cultural and historic qualities. The region boasts rich diverse landscapes that reflect its geology and topography, as well as a long history of settlement and land use. These distinctions create a range of unique and distinctive local landscapes not only across the region but also within smaller, local areas.

The Borough contains a diverse range of landscapes, including Lough Neagh basin, apple orchards, bog lands, drumlins, localised hills and important river valleys. The richness and importance of some of these landscapes, which include habitats of international and national importance, is given recognition through a variety of nature conservation designations such as Ramsar, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protected Areas (SPA). The landscapes of the Borough also provide a rich resource of productive agricultural land, habitats for nature, archaeological and historical features and remains which illustrate ways in which the land has provided for human occupation and activity in the past. They also provide for many recreational needs and are an important tourist asset. However, many are also subject to increasing pressures from development, infrastructure, renewable energy and changing agricultural practices.

Landscape Character Assessment provides a structured way to understand these landscapes, identify their distinctive qualities and assess their sensitivity to change, which is considered within this document.

The European Landscape Convention 2000 (ELC) was the first international treaty to be exclusively devoted to all aspects of European landscape. The Convention was aimed at the protection, management and planning of all landscapes and raising awareness of the value of a living landscape.

The ELC was ratified by the United Kingdom in November 2006 and entered into force in March 2007. The Convention is not just about designating special landscapes but about putting a value on people's perception of place, where they live, work and relax. Landscapes are a diverse resource that can have multiple understandings or can have different meanings for different people. Landscape embraces the interactions of the natural, cultural and perceptual attributes of an area. The ELC defines landscape as:

*'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'*²

¹ For further information in respect of the LDP Strategic Settlement Evaluation, Environmental Assets Appraisal and Development Pressure Analysis see Technical Supplements 1, 10 and 8, respectively.

² European Landscape Convention: Preamble

The scope of this definition applies equally to all landscapes: *'The landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas.'*³

Landscape has a language, it is not just scenery or a backdrop, and it links culture, nature, the past and present. Landscape applies everywhere, not just the so-called 'beauty spots' but also the ordinary, the urban, the rural and even the degraded areas. Many landscape values are not tangible but provide context for people's lives, they matter a great deal.

As a follow up to the ELC, the Northern Ireland Landscape Charter 2014 was a call to action to acknowledge the shared responsibility to manage and enhance the quality of natural, rural and urban places whether on land, inland water or the coast and whether outstanding or degraded, which collectively constitute the landscape of Northern Ireland.

The vision for the NI Landscape Charter is that:

*'Within one generation we shall all be proud of our landscapes because they continue to be cared for by all of us as a vital national resource, expressing who we are as a people and fundamental to our prosperity and well-being'.*⁴

The charter provides 10 affirmations for Northern Ireland's Landscapes as follows:

- Our landscapes are an essential aspect of our sense of place and belonging.
- Our landscapes contribute to our health, well-being and quality of life.
- Our landscapes are for all of us as part of our national and community identity.
- Our landscapes reflect the multiplicity of our history and culture.
- Our landscapes shall continue to inspire expression in words, sound and images.
- Our landscapes shall continue to express who we are and have been as people.
- Our landscapes shall continue to attract others to visit and generate wealth.
- Our landscapes shall continue to attract individuals and businesses to locate here.
- Our landscapes shall assist in marketing the export of our goods and services.
- Our landscape and its management shall become an example to other nations.

The Charter highlights the shared responsibility of public bodies, commercial enterprises, landowners and individuals to manage and enhance the quality of our places. The Charter provides six guiding principles for decision making which in turn provides a unified approach and focus for all.

Guiding Principles are:

- All landscapes matter and each of us has the right to derive the benefits of those places that matter to us.
- Each of us respects this in all places even when they are not our own because our landscapes are a shared asset for which we have to exercise care and responsibility.
- Each distinctive sense of place collectively adds more value to the variety and uniqueness of Northern Ireland's landscape than the sum of each part.
- Change is continuous but we can manage it by using evidence to inform policy and decisions that respect and enhance the character and value of our landscapes.
- Transparency and communication about how the diversity, distinctness, history and character of our landscapes are considered engenders awareness and confidence.

³ European Landscape Convention: Article 6 (C, E) Identification and assessment

⁴ [Northern Ireland's Landscape Charter | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

- Each of us is responsible and empowered to shape the future of our landscapes in the actions and decisions taken now by us and others on policy and development.

The Council seeks to support this recognition and pride in our landscapes by establishing policy that can ensure they are sustainably managed by respecting landscape character and sense of place for future generations.

Appreciation and Understanding of Landscapes within the Borough

Landscape Character is the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape. It is these patterns that give each locality its sense of place, making one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. In defining the combinations of components which make each landscape unique, landscape character is a way of thinking about landscape more holistically and objectively, rather than focusing on scenic beauty and subjective responses. Landscapes have evolved over time as a result of both natural and cultural processes.

Natural processes have given rise to the physical structure of the landscape – geology, landform and soils.

Cultural processes have given rise to varying patterns and types of tree cover, field boundaries and settlement – they are a reflection of human interaction with the land.

Physical elements provide the fundamentally stable basic pattern of landscape, while cultural elements are superimposed on this and are more fluid, reflecting social and land use changes over time. Layered on top of this is the perceptual element – our own personal appreciation of landscape and how we relate to or make use of it, as individuals and communities.

Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing variations in landscape. Landscape character assessments identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas. Natural processes, in part that have shaped the landscape include geology, drift geology, hydrology (rivers and wetlands) and climate. These four interrelated categories are considered as processes that form the resulting topography, land vegetation cover and soil conditions.

Landscape character assessments also show how the landscape is perceived, experienced and valued by people. The rationale for assessing and understanding the landscape resource is to ensure that the distinct identity, the diverse character and the scenic quality of landscapes are preserved, safeguarded and enhanced for future generations. LCA recognises the dynamic nature of landscape – with an emphasis on informing the management of change and creating new landscapes for future generations to inherit.

Moreover, the effects of negative transformations are growing. Further policy measures can be used to strive towards the sustainability of our landscape patterns and local identity.

The process of landscape character assessment across Europe and UK has been evolving with the publication of the 2002 Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and

Scotland, and the publication of *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* 2014.⁵ These guidance documents have helped to provide the basis and approaches for conducting the assessments. The updated LCA will ensure that process reflects the established principles of Landscape Character Assessment as well as assessing current landscape conditions and trends.

Some of the landscapes of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon have special qualities, which are not recognised through formal landscape policy. Additionally, some areas are clearly demonstrating a need for enhanced protection based on merit and the growth of new, modern landscape pressures. Landscape character assessment provides the starting point for the Council to develop policies for the care, enhancement and sustainable use of the landscapes within the Borough.

Northern Ireland's landscapes were described in the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 1999 (NILCA 2000). This assessment divided the regional landscape into 130 landscape character areas (LCA's), it described the character of each area, its sensitivity, condition and provided principles for landscape management. This update focuses on the local landscape character areas, 23 of which are located within or partially within the Borough.

Background to this Landscape Character Assessment Update

Following advice issued by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in December 2017, the Council was advised to undertake an update of landscape information within its administrative area to support and inform the preparation of the Local Development Plan.

In response to this advice and detailed in this technical supplement the Council has now undertaken a review and update of the existing NILCA Landscape Character Assessment for the Borough. This update examines whether changes in landscape character have occurred and identified the impact of modern development pressures. This LCA update has been prepared in association with Soltys Brewster Consulting.

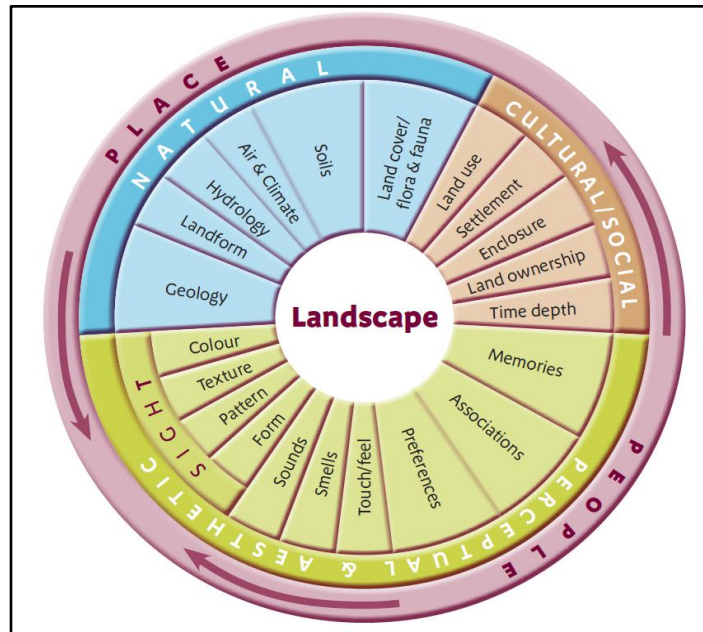
In addition to and in accordance with regional guidance this Technical Supplement also updates the 'Landscape Preparatory Paper August 2016' and baseline evidence within the topic of Landscapes within the Borough, which accompanied the Preferred Options Paper (POP), published in March 2018. It should be noted that this evidence base also informs the additional assessments and appraisals required as part of the LDP preparation process, most notably the Sustainability Appraisal.

Understanding the landscape and its relationship with change and landscape management is a critical part of landscape character assessment. The guiding principles developed by the ELC embrace a holistic understanding of landscape as the result of the complex interaction of natural (e.g. geology, soils, biodiversity), cultural (e.g. settlement, land use) and the perceptual and aesthetic (e.g. experience, associations, tranquillity, colour). Landscape links past with present and is the manifestation of the evolution of physical processes and human intervention. Landscape is dynamic and has always evolved and will continue to change.

⁵ Scottish Natural Heritage/ Countryside Agency. 2002. Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland & Tudor, C. 2014. An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Natural England.

Landscape can exist at any scale from large tracts of land, such as mountain ranges, to small locally valued spaces such as parks and streetscapes. Landscape matters to people and therefore represents multiple values and includes tangible and intangible values.

Fig 1: The Landscape Wheel - Source, Natural England 2015



The 'Landscape Wheel' (Fig .1) illustrates that landscapes cumulatively shape People and Place through the integration of natural, cultural/social and perceptual and aesthetic processes.⁶ The wheel provides a guide that shows the interlocking influences that inform the LCA process through the composite na landscapes.

The principles of the wheel are brought forward into the examination of landscapes through a Landscape Character Assessment. The LCA process should apply the following principles:

- Landscape is everywhere and all landscape and seascape have character;
- Landscape occurs at all scales, and the process of Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at any scale;
- The process of Landscape Character Assessment should involve an understanding of how the landscape is perceived and experienced by people;
- A Landscape Character Assessment can provide a landscape evidence base to inform a range of decisions and applications;
- A Landscape Character Assessment can provide an integrating spatial framework – a multitude of variables come together to give us our distinctive landscapes.

Within the NILCA 2000 report the 130 different landscape character areas within Northern Ireland have a distinctive character based on geology, landform, land use and ecological features. For each LCA, the key characteristics are described and an analysis of landscape conditions and its sensitivity to change is made. The report indicated for each area, the key characteristics, principal forces for change and the key issues influencing landscape

⁶ Tudor C. 2014. An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Natural England

sensitivity. It also suggested specific landscape guidelines for each area based either around landscape management or establishing principles for accommodating development.

The LCAs form and follow complex landforms and features that have naturally evolved. These area boundaries do not follow or accord with local authority or other administrative boundaries. As detailed in Table 1 Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area contains twenty-three Landscape Character Areas, a number of which straddle neighbouring districts:

Table 1: Landscape Character Areas within the Borough

LCA Name	LCA Number
Blackwater Valley	46
Loughall Orchard Belt	47
East Lough Neagh Points	62
Portmore Lough Fringes	63
Lough Neagh Peatlands	64
Upper Bann Floodplains	65
Armagh Drumlins	66
Armagh/ Banbridge Hills	67
Carrigatuke Hills	68
Newry Basin	69
Ballyroney Basin	76
Iveagh Slopes	77
North Banbridge Hills	78
Craigavon Plateau	79
Donaghcloney Valley	80
Kilwarlin Plateau	81
Dromore Lowlands	82
Lower Slieve Croob Foothills	83
Mourne Foothills	84
Slieve Croob Summits*	87
Craggy Dromara Uplands	88
Hillsborough Slopes	89
Upper Ballinderry Plateau	109

*LCA 87 Slieve Croob Summits: A very small section of land from this LCA crosses into the Borough which is not large enough to carry out an assessment, it is therefore omitted from this LCA update

Areas of Scenic Quality

The NILCA 2000 also identified Areas of Scenic Quality which are detailed in 'An Appreciation and Analysis of the Landscapes of the Region'. These areas of scenic quality were described as landscapes of regional or local importance, recognised for their scenic quality, in that they are important landscape resources in their own right, regardless of location or setting. In addition, they can include significant sites or features of nature conservation, historic or cultural importance.

The landscape assessment defined 15 Areas of Scenic Quality, two of which are within the Borough.

- The Blackwater Valley,
- The Lough Neagh Fringe

Of the Borough's 23 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) identified in the NILCA 2000 reports, four are assessed as having the highest sensitivity to change:

- Lough Neagh Peatlands
- Blackwater Valley
- Mourne Foothills
- Lower Slieve Croob Foothills

NIEA- Supplementary Guidance on Wind Energy

Broad strategic guidance with regard to the sensitivity of Northern Ireland's landscapes is also contained within NIEA Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes (2010). It contains an assessment of each of the 130 LCAs (NILCA 2000) by referencing the characteristics and values associated with each LCA. Although specifically concerned with impact of wind energy development it is considered a useful reference for identifying landscapes within the Borough that are particularly vulnerable to change.

Within the guidance report, each LCA is given an overall sensitivity level using a five-point scale ranging from high to low. Of the 23 LCAs that fall within or partially within the Borough, 9 have been given a high sensitivity rating (Blackwater Valley, Lough Neagh Peatlands, Upper Bann Floodplain, Donaghcloney Valley, Portmore Lough Fringe, Hillsborough Slopes, Craggy Dromara uplands, Slieve Croob Summits & Mourne Foothills).

Of the nine LCAs with a high sensitivity rating, the following two LCAs are particularly vulnerable to development as they also fall within the NILCA 2000 report ASQs and contain a number of nature conservation designations:

- Lough Neagh Peatlands; and
- Blackwater Valley.

While the guidance may offer direction on the sensitivity of an area to wind power generation, it is acknowledged that there may be considerable variation in sensitivity level within each LCA.

It is important to note that while the Borough contains 23 LCAs, many of these extend into neighbouring local government districts. In several cases, only a small portion of an LCA lies within the Borough boundary, with the majority located outside the Council area.

2.0 Legislative Context

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. The Act underpins the reformed two-tier planning system that commenced on 1 April 2015, it introduced the plan-led system, where the Local Development Plan (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.

3.0 Policy Context

Regional Policy Context

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

Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' (The Northern Ireland Executive)

The Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' (PfG) identifies three core areas of focus for the Northern Ireland Executive:

- Doing what matters most today;
- Building new foundations; and
- Shaping a better future.

Ambitions for the PfG, set out under these three core areas include: supporting wellbeing, growing the economy, increasing housing supply, upgrading public sector infrastructure, upgrading sports stadia and increasing opportunities for local sports; improving transport infrastructure for safer, more active and sustainable travel, connected communities, and the decarbonisation of all housing stock. In specific regards to the planning system, the PfG proposes the implementation of a planning improvement programme with local government and other stakeholders which will aim to ensure that the planning system works for businesses, people, and the environment.

The PfG also sets out three interconnected Missions aimed at delivering better wellbeing, long-term sustainability and a thriving economy:

- 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 PfG also sets out a number of cross cutting priorities, which will assist in the delivery of the Missions, including growing a globally competitive and sustainable economy, providing more social, affordable and sustainable housing, and protecting Lough Neagh and the environment.

In relation to protecting Lough Neagh and the environment, the PfG acknowledges that Lough Neagh is one of our most important natural resources and is of economic, tourism and recreational significance. It identifies challenges including the significant blue-green algae blooms in Lough Neagh and the impacts of climate change on the wider environment-recognising that if our natural environment is not looked after, there are likely to be many more environmental crises. In order to address these issues, the PfG sets out a range of proposed actions including the publication of the Lough Neagh Action Plan⁷, the development of an Interagency Monitoring Protocol and the publication of a new environment strategy. Additionally, in relation to climate action, the PfG commits to setting carbon budgets and the

⁷ Published July 2024- [The Lough Neagh Report \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk)

development of the first Climate Action Plan, which will set out cross-cutting steps to reduce carbon emissions, adapt to changing weather patterns, and work towards net zero.

Sustainable Development Strategy

The Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010, aims to create ‘a peaceful, fair, prosperous and sustainable society.’ The sustainability approach intends to ‘ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations.’ (UNCED, 1992). Outlined in the Strategy are Priority Areas for Action, Strategic Objectives, Guiding Principles and Targets, as well as key challenges to achieving sustainability. This approach promotes the need to protect and improve the environment with emphasis on the limits of the planet’s environment, resources and biodiversity and to ensure that finite resources are protected for future generations.

Regional Development Strategy 2035

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 states that the natural environment directly supports all life and is essential to well-being. Human impacts on landscapes over the last century, as the result of increased development, have adversely affected biodiversity. There has been a substantial reduction in the total area of semi-natural habitats due to ongoing land use intensification from agriculture and urbanisation.

The RDS 2035 states the following: -

- *Recognise and promote the conservation of local identity and distinctive landscape character.* Landscape character is what makes an area unique. It is defined as “a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements, be it natural (soil, landform) and/or human (for example settlement and development) in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse”. Informed and responsible decisions on the management and planning of sustainable future landscapes can only be made if proper regard is paid to their existing character. By understanding how places differ we can also ensure that future development is well situated, sensitive to its location, and contributes to environmental, social and economic objectives. The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 provides valuable guidance on local landscape character and scenic quality.
- *Conserve, protect and where possible enhance areas recognised for their landscape quality.* Protected landscapes should continue to be managed through a partnership approach involving central and local government and the local communities.
- *Protect designated areas of countryside from inappropriate development (either directly or indirectly) and continue to assess areas for designation.* Designating special areas for protection is an effective way of ensuring our wildlife and natural landscapes retain their individual characteristics. Some areas are deemed of such importance that they are formally designated under various pieces of national and international legislation.

Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

The Draft Marine Plan is the first stage in the preparation of a Marine Plan for Northern Ireland that will inform and guide the regulation, management, use and protection of the Northern Ireland Marine Area. The plan manages human activities, conservation and sustainable development across Northern Ireland's inshore and offshore marine waters.

For authorisation or enforcement decisions: When taking any 'authorisation or enforcement' decision or 'other decisions' relating to any act which affects or might affect the whole or any part of the marine area, Section 58 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) and Section 8 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, require that a public authority must make and authorisation or enforcement decisions in accordance with the appropriate marine policy documents; unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise. For Council, this means that, currently, in making such a decision we are legislatively required to ensure that that we do so, in accordance with the UK Marine Policy Statement (UK MPS). The UK MPS is a material consideration and is of equivalent standing to terrestrial policy documents, such as, the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).

Once the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland is published in final form, we will also have to ensure that such decisions are taken in accordance with the Marine Plan (in addition to the UK MPS).

It is important to note, that this applies to any decision relating to any act, which affects or might affect the whole or any part of the marine area, so will include for example, decisions on proposals that are not located near the coast, but which might impact on the marine area.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) - Planning for Sustainable Development (Edition 2, 2025)

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) places Sustainable Development at the heart of the planning system. The SPPS defines the three pillars of sustainable development (economy, society & environment). It advises that Planning Authorities should deliver on all three pillars in formulating policies and plans. Within the environment pillar, the SPPS sets out the need to protect and enhance the built and natural environment, including landscape character. The SPPS states that:

*'Northern Ireland is a region of dramatic landscape contrasts and subtle transitions. The inherent diversity of the underlying rocks, landforms and soils has been augmented by centuries of settlement and land management, resulting in rich, varied and unique landscape patterns and features within the region. Our natural and cultural landscapes are an essential aspect of our sense of place and belonging and are part of our national and community identity.'*⁸

At paragraph 5.16, the SPPS highlights that councils preparing LDPs must take account of the RDS 2035, the Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, the SPPS and any other policies or advice and guidance issued by the Department such as landscape character assessments. The SPPS also states that LDPs should also consider the natural and cultural components of the landscape and promote opportunities for the enhancement or restoration of degraded landscapes, which reflects the aim of the ELC.

⁸ Strategic Planning Policy Statement, Edition 2 (2025)

In directing ‘other types of development’ in the countryside, beyond those for which the SPPS sets out specific Regional Strategic Policy, it states that where there are areas of the countryside which exhibit exceptional landscapes, and visual amenity value such as lough shores, and certain views and vistas, development should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Where appropriate these areas should be designated as Special Countryside Areas (SCA) in the Local Development Plan (LDP) and appropriate policies brought forward to ensure their protection from unnecessary and inappropriate development. Local policies may also be brought forward to maintain the landscape quality and character of Areas of High Scenic Value.

The SPPS states that the LDP process has an important role for Councils in identifying and protecting key features and assets of the countryside while balancing the needs of rural areas and communities. This should include an environmental assets appraisal and landscape assessment which will provide the evidence base for the purposes of bringing forward an appropriate policy approach to development in the countryside. This technical supplement forms part of the Council’s Countryside Assessment which includes the four related strands:

- A Strategic Settlement Evaluation (within Technical Supplement 1)
- A Landscape Character Assessment (Technical Supplement 9)
- A Development Pressure Analysis (Technical supplement 8).

Other Planning Policy

The primary sources of operational planning policy relevant to landscape considerations covering environmental assets, renewable energy, countryside development, and the historic environment are found within the following Planning Policy Statements (PPSs):

- PPS 2: Natural Heritage;
- PPS 6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage;
- PPS18: Renewable Energy and [Best Practice Guidance to PPS 18](#)
- PPS 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside

Regional Guidance

The importance of the landscape of Northern Ireland is included in additional Supplementary Planning Guide issued by the former DoE through the ‘Good Design and Place making Guide’ and Building on Tradition’- A Sustainable Design Guide for Northern Ireland (DoE, 2012).

Development Plan Practice Note 7, ‘The Plan Strategy’ (2015), outlines the key procedural requirements and good practice for preparing a Plan Strategy.

Local Policy Context

Extant Area Plans

The existing statutory Area Plans covering the Borough provide the policy framework against which development proposals are considered.

- The Armagh Area Plan (AAP) 2004
- The Armagh Area Plan Alteration No 1: Countryside Proposals

- The Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan (BNMAP) 2015
- The Craigavon Area Plan (CAP) 2010
- The 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 landscape protection are laid out below.

Craigavon Area Plan (CAP) 2010 and Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan (DSTAP) 2010

There are no specific rural landscape designations within the CAP or DSTAP, however Countryside Policy Areas (CPAs) are designated at the Lough Neagh Shore, Portmore Lough and Lough Gullion (CAP) and the Lough Neagh shore and environs (DSTAP). The Plan advises that further development in these areas could erode their rural character and landscape quality. In addition, it was considered that the continued build-up of development closer to Lough Neagh would not only be damaging to the character and appearance of this area but would also have significant adverse effects on the important nature conservation interests of the Lough and its shoreline.

Within both these Area Plans, Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development (ACMDs) were also designated to the south of Lough Neagh. ACMDs are designated in order to safeguard the most valuable and vulnerable areas and features of the environment each plan area from the detrimental effects of mineral extraction. Each designation has taken into account nature conservation and earth science interests, archaeological and built heritage, landscape quality and character, as well as visual prominence.

Armagh Area Plan 2004

Armagh Area Plan Countryside Proposals: Alteration 1- A Countryside Policy Area (CPA) was designated to the north /northeast of Armagh, the purpose of which was to protect the visual amenity of areas of landscape quality. Again, this CPA was superseded by PPS 14, then PPS 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside.

Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015

There are no specific rural landscape designations that lie within the Council boundary.

Other Council Documents and Strategies

Connected: A Community Plan for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 2017–2030

The Community Plan sets out the long-term vision for the Borough and provides an overarching framework for partnership working. The Community Plan establishes a new collaborative approach with community planning partners to deliver a shared vision and agreed outcomes. It guides and influences the delivery of public services across the Borough, helping to improve the quality of life for all citizens.

The Community Plan is an important strategic document for the Council and has been taken into account within the planning hierarchy in preparing the new Local Development Plan (LDP). Its vision is: *“We have a happy, healthy and connected community, with vibrant, sustainable and appealing places for living, working and learning.”*

This vision is supported by three strategic themes, Community, Economy and Place, alongside three cross-cutting themes of Connectivity, Sustainability and Equality. The long-term outcome of the Community Plan outlines *“the quality of life conditions we want for everyone in our Borough by 2030.”*

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

The Corporate Plan 2023-27 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.

4.0 Borough Profile

Landscape Setting of the Borough

The Borough is home to a diverse range of landscapes from the Carrigatuke Hills on the border with the Newry Mourne and Down District to the lowlands of the southern Lough Neagh Basin, from the secluded Blackwater Valley to the Mourne foothills and the rolling ridges of the Lower Slieve Croob foothills.

In the north of the Borough is the southern Lough Neagh basin, bounded by the Blackwater Valley to the west and the valley of the Upper Bann to the east. This extensive lowland basin of Lough Neagh influences the topography of land in the north and northeast of the Borough.

Within the northern portion of the Borough there are three broad landscape types; low-lying wetlands, rolling farmlands and river valleys. The landscape of the Craigavon Plateau is relatively small-scale, with undulating pastures and winding lanes, although it is dominated by the extensive urban development of the Craigavon Urban Area (Portadown, Craigavon and Lurgan). To the west of Portadown, the gentler landform around Loughgall supports a more diverse landscape pattern, a notable example of which is the many apple orchards.

The valley of the Upper Bann is the largest in the area and marks the path of glacial outflow from Lough Neagh during the Ice Age. The River Bann valley has a relatively wide, flat valley floor, with some important and extensive areas of lowland peat, such as Brackagh Bog. The valley has strong north-south alignment, and the river provides an attractive focus for long views.

Lough Neagh provides the most sensitive landscapes in this area. The lough shore contains archaeological evidence of previous industry in the form of historic peat workings, while regenerating birch, willow, and alder scrub have created an environment of wild isolation. The area is part of a wide array of environmental designations, including Ramsar, Special Protection Area and Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) etc. The mouth of the Bann, on the southern shores of Lough Neagh, is a particularly scenic, flat, tranquil landscape of pastures, peat and marsh.

The east of the Borough is at the heart of the belt of drumlin lowlands which extend well beyond the Council boundaries. The drumlins are separated by numerous streams and wetland hollows, which link to the central winding valley of the Upper Bann. The influence and presence of the Upper Bann flows within a relatively narrow valley, but to the south of Katesbridge, the river subdivides into branching channels across the broad, waterlogged lowlands of the Ballyrone Basin.

To the northeast, around Dromore is an area of small, rounded drumlins, surrounded by extensive areas of moss and regenerating scrub. This low-lying landscape is enclosed to the north by undulating slopes, which extend into the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area. The river Lagan winds its way along the edges of the Kilwarlin Plateau LCA and through the Donaghcloney Valley LCA.

Historic estates are a significant influence in some areas and account for many attractive features, such as stone walls and tree lined avenues/entrance roads of trees. Banbridge, at the heart of this drumlin landscape, is situated on several drumlins and has a very unique

character. The sequence of tall mill chimneys along the river valley provides a glimpse of the area's industrial past.

The character of Banbridge's farmland landscape is strongly influenced by drainage. Farming in many areas is modern and relatively intensive and there are numerous farm buildings, which are often prominent on local ridgelines. The many poorly drained, low-lying areas trapped between small valleys and drumlins are sometimes less efficient to farm but in many places, these have given way for biodiversity to flourish.

In the south, the Carrigatuke Hills comprise rounded uplands, with moorland, forests and lower farmed slopes. There are long views over the landscapes of Armagh from the Carrigatuke Hills which is an area defined by a sense of isolation and rurality given the sparseness of settlement and limited interconnectivity with main transport routes.

The Armagh Drumlins in the west of the Borough, are centred upon the city of Armagh. These large scale, green rolling hills support intensive grazing with fields enclosed with bushy, well maintained hedgerows. A large proportion of the scenic Blackwater Valley is located within the Borough, and is an area dominated by the wooded Caledon estate and a number of smaller parkland landscapes. The flat, marshy floodplain of the meandering Blackwater River, which flows from the Clogher Valley into Lough Neagh has numerous small streams flowing between scattered drumlins which form islands on the floodplain. Drumlins enclose the valley and the intricate hedge-banked lanes allow limited views, creating a secluded landscape.

Changing Landscapes and the Need for Reassessment

The need for reassessment and examination of the NICLA 2000 series within the Borough is attributed to the growth in present day pressures for development. Countryside planning and management has been through major reform and has evolved through the introduction of new policy, i.e. PPS 14 to PPS 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside. Technical Supplement 8 Development Pressure Analysis demonstrates the level of demand for development since 2004. Section 3 of this technical supplement provides an analysis of development pressure in the countryside from wind energy development (1st April 2004 to 31st March 2024) to determine if there are any significant pressures from wind energy development (single wind turbines and wind farms) in the countryside, and whether any patterns are emerging that may cause damage and unacceptable change to local rural character.

Additionally, the growth in renewable energy production, such as wind energy, had a very limited presence in the landscape pre-2000 is also assessed. In a number of places wind turbine development and solar farm development is now a notable feature of landscapes. The development pressure analysis paper, which analysed the figures for wind turbine development within the Borough between 2016-2023 shows 'hotspot areas in the following LCAs: Dromore Lowlands, Armagh/Banbridge Hills, Armagh Drumlins and Carrigatuke Hills.

Landscape character assessment must be updated to remain relevant within the planning and development management process. Contemporary landscape conditions and sensitivities need to be properly evidenced and reported, so that development management guidance is current and can help to take account of possible future pressures for change. The recording of current landscape sensitivities will allow for planning policies to be updated where necessary ensuring

that they remain robust and resilient for landscape sustainability and protection of the most sensitive landscape areas of the Borough.

As there are many factors which contribute to landscape character consequently there are many factors that can contribute to landscape change, these may include:

- **Agricultural practices.** Gradual or sudden shift in crop types (e.g. energy crops) or livestock production will impact land cover and potentially field pattern. Farm diversification, hobby farming, any alteration of field boundaries, increased number and size of farm and agricultural accesses, replacement of traditional farm buildings with larger and more modern designs, modern, lifestyle change pressures such as recreational uses are just some of the factors which would influence a change in landscape character. The strive towards sustainability and as a response to the climate emergency is likely to see an increase in more arable crops, re-wilding of marginal agricultural land and an increase in tree and hedgerows planting.

- **Woodland, forestry and tree cover**

Forest Service, NI Woodland Register 2022⁹ provides the following data on tree cover within the Borough.

Woodland Type	Area Managed by (Ha)	
	Forest Service	Not Forest Service
Regenerating	31	0*
Broadleaf**	147	2626
Conifer	924	107
Mixed Conifer/Broadleaf	245	554
Short Rotation Coppice	No data	193
Open Ground **	54	0*
Not Known	0*	471
Total (ha)d	1401	3950
Council Total	5351	

Table 2

*No data

** includes land classified by DAERA as dense scrub

*** Unplanted ground classified as forested.

The potential any change in tree cover, regardless of type, to impact landscape character is significant. Factors that may influence such a change include a lack of woodland management, tree removal to make way for development, natural diseases such as Ash die back and an increased use of such areas for recreational purposes. It is important to note that in response to the climate emergency and the strive towards zero carbon emissions tree planting schemes will increase in many places which will in turn cause changes in landscape character.

Built development

The demand for housing, industry and infrastructure will continue to put pressure on rural landscapes. Due to the Borough's central location within NI, large population and the existing transport infrastructure demand for development within the Borough is high. The quantity of

⁹ www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/woodland-register

development can have an adverse impact on landscape while the design, scale and type of development are often crucial when it comes to respecting landscape character. Some factors that can influence a change in rural landscape character may include an increase in the quantity of overhead lines, settlement expansion, a decline in traditional rural dwellings and their replacement with larger modern homes, in addition to settlement patterns such as ribbon development, and visually intrusive siting of development and any improvement of the transport infrastructure.

Mineral workings & waste management

Within the Borough there are 14 active quarrying sites and 2 landing sites located at Lough Neagh which are associated with the extraction of sand and gravel. Such large-scale developments, regardless of their relative scale tend to have a dominating influence on landscape character and quality. Technological development, response and adaptation to climate change and the journey towards sustainable development will impact on all aspects of these facilities. The restoration of wildlife habitat at redundant mineral sites has the potential to both increase biodiversity and impact on landscape character.

Recreation and tourism

Tourism growth within the Borough, particularly around Lough Neagh may lead to an increase in holiday accommodation facilities, recreational facilities, farm diversification projects and the type of local businesses already within the countryside

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

In response to the climate emergency and commitments by the UK government to reduce carbon emissions by the growth of renewable and low carbon energy developments is inevitable. Single turbines are already impacting on landscape character, an impact which splits opinion on whether it is an adverse change. Growth in other energy sources, such as solar farms and battery storage systems may also occur, introducing further change to our landscapes.

Infrastructure and connectivity

With the improvement of internet access in rural areas comes the increase in wires, masts and poles which will not only impact local and community landscapes but will also cumulatively have an impact on views and scenic quality of wider landscape character areas. Changes in road and rail infrastructure as well as the development or improvement of recreational green and blue-infrastructure have the potential to change landscape character.

On-going societal and cultural change

With the passing of time the associations with art, people, history and culture within landscapes will continue to change. These every day, incremental changes may cause a change in the perception and enjoyment of landscape, as will the increase in awareness and appreciation of our landscapes.

5.0 Preferred Options Paper

Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper

As part of the LDP the Preferred Options Paper (POP) was published in March 2018. The POP set out the Key Issues of strategic significance deemed to affect the Borough, along with the preferred options to address them. On the topic of landscape the following preferred option was given:

Option ENV 4A

Consider areas of sensitive landscape for designation as Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV) or Special Countryside Areas (SCA).

The POP states that any landscape designations will be informed by an appropriate evidence base. These designations would be assisted by the identified Areas of Scenic Quality within the NILCA 2000 and policy brought forward to protect the Lough Neagh Shore and / or the Blackwater Valley sensitive landscapes from unsuitable forms of development, where appropriate. This option was the preferred option as it allows for the identification and protection of our most sensitive landscapes. The option also delivers an opportunity to provide a balanced approach to managing rural development. If we restrict inappropriate forms of development in these sensitive areas, it will help positively manage and protect these sensitive landscapes for future generations.

Smaller scale, settlement-based policy areas:

Option ENV 5A

Evaluate and, as appropriate, retain existing Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) designated in the extant Area Plans; consider the identification of new LLPAs; and introduce a consistent LLPA policy.

Option ENV 6A

Review existing open space wedges and policy zones as potential Urban Landscape Wedges; and identify both new Urban and Rural Landscape Wedges with associated policy.

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.

Key Issue ENV 4 Identifying and protecting sensitive landscapes.

Within this key issue the preferred option was ENV 4A: Consider areas of sensitive landscape for designation as Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV) or Special Countryside Areas (SCA).

The POP stated that any landscape designations will be informed by an appropriate evidence base. These designations would be assisted by the identified Areas of Scenic Quality within the NILCA 2000 and policy brought forward to protect the Lough Neagh Shore and / or the Blackwater Valley sensitive landscapes from unsuitable forms of development, where appropriate. Following the review of the landscape character assessment this option allowed for the identification and protection of potential sensitive landscapes.

POP Representations

Of the 201 responses received 31 (15%) referred to Key Issue 4. Of the 31 responses received 24 (77%) were in support for preferred option ENV 4A, 5 (16%) were unsupportive and 2 (7%) uncommitted responses.

While responses received were generally supportive a number of comments suggested that further evidence gathering is required to justify potential designations, this LCA review constitutes this evidence. Additionally, comments also included that economic and environmental need must be balanced, with further consultation and engagement as required.

Other comments stressed that the definition of sensitive landscapes needs to be clearly defined, as they can be subjective and that SCA's should extend beyond the ASSI / SPA designations at Lough Neagh into the wider hinterland to buffer the protected area and provide space for nature to expand. The use of a bespoke landscape policy rather than the established SCAs and AoHSV designations and policies is discussed further in the outcomes and recommendations section of the LCA review.

Unsupportive comments indicated that the POP did not adequately explain how sensitive landscapes would be determined and that an opportunity has been missed to propose a policy context that has regard for all of the landscapes in the Borough, including the historic dimension of the landscapes.

6.0 Methodology, Baseline and audit of existing Landscape Character Areas within the Borough

Step 1: Development of Approach

This landscape character update assessment used a methodology adapted from a range of established guidance sources, including the *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (SNH and Countryside Agency, 2002), *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (Tudor, 2014), and relevant advice from *Local Landscape Designations Scotland* and the Scottish Government's guidance for Local Authorities on Landscape and Development Planning.

Additional reference material was taken from the *Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (NILCA) 2000*, the *Regional Landscape Character Assessment 2015*, and NIEA's *Supplementary Guidance on Wind Energy*.

The baseline study and review of existing information involved:

- The identification of the LCAs within the Borough
- Previous designations from legacy Area Plans for Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon and Dungannon & South Tyrone.
- Cultural and historical data (Historic Map Viewer, online cultural resources etc.) that helps inform the historical human interaction with landscapes.

These sources helped to establish a baseline for the identification of landscape units and boundaries of existing landscape designations.

The information from the baseline study provided the background on what landscapes have been previously valued within the Borough.

Step 2: Desk Study

The desktop study involved the collection and review of relevant background documents and spatial data such as geology, natural and historic features, areas prone to flooding and any cultural associations, (refer to Appendix 2). Other material relevant to help enhance the evidence base was incorporated, this included information on other designations, including natural heritage, historic environment, geodiversity, cultural heritage, open space and folklore. This led to the creation of a desktop study, which produced an initial set of background data.

Step 3: Field Survey

Field work was essential to capture the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities of the landscapes within the Borough (refer to Appendix 3). Information was collected in the field in order to test and refine and add to (as appropriate) the outputs of the desk study, the maps of landscape character areas / types and the associated descriptions. At times, when the fieldwork survey identified issues that needed to be clarified further desk study was sometimes required. To improve the reliability of the survey, two planning officers independently completed the survey study sheet and subsequently compared their findings. This comparison allowed them to identify and reconcile any differences, ensuring that the assessment was not influenced by individual bias.

A landscape unit represents a defined area identified as field work study site. For the purpose of this study the landscape unit is known as the Fieldwork Study Site (FSS). These sites were selected to provide a representative sample of each LCA from the North, South, East and West of the Borough and include as many landscape attributes and features that were identified through the desktop.

Assessment Criteria

Qualitative analysis represents a criterion based narrative assessment of the characteristics and qualities of each LCA. The criteria for assessment of landscape records are critical for the narrative assessment to achieve a constant, robust and holistic analysis of the overall landscape qualities either positive or negative across the Borough.

The table below outlines the criteria used to evaluate the landscape units with each criterion examined to identify their value, vulnerability and subsequent sensitivity.

Criterion	Definition
Identity and sense of place	The extent to which a landscape is representative of the study area as a whole and to which it contributes to community identity, provides a sense of place or promotes an image of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon at a local, regional or national level.
Rarity	Landscapes which are unique to Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon or uncommon elsewhere.
Intactness and condition	Landscapes that are intact and distinctive, and in a good state, having not been overly affected or impacted by human interaction and development over a considerable period of time and/or where such landscapes may be experiencing development pressure.
Wilderness	The degree of perceived naturalness, lack of modern artefacts or structures, rugged and of physically challenging landform and remoteness/inaccessibility.
Scenic Quality	The extent to which the landscape, contains pleasing combinations of features, or to which it prompts strong sensory appeal.
Pattern of Development, including Settlement fringe, development use and Employment	The influence and provision of humans within the landscape for development, employment, recreation and other services.
Built Heritage	Landscapes in which built heritage assets have a significant influence on character or landscapes which provide key views, in to and away from, important built heritage assets.
Field Pattern and Boundary	Field boundaries make an important contribution to the character and biodiversity of the landscape and are one of the strongest surviving links to the farming traditions of the past. Some hedges and walls along parish boundaries, old roads and tracks date back to the medieval period or earlier.
Land Use and Cover	Land cover/flora and fauna – types of vegetation and wildlife are present Habitats/biodiversity – The presence of specific habitat types wetlands, hedgerows, woodland, species rich meadows and species Land cover, Vegetation cover – The type (dense woodland, scrub, hedgerows, bare peat, farmland, open water)

	Tree cover - Tree/woodland cover and type of woodland (broadleaf, conifer, mixed, scrub)
Cultural Heritage, Qualities and Folklore	Landscapes which provide cultural associations such as with literature, music, art or local history or which have spiritual associations.
Naturalness and natural heritage assets	The perceived importance to the landscape of features of natural heritage interest, including important habitats.
Views	The extent and importance of views in and out of the landscape, including the relative visibility of the landscape from key routes and locations.
Access and usability	The extent to which the landscape is accessible to the public through rights of way, footpaths and cycle tracks.
Landscape Consistency	The extent to which the landscapes are consistent in the terms of the above criteria
Policy Context	Landscapes which are the subject of, or support other Borough wide strategies, plans and projects.

Table 3 Assessment Criteria

Each of these criteria were developed into an assessment question, which was answered in relation to each of the landscape units within the fieldwork study sites and each LCA in the desktop study. Answers were defined based on the judgement of the officer in the field based on the narratives of what is was viewed, heard and felt at the FSS at that particular time.

The assessment stage involved the review of each landscape unit and LCA against the agreed assessment criteria. The analysis of this assessment was based on both the desk study and fieldwork studies.

For each field study site, a standard evaluation sheet was completed on-site to record information for all assessment criteria. In addition, a narrative evaluation was prepared for each landscape character area, addressing scenic quality, the influence of modern development, land use and agricultural patterns, sense of place, key views and vistas, and the overall issues affecting the area.

Step 4 Qualitative Analysis and Comparative Evaluation

The completion of desktop and fieldwork studies enabled a series of comparisons between various landscape units based on specific assessment criteria grouped under six overarching themes. The comparisons were conducted through data coding and through the narrative of landscape coping capacities and vulnerability to modern change. The narrative focused on the landscape units' ability to absorb and accommodate new modern development; how well existing development is integrated into the dynamics of landscape and how close the landscape is to its natural state. The analysis helped identify patterns of change within the landscape characteristics of each LCA which then informed a review of each LCA's condition and sensitivity.

The summary of the narrative descriptions were used to evaluate and confirm which landscapes demonstrate a high value, those which have been impacted through modern development and land use practises or those which display unique vulnerable landscape features. This approach gave an indication of those landscapes within the Borough which exhibit the highest sensitivity, and which are considered worthy of recognition and protection.

7.0 Outcomes, Recommendations and draft Plan Strategy Approach

From the outcome of this LCA Update it is very clear that the Borough retains a wide variety of landscapes and consequently a wide variety of references to local culture, identity and sense of place. The landscape assessment has evidenced highest landscape value, vulnerability and sensitivity in the landscape areas of Lough Neagh fringe / Peatlands, and high sensitivity / highest value in the landscape areas of the River Blackwater

- Within the Council portion of LCA 46, Blackwater Valley, landscape areas in its central and northern portion were found to be of high landscape value. The landscape area near the Tynan River confluence with River Blackwater evidenced highest landscape value.
- Within the Council portion of LCA64, Lough Neagh Peatlands, all landscape areas between the lough shore and M1 motorway evidenced considerable variation of level of value / vulnerability of each landscape characteristic assessed except relating to natural heritage which scored highly in all landscape areas. All these landscape areas were found to be of high/highest sensitivity. The landscape area south of the motorway was found to be not high in landscape value, vulnerability or sensitivity.

The Council therefore proposes the designation of Landscape Policy Areas within these locations. Following consultation with the Council's Critical Friend, Soltys Brewster Consulting, a strategic-level landscape policy approach was deemed appropriate for both the Blackwater Valley and Lough Neagh regions.

Strategic level landscape designations already existing in Northern Ireland Planning Policy approach and within the remit of the LDP include Special Countryside Areas (SCA), Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV), Areas of Scenic Quality (ASQ).

The Preferred Options Paper, Option ENV4A considers areas of sensitive landscape for designation as AoHSV or SCA. SCAs are defined in SPPS as exceptional landscapes (such as mountains, stretches of coast or lough shores, and certain views or vistas) wherein the quality of landscape and unique amenity value is such that development should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances; appropriate policies should be brought forward in LDP to ensure protection from unnecessary and inappropriate development. AoHSVs are defined in the RDS as comprising significant high quality attractive, natural, historic and environmental assets. SPPS advises inclusion of policies in LDP to maintain AoHSV landscape quality and character.

Regarding a policy approach for 'high scenic value', it was noted that 'scenic' is dependent on multiple non-visual landscape characteristics which merit equal consideration. New development in SCAs should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, thus this policy approach was not considered appropriate for the settled landscapes of Blackwater Valley and Lough Neagh fringe / Peatlands. The term Strategic Landscape Policy Area infers a proactive approach for landscape management rather than a restrictive approach against particular development.

Existing policy for Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPA) has a greater focus on one or more specific landscape features, assets or areas. LLPAs and Landscape Wedges are suggested for smaller scale, settlement-based landscape policy areas.

A strategic level Landscape Policy Area, however, can encompass multiple landscape features, areas or assets of high value and high vulnerability which are interconnected and consolidated over a broad area.

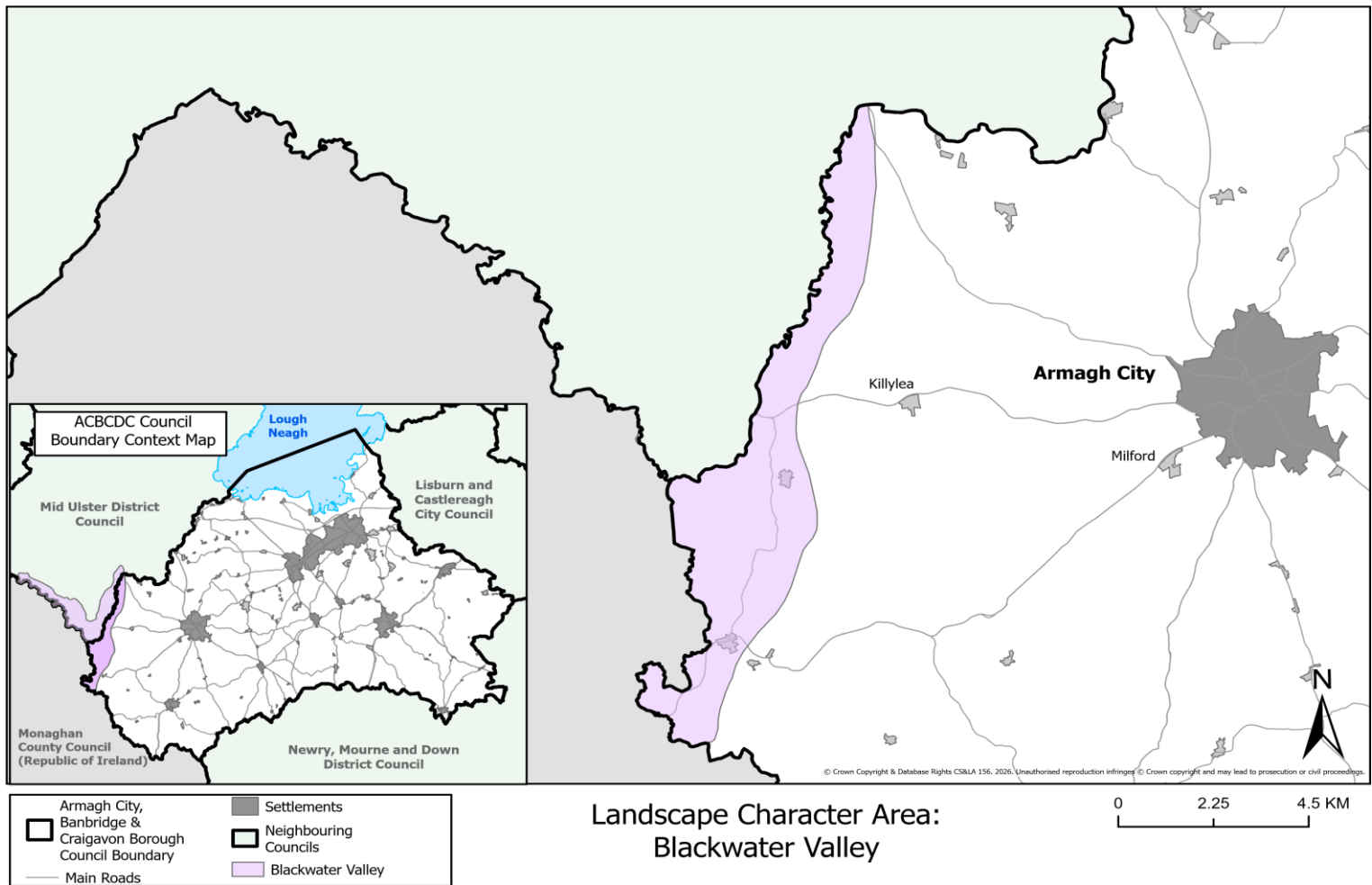
It should be noted that specific valued, vulnerable and sensitive landscape features and assets within a strategic level Landscape Policy Area may be explicitly protected through definition of local level Landscape Policy Areas overlapping with the strategic level designated and this may be examined further at Local Policies Plan.

Appendix 1

Review of Landscape Character Areas:

LCA Name	LCA Number
Blackwater Valley	46
Loughall Orchard Belt	47
East Lough Neagh Points	62
Portmore Lough Fringes	63
Lough Neagh Peatlands	64
Upper Bann Floodplains	65
Armagh Drumlins	66
Armagh/ Banbridge Hills	67
Carrigatuke Hills	68
Newry Basin	69
Ballyroney Basin	76
Iveagh Slopes	77
North Banbridge Hills	78
Craigavon Plateau	79
Donaghcloney Valley	80
Kilwarlin Plateau	81
Dromore Lowlands	82
Lower Slieve Croob Foothills	83
Mourne Foothills	84
Craggy Dromara Uplands	88
Hillsborough Slopes	89
Upper Ballinderry Plateau	109

LCA 46 Blackwater Valley



Landscape Character Area:
Blackwater Valley



River Blackwater



Fields separated by bushy hedgerows and trees creating an enclosed wooded character

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The Blackwater Valley Landscape Character Area is divided by the River Blackwater, its eastern side lies within the Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough and the western side lies within the Mid Ulster District Council area.

The portion of the LCA within the borough extends from the Battleford Bridge and stretches southward, along the Blackwater to include the settlements of Tynan and Middletown. The Cor River provides further riparian interest along the western and southern boundary of this LCA.

Topography and Drainage

The LCA contains the flat marshy floodplain of the Blackwater River, which flows from the Clogher Valley into Lough Neagh. Numerous small streams flow between scattered drumlins that form islands on the floodplain and an abandoned canal, with numerous bridges, follows the length of the valley. Rounded drumlins enclose the valley and twisting hedge-banked lanes allow limited views, creating a secluded landscape.

This LCA lies within the region described as the Central Lowlands which is characterized by a largely centripetal drainage system from the rim of the basin into Lough Neagh that ultimately drains northwards via the Lower Bann.

The Cor River flows into the River Blackwater which then flows northeast toward Lough Neagh and forms part of the border between Co. Armagh and Co. Tyrone as well as the Republic of Ireland.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The river is fringed with wet semi-improved and improved pasture and marsh. Fields are divided by mature overgrown hedgerows and trees giving the area a well wooded character. Field pattern is irregular with small-medium sized fields. Drumlin tops and slopes are predominantly improved grassland with some arable. Grassland is managed by grazing cycles and modern practices.

Winding lanes lined with well-maintained, tall hedges and banks add considerably to the sense of seclusion within this landscape.

Pockets of fen provide biodiversity interest within the river valley, attracting an array of insects and birdlife.

Numerous pockets of mixed woodland provide a very distinctive landscape character to the central area of the LCA, this woodland provides an attractive and enclosed setting to the settlements of Tynan, Caledon. The woodland, rivers and the estate lakes are of high biodiversity value and contribute to the peaceful, undisturbed and enclosed qualities of this LCA.

Other significant features include the stone wall boundary for Tynan Abbey and a few conifer tree shelter belts. There is some evidence of boundary treatments surrounding rural dwellings are becoming less rural in character with the introduction of such materials like metal fencing and brick and ornate walls. There is evidence of some post and wire fencing replacing hedgerows on hilltops and along the river banks.

Features of biodiversity interest

- The majority of woodland is associated with estates - some of the largest estate woodlands in Northern Ireland
- Grassland accounts for the majority of land cover, almost all of which is in improved pasture that is generally of low biodiversity
- Areas of wet grassland alongside the river that are relatively species-rich and important for wetland birds
- Rare lake types, particularly marl lakes, with specific species
- Priority Species important for salmon and trout

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

No International environmental designations

National Environmental Designations: Caledon & Tynan ASSI and Tullybrick Lough ASSI

Overall, the LCA includes significant priority habitats, which include peatland, woodland, fen and lakes. Areas of wet grassland alongside the rivers are relatively species-rich and important for wetland birds. Rare lake types, particularly marl lakes, with specific species.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) are:

- Tullybrick Lough
- Tynan Abbey
- Knockbane Bog

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Within the Borough, the settlements of Middletown and Tynan are located within this LCA.

Residential development within the LCA is scattered, rural single dwellings with small clusters of longer established dwellings, many of which are associated with farm units and outbuildings. Some clusters of newer dwellings have been created and a number of more recently constructed dwellings tend to be of large, generic, affluent styles which are beginning to detract from the rural aesthetics of this landscape. The style and extent of some gardens and curtilage boundary treatments are more familiar to suburban areas.

Built Character

Overall the interaction of the built environment with the natural landscape is largely in keeping with the character of the landscape. This is largely due to the topography and land cover. More modern, generic house styles and larger scale development can be seen to infiltrate in some areas, which, if continues it may erode the rurality and seclusion within this landscape.

Other individual challenging features include:

The size, siting, massing and scale of large industrial/ commercial workings for scrap metal and associated hard standing.

Evidence of some minor, rural roads having to accommodate large and heavy traffic movement associated with local businesses.

Quarries

- There are no quarries or landing sites located within this LCA

Built Heritage Assets

Within the Borough's section of this LCA there are:

- Approximately 25 Historic Monuments
- 5 Scheduled Monuments
- 1 monument in State Care, Tynan Village Cross
- 17 Listed Buildings/Structures
- 1 HPGD, Tynan Abbey with the Caledon HPGD on the boundary with Mid Ulster DC
- Over 50 Industrial sites, such a large number of sites indicating the impact of the Ulster Canal on this landscape.

Some traditional outbuildings and derelict cottages remain in the landscape.

The influence of the Caledon estate and parkland planned landscape has a significant presence in the entire LCA.

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Community assets include the rivers Blackwater, Cor, Tynan as a source of recreation such as fishing, canoeing and walking.
- The Blackwater Heritage Trail, including picnic areas and walks.
- The influence of the historic parklands on this landscape, including Tynan Abbey can be enjoyed even though it is in private ownership.
- Traditional farmstead and outbuildings which point to the historic farming past of the area.
- The number of significant historic monuments is also an indication of the value of this landscape both in terms of historic identity as well as a unique sense of place today.
- Knockbane Bog would have historic and cultural associations with past generations for fuel provision.
- The Dredge Bridge, commissioned by the Earl of Caledon in 1843 is the only surviving example in Northern Ireland of this type of suspension bridge. The bridge was dismantled from its original position at Glenarb and re-erected in its present location.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- Inaccessibility is a key feature of this landscape. Its small and enclosed scale does not lend itself to long vistas. It is this secretive and tranquil quality that makes this LCA unique.
- The history and significance of the river Blackwater can be accessed along the Heritage Trail
- The Ulster Way and the National Cycle network provide appropriate access to this landscape.
- In more recent years there has been the introduction of canoe access points along the Canal
- Fishing is also available to permit holders along the river Blackwater and tributaries.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Overall this landscape has a very pleasant perception and scenic quality with occasional, attractive narrow views and an overall textured and colourful visual appeal. Travelling within this LCA there is a perception of calm due to its enclosed topography and hedge- banked laneways and a relatively restrained built character. The enclosed perception of this LCA is facilitated by the generous scattering of mature deciduous trees such as ash, oak, beech, sycamore, alder and willow. The trees are within roadside hedgerows, inner field boundaries and around farms as shelterbelts.

This is a rural, peaceful and unspoilt valley with unique scenic quality.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

This is an attractive, rural relatively undisturbed and unspoilt valley, which affords unique and high scenic quality.

This dynamic landscape of a flat, marshy valley enclosed by drumlins with rounded tops, has created a secluded and secretive landscape. Its wooded character and hedge banked lanes also provide a strong connection to the history and significance of this unique landscape. This connection to the past is also experienced through the traditional farm buildings and farm cottages that still remain in use. The area also has a wide array of heritage assets linked to the industrial heritage use of the river and canal.

The landscape is in good condition, but there is a growing pressure from the development of single dwellings. It must be noted that a large proportion of houses are associated with farm units, however the shift to more individual dwellings and a tendency to cluster these is not suitable for this landscape, despite its tolerant nature.

There is some evidence of a shift from the traditional scale and design of farm buildings to a more industrial scale and design. This change can erode the strong rural and traditional character.

Overall due to the topography and influence of high hedges and mature trees, the resulting development is not obvious, however this capacity to accommodate development should be respected and enhanced through sympathetic design, scale and integration of new development.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Large industrial style sheds, a scrap yard and surrounding infrastructure interrupt the small scale of this landscape.
- Impact of heavy vehicles on small rural roads and increased use of modern fencing
- Growth in number of inappropriately scaled, designed and style of residential properties and the associated large curtilages.
- Although not within the Borough, there are views of wind infrastructure in Mid Ulster District

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The main threats to this landscape are the demand for single houses and the shift away from appropriate scale and design of buildings and materials and the design and scale of agricultural buildings. This small scale landscape with its secluded character and its winding lanes has the capacity for small scale, well designed development. In order not to exceed this capacity however the topography and land cover should be respected through the use of appropriate siting, suitable tree planting and careful consideration of the scale and design of any new development.

The changes in landscape condition have had a minor impact on the landscape characteristics, as set out in NILCA 2000. In relation to the cultural, perceived and intangible aspects of landscape character some changes such as the often incongruent design and scale of dwellings, a move towards larger, industrial style agricultural buildings and the replacement of what would be tall hedgerows with post and wire fencing could begin to erode local characteristics.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicates that predominantly low development pressure for rural housing was experienced across the majority of this LCA within the Borough between 2010 and 2024. However, a small area of medium development pressure was also identified within the southern portion of the LCA.

The pressure analysis also indicates that there is low development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 within the Borough's section of this LCA.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Large developments could not be integrated into this small scale, secluded landscape.
- The wider landscape settings of historic features and estates should be considered in relation to any changes from built development.
- It is essential that any new development is associated with extensive tree planting to ensure that it does not disrupt the wooded and unspoilt character of the river valley.
- Built development along the roads at the lower edges of the floodplain would be out of character with the existing landscape pattern; houses are generally sited on higher land and are typically set a short distance from the public road.
- Houses are generally sited on higher ground and are typically set a short distance back from the public road.
- The restoration of derelict buildings is preferable to the construction of new ones.

In terms of wind energy infrastructure, it is evident how the scale of such infrastructure can influence the scenic quality of this landscape. Wind or any other large scale energy infrastructure must be scaled appropriately so as not to overwhelm the scale of this drumlin landscape.

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are:

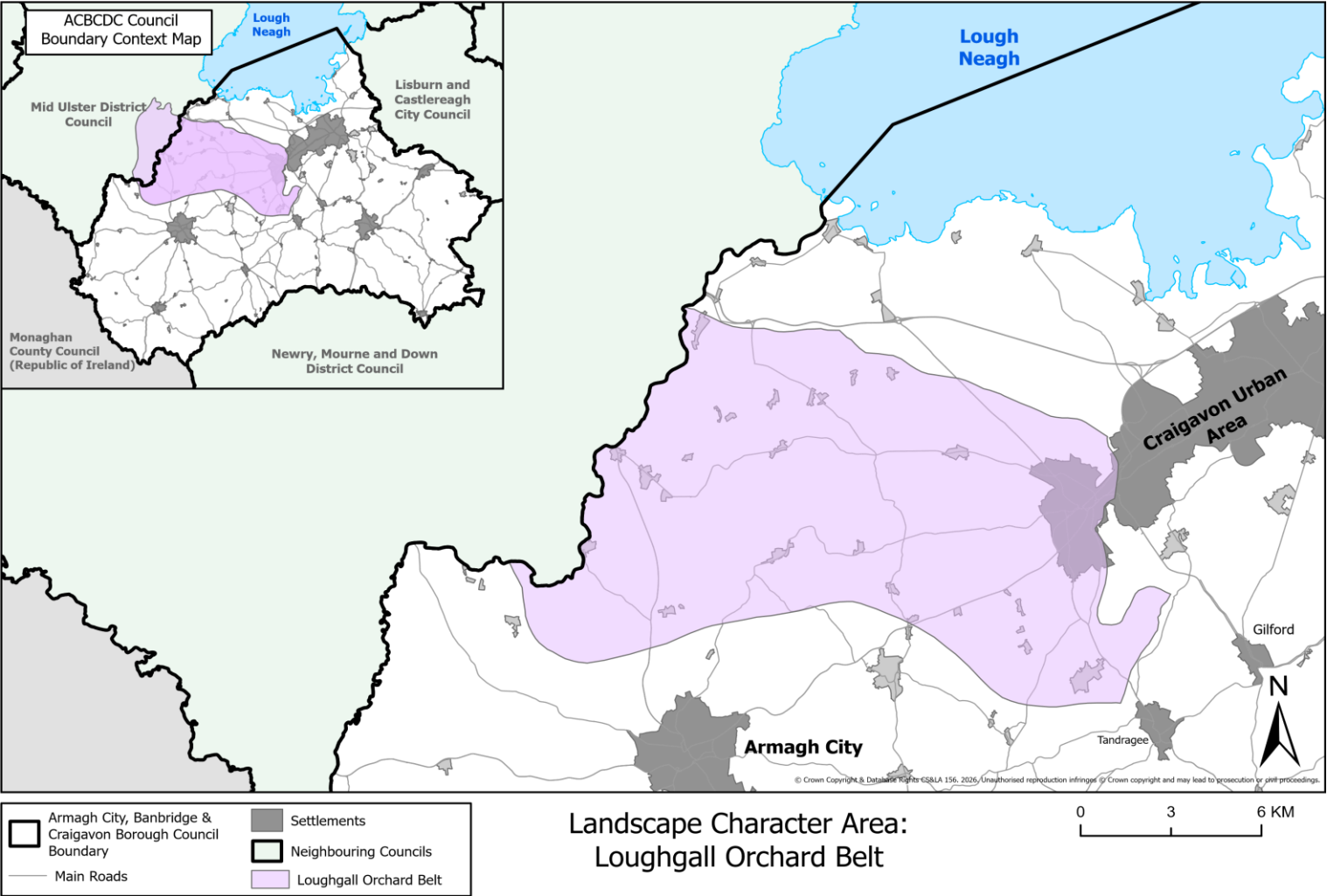
- This LCA has a low-lying character, small scale and high sensitivity. Any turbine development must be closely associated with and reflect the scale of farmsteads and sheltering woodland.

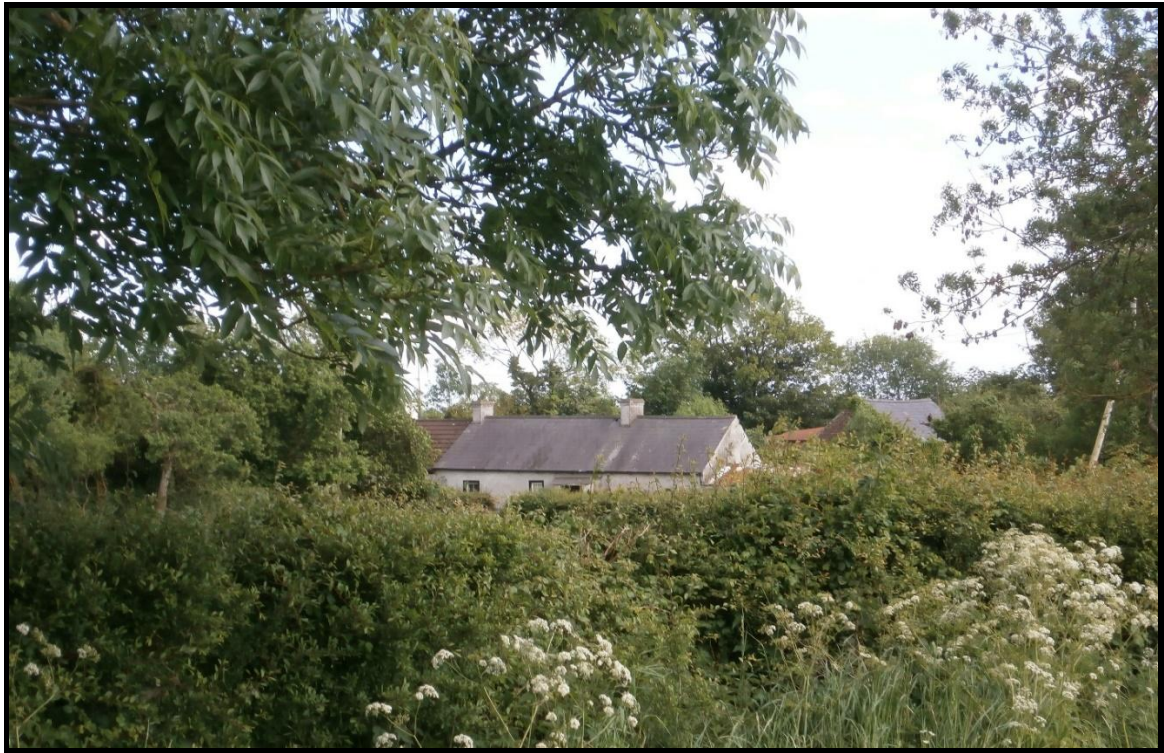
- Care would be required to avoid adverse impacts on the extremely sensitive drumlin tops and key landscape and visual characteristics and values of this landscape.

Outcome of Review

From the evidence gathered it is clear that a large section of the Blackwater Valley LCA is a unique and valued landscape. Given that some areas within this landscape character area demonstrate a high value of scenic quality alongside many cultural and historic characteristics it is considered worthy of a greater level of protection in terms of the impact of built development.

LCA 47 Loughgall Orchard Belt





Dwellings connected by hedge lined winding roads.



Varied rural landscape pattern, with mixed farmland and horticulture; extensive orchards on sheltered drumlin slopes.



Low, rolling drumlins

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The majority of this LCA lies within the Borough, its NW portion lying within the Mid Ulster District Council area. Within the Borough the LCA includes Portadown, extending westwards towards the boundary with Mid Ulster District Council and north west towards the M1 motorway. To the south the LCA contains a number of settlements some of which are Blackwatertown, Loughgall and Laurelvale.

Topography and Drainage

The Loughgall Orchard Belt is characterised by low rolling drumlins which fall towards Lough Neagh to the north and to the slopes of the Blackwater valley to the west. It is crossed by numerous small river valleys and streams, tributaries of the Rivers Blackwater and Bann. The underlying geology is a mix of sedimentary and contemporaneous igneous rocks and gives rise to rich brown soils and farmland.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

This landscape gently descends in low rolling drumlins toward Lough Neagh, interspersed with numerous small river valleys, streams, and low-lying mossy areas. This varied rural setting features a patchwork of mixed farmland and horticulture, with new and mature orchards thriving on the sheltered drumlin slopes. The area is enriched by wooded estate landscapes, parklands, scenic loughs, mature bands of trees, and neatly maintained hedgerows. From the hilltops, there are expansive views stretching toward Lough Neagh and the Portadown area.

There is a varied agricultural pattern with irregular small-medium fields on the rolling, low drumlins. There are large areas of improved grazing in addition to some smaller pockets of rough grazing on lower ground. Hedgerow boundaries are small-medium with scattered mature trees however some hedgerows have become broken in many places. Drainage ditches and small streams also mark a number of field boundaries on lower ground.

Features of biodiversity interest

- The grassland cover in the LCA is comparable to that of Northern Ireland overall. Most of this grassland consists of improved pasture, which typically has low biodiversity value.
- Aside from cultivated orchards, demesnes woodland and wet woodland accounts for a very small proportion of land cover. Wet woodland occupies former cut-over bog and is probably the majority of the woodland
- There are some scattered small pockets of wet grassland, and acid grassland on cut-over bog
- Lowland raised bog is extensive across the north of the LCA, reaching southward in the Blackwater valley and in the flatlands west of Portadown. Almost all has been cut-over in the past, some has been colonised by birch woodland, little intact bog remains.
- Fens are generally small and form a mosaic with reedbeds around loughs

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

Selshion near Portadown is designated as an ASSI.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) are:

- Selshion Bog
- Loughgall Lake & Woodlands
- Annacramph Lane and Carganamuck Quarry
- Derryhubbert/ Derryardry
- Agory Moss
- Derryore
- Benburb/Milltown

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Due to the location, available infrastructure and the large area covered by the Loughgall Orchard Belt there are a number of designated settlements, these are:

Annaghmore, Annahugh, Ardress, Blackwatertown, Charlement, Kilmore, Laurelvale, Loughgall, Portadown and Scotch Street.

The area exhibits both a scattered and clustered pattern of single rural dwellings, often concentrated around road junctions or along main roads. These dwellings typically feature large curtilages and modern, affluent designs that contrast with the rural setting, contributing to a suburban character. While some areas show older bungalow-style homes with modest integration into the landscape, others lack traditional or vernacular features, leading to a diminished local visual character. Screening is inconsistent, with some inappropriate conifer planting, and natural integration is generally limited. Despite not being overly obtrusive, the cumulative impact of design, scale, and layout detracts from the rural aesthetic.

Built Character

In addition to some areas of scattered rural dwellings there are numerous areas where an accumulation of dwellings have developed. Ribbon development is also notable, especially along major roads. Many dwellings are not of a traditional rural vernacular in scale and style but tend to be large and affluent in scale and design which contribute to the change towards a more suburban perception. In more recent residential development it is clear that a more vernacular, rural design has been sought.

Perhaps as a result of the proximity to large urban areas and the motorway the number of commercial and industrial properties is notable, examples of which are a light industrial trailer yard, a garden supplies business, a mechanical engineering business and lorry storage. Traffic is also heavy on many roads within this LCA.

A number of large scale, prominent modern agricultural sheds are located on drumlin slopes which have further altered the built character to more conspicuous and intrusive.

Wind turbines are evident in both drumlin top locations and in more built up areas.

Large-scale electricity pylons traverse through this LCA, creating a stronger sense of human influence despite its otherwise rural character.

Quarries

- Carganamuck/ Grange Quarries

Built Heritage Assets

The recorded built heritage interest in this landscape character area is as follows:

- Over 100 historic monuments, 9 of which are scheduled including Charlemont Fort
- Over 150 Listed Buildings/Structures
- 5 HPGD including The Argory, Ardress and a supplementary site at Summer Island
- Over 150 Industrial Heritage Sites, among many are bridges, lock houses, canal locks, mills, mills and stores, limestone quarry & limekilns, factory, brickworks and distillery
- Approximately 25 Defence Heritage Sites
- 1 Area of Archaeological Potential at Scotch Street.

The range and number of historic sites highlights how the varied uses and interactions with human behaviors have shaped and affected this landscape and continues to influence the character and perception of the area today.

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Strong cultural and agricultural associations with the 'Orchard County' include very distinctive apple orchard landscape features which link product with the identity of the local population.
- Bramley apples from Armagh enjoy Protected Geographical Indication status within the European Union. The apples have a tarter taste than those grown in England, and over 40,000 tonnes are produced annually.
- The origins of why this area is popular with apple producers is unclear. One story is that seeds of sweet apples were brought to Ireland during the migration of the Celts from Europe. A large apple believed to date from about 1000 BC has been found in excavations at Navan Fort near Armagh. Legend has it that St Patrick himself planted an apple tree at Ceangoba, an ancient settlement outside Armagh City. Old historical records tell us that monks at the Culdee Monasteries, which were established in Armagh in the 9th century, enjoyed apples as treats during festivals. By the 12th century, apple growing was widespread in County Armagh and orchard planting increased throughout the following years.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- Train line provides access as far as Portadown.
- National Cycle network is located close to Portadown and Charlemont but the route is located further north, skirting the Lough shore.

- Recreational access within this LCA is limited to open space associated with settlements and footpaths.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Overall, modern rural development has led to a fragmented and sometimes visually cluttered landscape, due to the clustering of contemporary single dwellings that often lack cohesion with the traditional rural character. The presence of moderate plant traffic and modern agricultural practices has further altered the rural setting. Hedgerows, once a defining feature, are now often poorly maintained, with gaps and replacements by modern wire fencing, contributing to a decline in the area's visual and ecological quality.

Overall, in many areas, landscape perception has been diminished by modern development, resulting in a fragmented and visually less engaging environment. The traditional apple orchards remain a striking and valuable scenic feature, reinforcing County Armagh's identity. The area offers some pleasant views of textured and colourful landscapes, the area's aesthetic is considered quite pleasing.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

This area is characterized by small-scale rolling drumlins with irregular field boundaries, generally marked by well-maintained native hedgerows and scattered deciduous trees. The landscape includes rough, wetter fields in lower areas and is visually enriched by traditional apple orchards, particularly to the northeast, which contribute significantly to the area's scenic and cultural identity. The rural character is increasingly disrupted by modern influences. These include clusters of affluent single rural dwellings, ornamental gardens, inappropriate conifer screening, commercial sheds, and utility infrastructure. Despite these pressures, the drumlin topography and some effective screening help retain a moderately pleasant and textured landscape.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Proximity to Portadown and main roads has increased modern development pressure..
- Linear sprawl and clustering of modern single rural dwellings along rural roads and junctions.
- Many new dwellings are modern and less vernacular in design, often with ornamental gardens that disrupts rural character.
- Presence of commercial sheds and light industrial units with composite fencing.
- Modern agricultural sheds (e.g., profiled metal cladding) contribute to a more industrial perception rather than agricultural.
- Electricity infrastructure in the central area adds visual clutter.
- Notable presence of wind turbines.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The changes in landscape condition have had a medium impact on the overall landscape characteristics of Loughgall Orchard Belt, as set out in NILCA 2000. In relation to the cultural, perceived and intangible aspects of landscape character some changes such as the often non-rural design and scale of dwellings and the move towards larger, industrial style agricultural buildings is beginning to erode at local characteristics and becoming uniform throughout the rural area. The introduction and notable number of wind turbines scattered throughout the LCA have an impact on visual amenity, whether this is in a negative or positive way is subjective however they do signal a shift in landscape character as a consequence of their unique, modern and bold scale and design.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicated that there are many localised areas within the LCA that have experienced medium – high development pressure for housing between 2010-2024.

The pressure analysis indicated that predominantly low development pressure for wind turbines was experienced across the majority of this LCA within the Borough between 2010 and 2024. However, a small area of medium development pressure was also identified within the central section of the LCA.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- There is scope for extensive woodland structure planting on the fringes of existing housing estates near Portadown. It would be beneficial to associate all new built development with planting to provide a partial screen and to integrate the development within the existing geometric farmland pattern.
- The use of traditional building materials and forms in new housing will improve the character and integration of new built development.

Additional guidelines may also include:

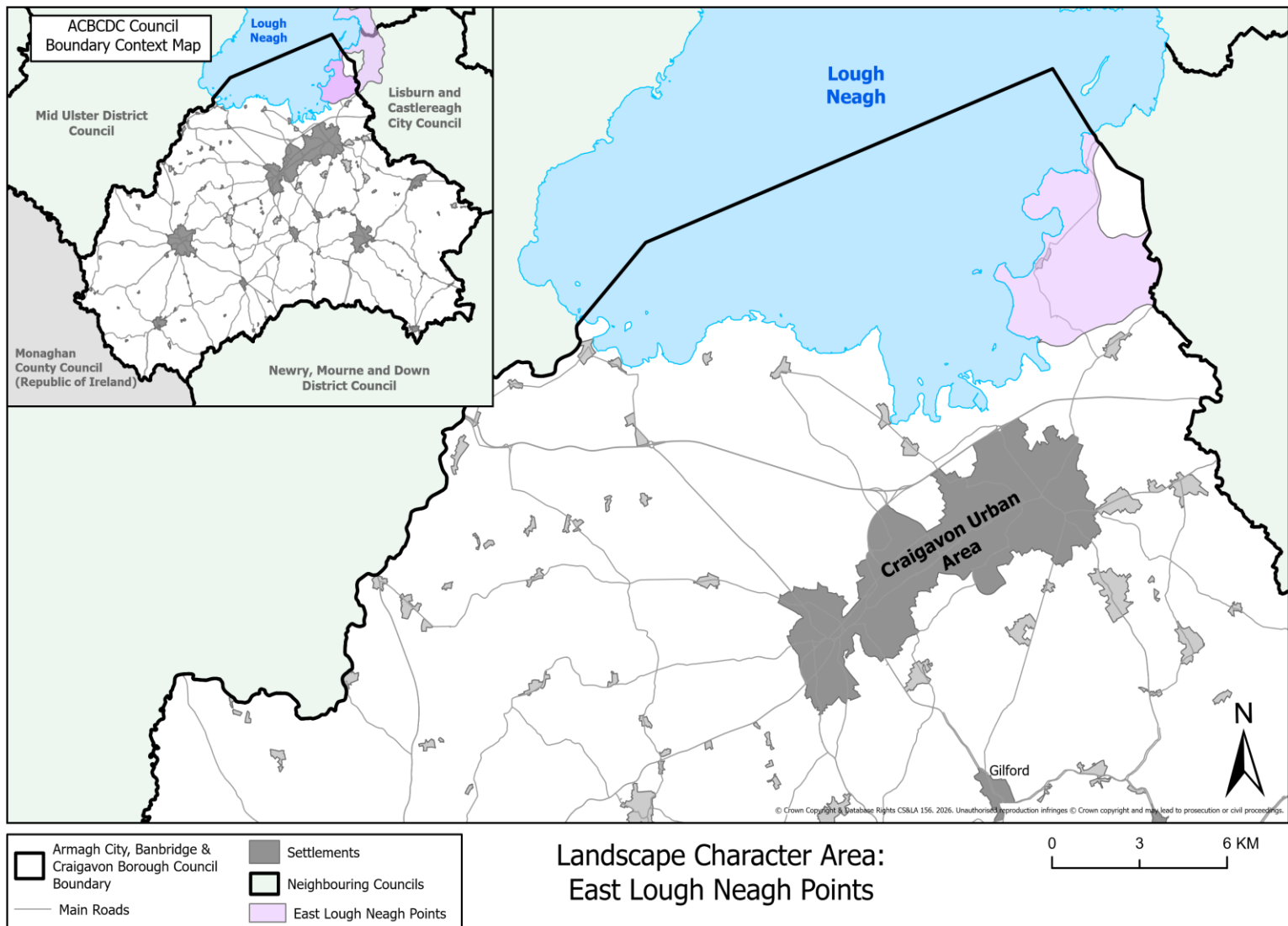
- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular rural influences.

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that the most appropriate locations for turbines are those sheltered by drumlins and woodland, and those associated with buildings or settlements. Mid-slope sites may offer the best landscape integration. Turbines should be scaled to match the complexity of the landscape. Efforts should be made to minimize the visual impact of turbines in conjunction with overhead power lines. Special attention is needed to avoid negative effects on distinctive settings and designed landscapes. Additionally, care should be taken to prevent adverse impacts on small-scale but distinctive landform variations, landmarks such as churches, and the complexity of the landscape.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Loughgall Orchard Belt have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 62 East Lough Neagh Points





Overgrown, dense hedgerows, containing stands of willow



Larger-scale farmland with arable fields and a more open character on the flatter land towards the shores of the Lough.

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

Approximately a third of this LCA lies within the borough, the remainder is divided between Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey. From the Goudy River, this area extends northwards toward the Boghead Bridge Road, where it then extends further along the Lough shore to include Lignaboy Point and Tunny Point.

Topography and Drainage

The East Lough Neagh Points is a rolling agricultural landscape with a varied mix of field sizes and overgrown hedgerows on an area underlain by Lough Neagh Clays on the eastern fringes of Lough Neagh. There is a strong contrast in the scale and pattern of the farmland between the rolling margins of the basalt plateau and the flat clay landscape on the fringes of Lough Neagh. In the latter, there are long views across a completely flat landscape. The low gradients of the rivers, especially on the clay lowlands immediately around Lough Neagh, create slow drainage and frequently it is only the slopes of the many drumlins that provide permanently dry sites.

Rivers within this section of this LCA include the Goudy River, there are also some major artificial waterways which form part of a significant water management system connected to Lough Neagh namely the Navvies Drain, Selshan Drain and the Tunny Cut.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

There is a clear contrast in the scale and pattern of farmland between the rolling higher ground and the flat low-lying land closer to the lough. In the flatter areas, there are long, open views across a largely level landscape, with large, prominent farmsteads set on slightly raised ground. Many farms are associated with stands of mature trees. Linear shelterbelts divide the farmland, while mature hedgerow oaks and willows line the roads. Closer to the shore larger fields are drained by straight ditches and enclosed by broken and small hedgerows. Built development is no longer restricted to the 'islands' with many instances of lower ground being filled to enable the construction of single dwellings.

Features of Biodiversity Interest

- Woodland cover is predominantly broadleaved wet woodland (a Priority Habitat) principally around the shore of Lough Neagh.
- Grassland is the majority overall land cover, the bulk of which is improved pastures. There are some small examples of more species-diverse, traditionally managed meadows
- An impressive complex mosaic of habitats in the Montiaghs ASSI and SAC.
- Lough Neagh and its shores have a diversity of habitats and the lough is nationally and internationally important for its wetland birds. ASSI, SPA, RAMSAR, NR

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

International designations: Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar
Lough Neagh & Lough Beg SPA.
Montiaghs Moss SAC

National designations: Lough Neagh ASSI
Montiagh's Moss ASSI
Lough Neagh Islands NR

The Lough Neagh area is well recognized for its valuable biodiversity. Over forty rare or local vascular plants have been recorded for the site since 1970, the most notable are eight-stemmed waterwort, marsh pea, Irish lady's tresses orchid, alder buckthorn, narrow small-reed and holy grass. All these plants are protected under the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985.

The Lough and its margin are also home to a large number of rare or local invertebrates, including two aquatic and two terrestrial molluscs, a freshwater shrimp (*Mysis relicta*), eight beetles, five hoverflies, seven moths and two butterflies. Of the rare beetles recorded two, *Stenus palposus* and *Dyschirus obscurus*, have their only known Irish location around the Lough. The Lough also supports twelve species of dragonfly.

Three notable fish also occur in the Lough, the river Lamprey and the Pollan; both Irish Red Data Species, and the eel, which is present in large numbers and commercially fished.

Internationally important numbers of waterfowl regularly winter on the Lough, with the peak number averaging over 66,800 birds since 1988. Individually, species which qualify as internationally important are whooper swans, pochard, tufted duck, scaup and goldeneye. Species which qualify as nationally important are great crested grebe, cormorant, mute swan, Bewick's swan, shelduck, wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard and coot.

In the summer the Lough supports internationally important numbers of breeding black-headed gulls and has the largest concentration of great crested grebe in Ireland. Nationally important numbers of breeding redshank, snipe, common tern, tufted duck, pochard, shoveler and gadwall are found (the last three being Irish Red Data Species).

Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance:

There are no SLNCIs located within this LCA.

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Within this section of this LCA there are two patterns of residential development. There is a linear pattern of rural housing, with some derelict farm buildings and tiny cottages along the ridgetop roads, as well as much newer, modern development. Small, tight groupings of dwellings, off small, narrow laneways also appear to be a relatively recent trend. Ribbon development has also grown along lower lying roads such as Diamond lane, off Brankinstown Road.

This relatively high density housing is significantly out of character with this low-lying rural area. The design, materials and features of many new houses and curtilages detract significantly from the unique natural characteristics of this lough environment.

The small settlement of Derrymore is located on the shore of the Lough.

Built Character

The small settlement of Derrymore, located on the shore of the Lough has seen considerable expansion in terms of housing developments. A buildup of both ribbon and clustering residential in many locations in this LCA, many of which are incongruent in scale or design has degraded this landscape in terms of distinctive lough shore environs, scenic and rural perception. Additionally a sand and gravel extraction landing site is located on the Lough shore near Derrymore Road.

Quarries

- Derryclone Quay (Mulhollands Landing Site)

Built Heritage Assets

- Over 35 historic sites and monuments, including two scheduled monuments on the Lagan Canal
- 1 Listed Building
- 9 Industrial heritage sites

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

Community assets and facilities are generally associated with the nearby villages of Aghagallon and Aghalee. The national cycle network threads through some of the roads along the lough shore.

A variety of recreational activities are available on the Lough and along the lough shore such as watersports, birdwatching, boat trips and walks that highlight many areas of historic and cultural interest.

Commercial fishing of eels, fresh-water herring and dollaghan (brown trout) takes place in the Lough. Eel originating from Lough Neagh has Protected Geographical Status in the EU. The lough bed is also dredged for sand, a landing site is located on the shore, just north of Ellis's Gut, (Mulhollands Landing Site).

This landscape has been an inspiration to many poets, artists and writers that have works known and celebrated throughout the world. Seamus Heaney and Charles Lamb to name only two.

There are a number of stories and legends about the lough and how it came to be but one such story is that of Lí Ban.

Lí Ban was the daughter of Eochaidh, King of Ulster. She and her pet dog were the only ones to survive when Eochaidh's palace and lands were flooded, drowning all who lived there and forming the great body of water we know today as Lough Neagh. For a year she lived alone in a bower under the lough with only her dog for company. Then, in her loneliness, she prayed to the goddess Danu asking to be turned into a salmon so she might swim with the fish of the sea for company. Danu only half granted her wish. The little dog became an otter, and Lí Ban was turned into a mermaid.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- There is some access to the lough from private jetties at Gawleys Gate and via Bartins Bay and along the shore front in Derrymore.
- The National Cycle Network passes through the west of this LCA and is part of events such as the Lap of the Lough, which has raised the profile of the lough shore and its environs and has thereby increased the accessibility of this location.
- Montiaghs Moss ASSI & SAC, a nationally and internationally recognised site of nature conservation importance can be accessed on foot, offering a very unique, tranquil and pleasing experience.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

The perception varies a great deal within this changing LCA. Along the lough shore there is a wild, open, calming influence with views across the wide expanse of the lough towards the Sperrins. This perception of an untamed landscape is enhanced by the sense of being close to nature in the wetland habitats found along the shoreline. This perception and the unified textures and colours combine to provide a very scenic and special landscape that is inspiring and uplifting. The wealth of cultural references from poets, artists, writers and story-tellers is testimony to the value and special qualities this landscape holds for local residents and visitors.

A buildup of both ribbon and clustering of houses in many locations, many of which are incongruent in scale or design have degraded this landscape in terms of residential, scenic and rural character and has therefore had a negative impact on the enjoyment and understanding of this landscape area.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

This landscape on the fringes of Lough Neagh features small, gently rolling hills with varied scale farmland. Higher ground is marked by linear development along straight roads, while dense, overgrown hedgerows—often containing stands of willow—add texture and a sense of enclosure to the area. As the land flattens toward the shores of the Lough, fields become larger in scale, with open pasture dominating the land use. Closer to the shoreline, land cover transitions into rush-filled, partially abandoned pastures and marshy areas.

A proliferation of ribbon and clustered residential development across numerous locations within this LCA, much of which is incongruous in terms of scale, design and settlement pattern, has begun to erode the distinctive character of the lough shore environment and diminished its scenic quality and rural sense of place.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Limited impact from commercial and infrastructure development.

- The number of newer, more complex and varied designed single rural housing, often in clusters and in ribbon development along straight roads has had a negative impact on the rural character.
- Infilling and raising of ground levels and the use of piling for foundations has enabled the construction of dwellings on sites which otherwise would not be possible.
- The influence of non-traditional style single houses overwhelms traditional settlement pattern.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The wider LCA has experienced a great deal from a high level of residential development. The high number of large, suburban style single, rural dwellings has eroded much of the rural and secluded characteristics that this landscape provides. However, within this gently rolling area there are many areas that remain unique and greatly enjoyable which is aided by the overgrown hedgerows and stands of wet woodland.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicates low development pressure for wind turbines experienced across the majority of this LCA within the Borough between 2010 and 2024.

In relation to rural housing, the pressure analysis indicates that there are many localised areas within the LCA that have experienced medium – high development pressure between 2010-2024.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Restriction of linear development along the ridge-top roads will prevent the development of a continuous ribbon of houses; development which is clustered in form and sited at the principal cross-roads will ensure that some open countryside is retained between settlements.
- Restricted routes for sand and gravel lorries and restoration of abandoned extraction sites will ensure such developments have minimal impact.

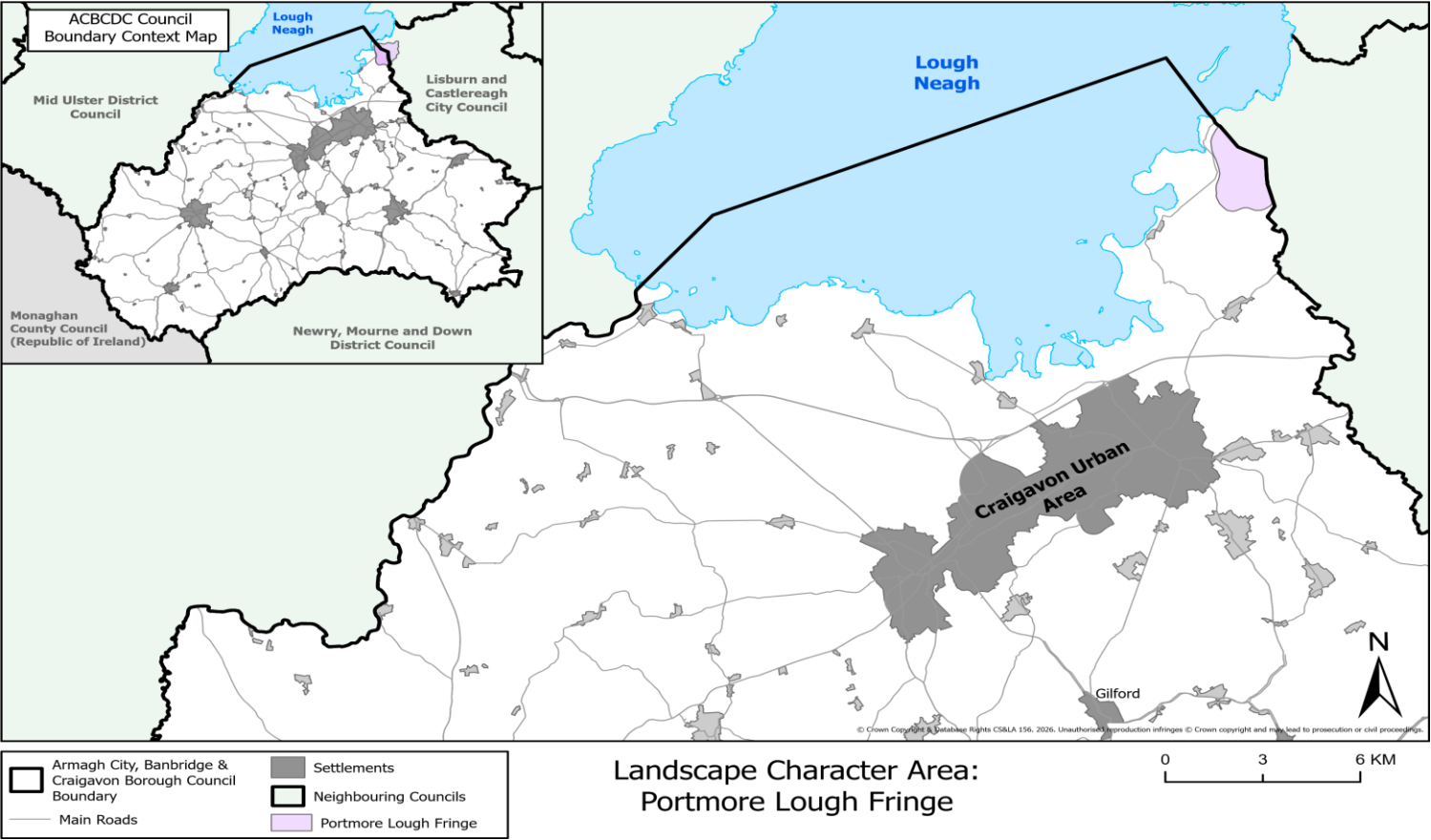
Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are:

- The shores of the lough are very sensitive, as are the ridge tops inland, with their smaller scale landscape patterns. Along the lough shore, the area's considerable ecological and historic resources and its recreational role are key constraints.
- The southern part of the area is most sensitive due to its more complex shoreline and accessibility.
- There might be some areas of lower sensitivity, especially in the flat clay farmland landscapes in the northern part of the LCA, away from the lough's edge. These are relatively large scale landscapes with limited access and visibility; the surrounding trees and shelterbelts might offer opportunities to integrate appropriately scaled wind energy development into the landscape.

Outcome of Review

This LCA is identified as sensitive to further changes to unique characteristics and is therefore recommended for additional policy recognition and protection.

LCA 63 Portmore Lough Fringe





Flat fenland landscape on the fringes of Portmore Lough.



Scattered small-holdings and small houses along narrow, straight tracks



Narrow, straight roads with mature hedgerows.

Physical Characteristics
Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough Portmore Lough is located in the northeast corner of the Borough, close to the shore of Lough Neagh. Approximately half of this LCA is located within the Borough, the remainder being in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.
Topography and Drainage The Portmore Lough Fringe is an area of pasture and fen on the low-lying flat landscape on the shores of Portmore Lough. The area is underlain by Lough Neagh Clay and becomes increasingly waterlogged towards the margins of the lough. There are numerous drainage channels and many of the straight, narrow roads are raised on embankments and bordered by ditches.
Land Cover and Field Pattern Larger grassland fields on higher drumlin slopes are predominantly improved grassland. Straight drainage ditches have aided field improvement. The larger fields on higher land are enclosed by overgrown hedgerows, fields remain progressively overgrown by regenerating scrub and fen carr on the margins of Portmore Lough. There are numerous drainage channels and many of the straight, narrow roads are raised on embankments and bordered by ditches. This geometric pattern is reflected in the farmed landscape. Waterlogged grassland, used for rough grazing, becomes less pronounced towards the scrubby fenland carr woodland on the lough margins where the land also becomes less accessible. Field pattern boundaries are geometric and regular between small and medium size and marked by either mature deciduous hedges or drainage ditches, along these ditches post and wire fences often mark boundaries. There are few views to Portmore Lough, as it is screened by dense fen carr. However the RSPB facility provides a valuable access point from which this landscape can be enjoyed. An equestrian facility interrupts this landscape but does not wholly detract from its uniqueness and tranquillity. Features of Biodiversity Interest • Significant wet woodland, a Priority Habitat, around the shores of the lough. • Wet grasslands, amongst improved pastures, are an important constituent of the wetlands along with fen and reeds • Dominated by the lough itself which forms part of a wider region providing habitats for wetland birds - inter-related habitats not only include adjacent and intermixed fens, wet grasslands and carr, but also Lough Neagh.
Designated Natural Heritage Sites International Designations: Lough Neagh & Lough Beg Ramsar and Lough Neagh & Lough Beg SPA National Designations: Portmore Lough ASSI

Portmore Lough is a eutrophic lough with extensive marginal fen and reed vegetation and shows excellent transitions into carr woodland. It is part of the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and regularly supports over 20,000 waterfowl in winter. The south-western shore, within the Borough is also an RSPB Reserve.

There are no Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) designated within this portion of the LCA.

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

This is a small LCA and only the western portion lies within the Borough, it does not contain any settlements.

The RSPB nature reserve provides a subtle interaction with this landscape through the use of wooden shelters/hides and natural pathways.

There is evidence of ribbon development between clusters of traditionally sited residential development. Many modern residential properties are large and affluent in design and many have large agricultural style sheds within their curtilage.

Built Character

The traditional settlement pattern of small houses scattered along narrow roads, and small farmsteads at the end of narrow, straight tracks is still evident however there is evidence of further ribbon development along the straight roads and some clustering of dwellings.

The infilling of land to facilitate the construction of the dwellings, many of which do not reflect the traditional design or scale of development suited to this landscape has begun to detract from the enjoyment of this landscape. Despite this level of development the area still retains its rather wild and remote character.

The more traditional location for development on higher drumlin slopes has also experienced an increase in residential development, leading to a more dense pattern of development, some of which is not in keeping with traditional scale and design.

Modern agricultural sheds, stables and a large equestrian arena are present which have had an adverse impact on the scenic quality of this local area.

Quarries: There are no quarries or landing sites located within this LCA.

Built Heritage Assets

The relatively small number of monuments reflects the small geographic area of the LCA within the Borough.

- One Scheduled monument – Crannog
- 4 Historic sites/monuments

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

Community services and facilities are available in nearby small settlements, villages and Craigavon Urban Area.

The RSPB reserve is an asset that provides access and interpretation of this landscape as well as landscape management.

Portmore Lough (from Irish *Loch an Phoirt Mhóir*, meaning 'lake of the great landing place') Bonny Portmore" is an Irish traditional folk song which laments the demise of Ireland's old oak forests, specifically the Great Oak of Portmore or the Portmore Ornament Tree, which fell in a windstorm in 1760 and was subsequently used for shipbuilding and other purposes.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

George's Island Road which leaves the Derryola Bridge Road (B156) loops over this raised area to then rejoin it again.

The RSPB nature reserve, including the viewing platform facilitates the access and appreciation of what would otherwise be a secretive, inaccessible landscape.

The national cycle network passes to the west of the LCA, along the Lough Neagh shore.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

The blend of strong hedgerows and trees, areas of wet woodland and the influence of low-lying flat and sloping drumlin topography result in a diverse, textured tranquil landscape that provides a pleasurable scenic quality that is unique.

Overall this landscape has an inspiring perception however there is the challenging intrusion from the equestrian arena and the design and scale of some residential ribbon development.

This LCA has small scale, wild character with high ecological value.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

This is a relatively isolated area characterised by partially waterlogged farmland and fen around the lough shores and improved grassland moving inland. The area of flat fenland is enclosed with some steep slopes to the west, upon which the RSPB Reserve is located and inhabits an excellent viewpoint over the Lough and surrounding land. The surrounding area is characterised by low-lying rough pasture, some of which is becoming overgrown by regenerating scrub. Straight, narrow drainage ditches surround the lough.

On the southeastern edge of this portion of this LCA there is wet woodland which consists of willow and alder and some mixed conifers. This is a relatively remote area with land considered to be in poor agricultural condition but with some drainage improvements in the form of long established and maintained linear drains. The area is very important for nature conservation evidenced by numerous national and international designations.

Along straight, narrow roads there are scattered as well as clustered single dwellings. The result of this has led to some ribbon development. This area has an inspiring scenic perception with stunning panoramic views, facilitated in no small part by the RSPB reserve.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Increase in the number of single dwellings, and the formation of some clusters of residential development
- Construction of large equestrian centre
- Introduction of more formal facilities at RSPB site, although these are not intrusive nor inappropriate to this landscape.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

Although the increase in residential properties is notable, the overall character is one of natural scenic quality, enhanced by its accessibility and environmental significance.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) has evidenced a low development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this section of the LCA.

For rural housing, development pressure has been low between 2010-2024. However, a localised area, which straddles LCA 62 and 63 evidences a high development pressure.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

The guideline from **NILCA 2000** that continues to be relevant for this portion of the LCA is:

- The restriction of further linear built development along roads will conserve their characteristic remoteness and the gradual transition to the wild fen.

Guidance from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** states that this is a small scale, low-lying LCA encircling Portmore Lough. It has many small scale landscape features, a remote and inaccessible character, and significant ecological resources.

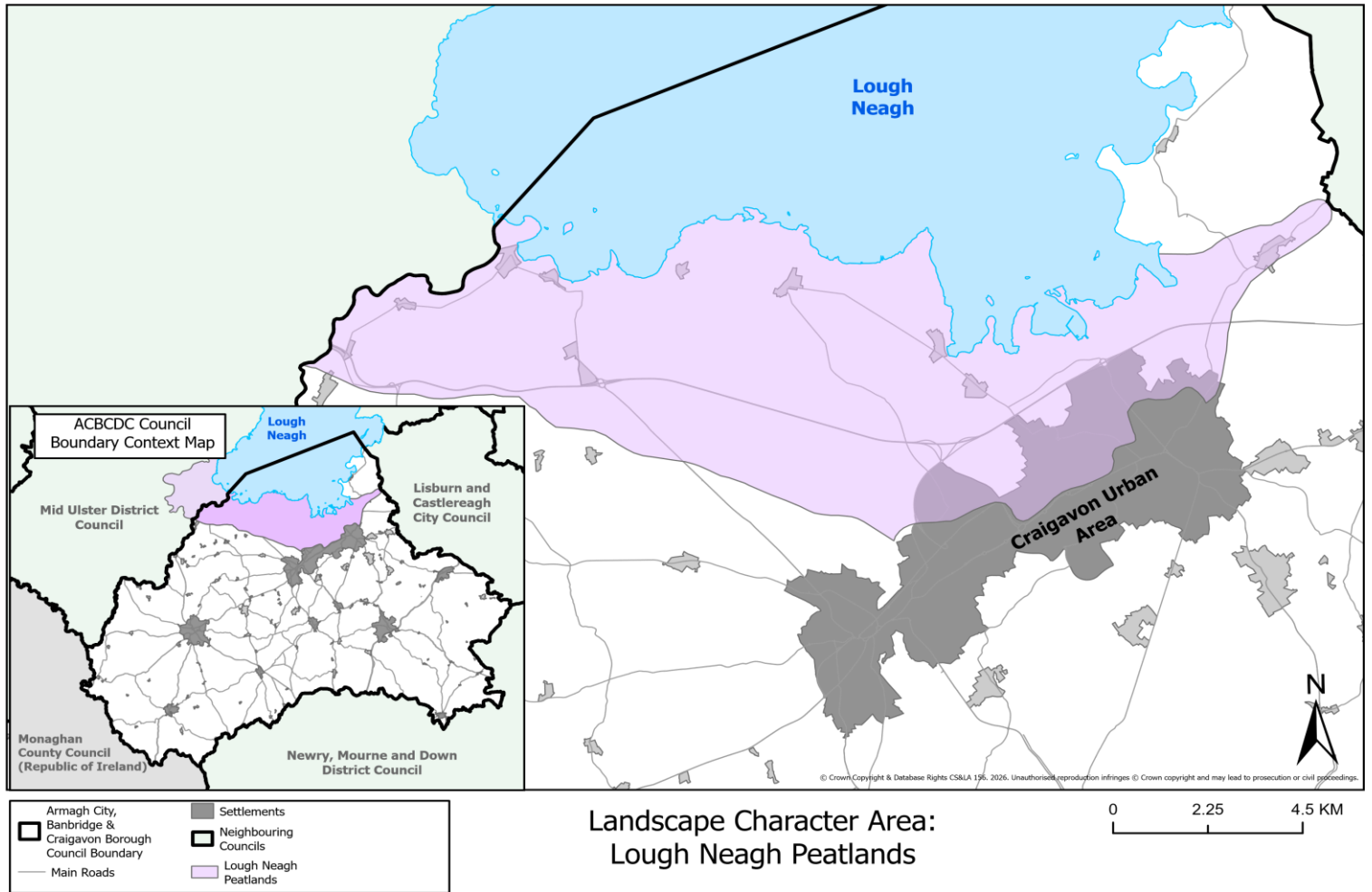
It would be highly sensitive to wind energy development which could easily overwhelm the small scale landscape patterns and potentially threaten the area's wildlife interests.

Overall Sensitivity - High

Outcome of Review

This LCA is identified as sensitive to further changes to unique characteristics and is therefore recommended for additional protection by an additional planning policy.

LCA 64 Lough Neagh Peatlands





High quality water edge landscape and wildlife habitats



Low-lying marshy landscape



Many scattered smallholdings, villages and new residential areas on higher ground linked by embanked roads

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character within the Borough

The majority of the Lough Neagh Peatlands LCA lies within the Borough, the remainder extending westwards into Mid Ulster DC. The LCA extends southwards towards Portadown and Lurgan and eastwards towards Aghalee (LCCC) along the route of the Lagan Canal. The M1 Motorway traverses east west across this LCA.

In the Craigavon Area Plan, the area along the lough shore, in the northern portion of this LCA is designated as a CPA in recognition of its landscape value.

NILCA 2000 identified the wetland and shoreline landscapes on the edge of Lough Neagh as being extremely sensitive and highly valued for their scenic quality and wildlife interest. They formed part of the 'Lough Neagh Shores Area of Scenic Quality'

Topography and Drainage

Lough Neagh is the largest freshwater body in Britain and Ireland. It is surrounded by relatively flat, low lying land forming the basin of the Lough. The large scale landform of the basin is overlain by medium scale farmland. The Lough Neagh Basin includes the smaller water bodies of Lough Beg and Portmore Lough, and the settled area of Portadown, Craigavon and Lurgan.

On the southern shores of Lough Neagh, much of the area has been previously worked for peat and has been extensively modified through extraction; there are distinct sharp changes of level marking areas where peat extraction has taken place. There are areas of regenerating birch and willow scrub and farmland, wherever drainage permits. The landscape is strongly influenced by the traditional road pattern, which mirrors that of the peat workings - a pronounced backbone down the Lough Gullion peninsular with laterals running off at right angles.

The river Bann and the river Blackwater wind through this landscape and flow northwards into Lough Neagh.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

Along the lough shore, field pattern is medium-large and irregular, with wet grasslands and woodland providing a mosaic of habitats for birds and other wildlife. Further from the shore, field pattern becomes irregular with medium sized fields and boundaries marked with mature, thick hedgerows. Post and wire fencing is also quite common, particularly closer to the shore.

There are areas of improved grassland and rough grazing with extensive drainage in a transitional landscape moving away from the Lough Neagh shore towards more improved agricultural land. There is evidence of some intensification and adoption of more modern techniques with fields of improved grassland and the subdivision of some fields with temporary electric fencing. However there remains some areas of less intensive farming with smaller holdings and a greater occurrence of acidic grasslands which are higher in biodiversity value.

The mix of fields, hedgerows, natural habitats and wet woodland create a varied and colourful patchwork within this landscape, with clusters of development, located on drumlin tops, linked with embanked roads.

Field and road patterns mirror the old traditional working stages of a peat bog and have laterals, or ramparts running off at right angles.

Fishing boats and a few small jetties are present along the shoreline.

Key Elements of Biodiversity Interest

- woodland cover is low, most of which is semi-natural and developed on cut-over lowland bog and includes much wet woodland
- almost all grassland cover is improved pasture, generally of low biodiversity .
- important areas of wet grassland, particularly along the shore of the Lough and mouths of major rivers
- Lough Neagh of national and international importance for the diversity of wetland birds and of national importance for pollan (one of two UK sites)

Natural Heritage sites:

International designations: Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar
Lough Neagh & Lough Beg SPA.

National designations: Lough Neagh ASSI
Peatlands Park ASSI
Derryvore ASSI
Lough Gullion ASSI
Mullenakill & Annagarraiff NNR
Oxford Island NNR.
Lough Neagh Islands NR

The Lough Neagh area is well recognized for its valuable biodiversity. Over forty rare or local vascular plants have been recorded for the site since 1970, the most notable are eight-stemmed waterwort, marsh pea, Irish lady's tresses orchid, alder buckthorn, narrow small-reed and holy grass. All these plants are protected under the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985.

The Lough and its margin are also home to a large number of rare or local invertebrates, including two aquatic and two terrestrial molluscs, a freshwater shrimp (*Mysis relicta*), eight beetles, five hoverflies, seven moths and two butterflies. Of the rare beetles recorded two, *Stenus palposus* and *Dyschirus obscurus*, have their only known Irish location around the Lough. The Lough also supports twelve species of dragonfly. Three notable fish also occur in the Lough, the river Lamprey and the Pollan; both Irish Red Data Species, and the eel, which is present in large numbers and commercially fished.

Internationally important numbers of waterfowl regularly winter on the Lough, with the peak number averaging over 66,800 birds since 1988. Individually, species which qualify as internationally important are whooper swans, pochard, tufted duck, scaup and goldeneye. Species which qualify as nationally important are great crested grebe, cormorant, mute swan, Bewick's swan, shelduck, wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard and coot.

In the summer the Lough supports internationally important numbers of breeding black-headed gulls and has the largest concentration of great crested grebe in Ireland. Nationally important numbers of breeding redshank, snipe, common tern, tufted duck, pochard, shoveler and gadwall are found (the last three being Irish Red Data Species).

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs):

Craigavon Lake North
Derryhubbert/Derrydry
Derrykeeran

Derryvane North
Derryvane South
Derryvore
Foymore

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

In some areas of this LCA there are ribbons of single dwellings along road frontages and in particular along ramparts. The majority of dwellings that have been constructed in recent times have often very little appropriate integration or sympathetic design for the local landscape. Many new dwellings have a suburban style in terms of design, massing, materials and scale. The number and scale of residential development is putting a very sensitive landscape under extreme pressure and in many instances, this pressure has reached a critical point in terms of visual amenity and rural character. Moving towards the Lough Shore environs, this negative influence decreases due to the more dominant wild and tranquil characteristics of the Lough.

There are notable groups of traditional, some 2 storey dwellings on top of drumlin 'islands' of which the scale, design and materials contribute to traditional settling pattern and rural character.

In addition to the large Craigavon Urban Area and M1 motorway, other settlements within this LCA are: Maghery, Milltown, Charlestown, The Birches, Derrytrasna, Derryadd, all of which are located on relatively elevated land within this Lough Neagh basin.

Built Character

Away from the lough shore the level and type of development is significant in some areas, this is due to proximity to main transport links and large urban centers and associated facilities and services.

In a number of areas throughout the LCA, such as near Aghagallon, the Ramparts, along Farlough Road and Dungannon Road, there is a considerable number of rural dwellings of non-rural design, materials and scale which has begun to influence scenic perception, contrasting sharply with the wildness and naturalness associated with the Lough.

The infill of sites required to facilitate development exacerbates the intrusive, visual impact if these dwellings by providing a raised base, set above the natural ground level upon which these large dwellings are placed.

Perhaps due to the proximity to the M1 there are a number of large businesses within the rural area which are also impacting on scenic perception, these include a garden centre/nursery, a large compost processing facility with storage compounds, filling stations, leisure facilities and retail premises. There has also been a number of wind turbines erected, albeit not within close vicinity of the Lough shore.

Another significant feature is the sand landing point, infrastructure and associated buildings on the Ardmore Road, on the Lough shore. Sand extraction in Lough Neagh is a long established business and activity at this location that has perhaps influenced the growth of residential development in the vicinity. This business forms part of the historical pattern of human activity associated with the Lough. Although it has limited scenic value, it contributes to the understanding of how the landscape has been used and inhabited over time.

Quarries: Emerson's Sand Quay (Landing Site)

Built Heritage Assets

A wealth and pattern of historic features reflects the long history and interaction local populations have had with this landscape and its natural constraints.

- 42 Historic Monuments, 6 of which are scheduled and include the Lagan Canal, a motte and tower at Coney Island and a Tower and enclosure: the O'Connor Stronghold at Derrywarragh Island.
- 27 Listed Buildings
- 3 HPGD, 2 of which are supplementary sites
- 76 Industrial Heritage site, many associated with the railway and
- 1 AAP at The Birches

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

A variety of recreational activities are available on the Lough and along the lough shore such as watersports, birdwatching and boat trips and walks that highlight many areas of historic and cultural interest.

Commercial fishing of eels, fresh-water herring and dollaghan (brown trout) takes place in the Lough. Eel originating from Lough Neagh has Protected Geographical Status in the EU. The lough bed is also dredged for sand.

Close proximity to the large Craigavon Urban Area, M1 and rural businesses provide economic and social assets as well as a high level of services and transport links.

This landscape has been an inspiration to many poets, artists and writers that have works known and celebrated throughout the world, Seamus Heaney and Charles Lamb to name only two.

There are a number of stories and legends about the lough and how it came to be but one such story is that of Lí Ban. Lí Ban was the daughter of Eochaidh, King of Ulster. She and her pet dog were the only ones to survive when Eochaidh's palace and lands were flooded, drowning all who lived there and forming the great body of water we know today as Lough Neagh. For a year she lived alone in a bower under the lough with only her dog for company. Then, in her loneliness, she prayed to the goddess Danu asking to be turned into a salmon so she might swim with the fish of the sea for company. Danu only half granted her wish. The little dog became an otter, and Lí Ban was turned into a mermaid.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

The M1 cuts a swathe through this LCA which is particularly at odds with the geometric road network, including ramparts close to the lough shore. In addition to this there is a large portion of the Craigavon Urban Area and associated road network in this LCA.

There are a number of locations and activities that provide access to this landscape, these include:

- Maghera Country Park
- Blackwater canoe trail.

- Loughshore trail provides access for cyclists.
- Oxford Island, Kinnegoe Marina provide boat trips
- Peatlands Country Park
- Lagan canal towpath at Aghagallon.
- Commercial fishing of eels, fresh-water herring and dollaghan (brown trout) takes place in the Lough. Eel originating from Lough Neagh has Protected Geographical Status in the EU. The lough bed is also dredged for sand. Lough Neagh is also an important source of fresh water for Belfast.
- The National cycle Network passes through the west of this LCA and events such as the Lap of the Lough have raised the profile and thereby the accessibility of this location.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

The perception varies a great deal within this transitional LCA. Along the lough shore there is a wild, open, calming influence with views across the wide expanse of the lough. This perception of an untamed landscape is increased by the sense of being close to nature in the wetland habitats found along the shoreline. This perception and the unified textures and colours combine to provide a very scenic and special landscape that is inspiring and uplifting. The wealth of cultural references from poets, artists, writers and story-tellers is testimony to the value and special qualities this landscape holds for local residents and visitors.

Further away from the Lough shore many areas have seen a lot of development of single dwellings, many of which are of an inappropriate scale or design. The number of rural businesses as a result of good transport links is adding to the level of development and thereby impacting on the scenic value of this LCA. The flat topography, which does not have the capacity to integrate large dwellings is beneficial in that there are no views from the lough and its shore, therefore the impact of these areas of development is not evident at the lough shore.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

This landscape character area is a contrasting mix of gentle, scenic areas that are rich in biodiversity and areas that have experienced a relatively large amount of residential and economic development, which in many instances is not of appropriate scale or design to this unique landscape. The infilling of land to accommodate residential development further enhances the incongruent nature of this development.

The influence of modern development has degraded the rural character in some locations, through intensive ribbon and clustering of residential properties and the use of non-traditional materials and construction techniques. These dwellings represent a notable element in this landscape and at times can overwhelm traditional settling patterns

The agricultural landscape is one of improved –semi improved grasslands mixed with acidic grassland and rough grazing. Where they remain, hedgerow boundaries are strong and well

maintained, however there is a move towards more post and wire fencing replacing hedgerow boundaries at some locations.

Towards the lough shore the sensitivity of this landscape increases to a significant level. Pockets of wet woodland which are of immense biodiversity value add to this exceptional scenic landscape and on numerous occasions serve to screen and soften incongruent residential properties.

Commercial and industrial activity to the western side of this LCA and along roads running close to the M1 and into the Craigavon Urban Area is very conspicuous. In some areas, the development of commercial and industrial activities, recreational facilities, wind turbines, and transport links has led to a landscape that is perceived as increasingly suburban.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Loss of pockets natural vegetation, in particular wet woodland to inappropriate single rural housing, often in clusters or in ribbon development along straight roads has had an impact on the rural character of this landscape character area.
- Infilling and raising of ground levels and the use of piling for foundations has enabled the construction of dwellings on sites which otherwise would not be possible, in some places this overwhelms traditional settlement pattern and real character.
- The influence of non-traditional dwellings overwhelms traditional settlement pattern.
- Large industrial style garages or sheds are often included within domestic curtilages.
- Large commercial businesses, such as a plant nursery and composting facility, haulage and leisure facilities have also degraded the scenic quality of this landscape.
- Large wind turbines, however, it is important to note that these are not located along the more sensitive areas, such as close to the lough shore.

Overall impact on Landscape Character

- The wider LCA has suffered a great deal from a high level of development. The high number of large, suburban style housing along the spine of ramparts just south of the lough has eroded much of the rural and secluded characteristics that this landscape provides.
- A large number of commercial enterprises, the scale of which is out of place with the topography and nature of this landscape.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) has provided evidence of low development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this section of the Borough. The few turbines within this area are situated close to or within the urban areas, particularly the Craigavon Urban Area.

For rural housing, development pressure across this LCA has been mixed. Between 2010 and 2024, there have been a few areas of high development pressure, alongside several areas experiencing medium pressure.

In terms of landscape character the scale, design and materials of housing are the priority elements that threaten local landscape character by reflecting housing that would be more common in an urban setting.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this LCA are:

- The continued development of single houses on drumlins is likely to be detrimental to landscape character and the existing settlement pattern should be conserved.
- The architectural style and intensity of development is important in this area of dispersed rural character. Simple architectural forms, using materials with subtle colours which will age with time are most appropriate; developments should be small.
- The visual impact of new development and its associated infrastructure should be considered in relation to long views from higher land to the south.
- Lough Neagh has high scenic quality and there is scope for more view points and footpaths to take advantage of this landscape asset.

Changes in settlement pattern are threatening many aspects of landscape character, such as cultural and historic linkages and the distinctions between marsh and drumlin topography. The size, style and design of housing is further introducing a generic rural housing element that is not complementary to this particular landscape.

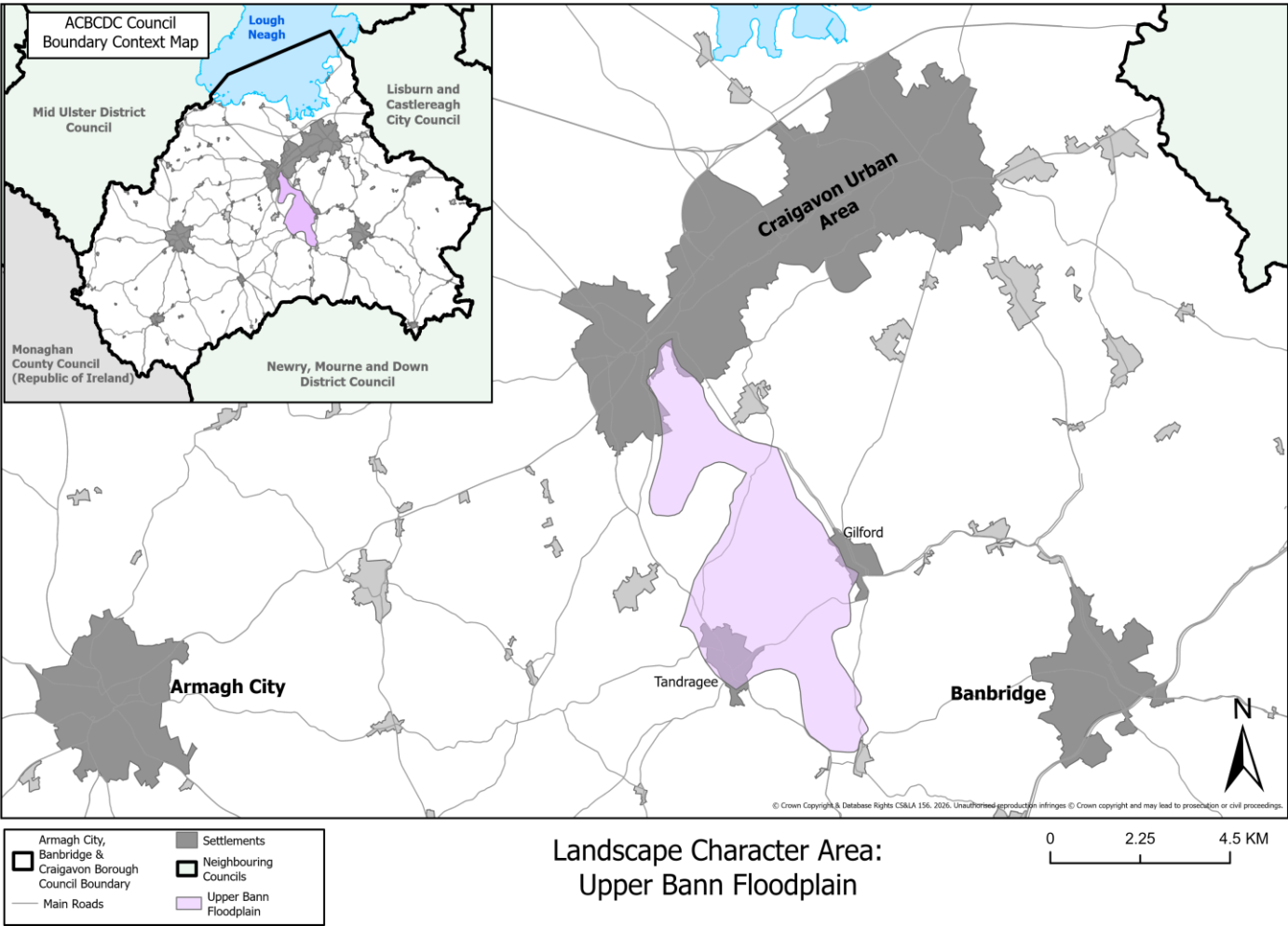
Guidance from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** states :
Inappropriate turbine development in this LCA could easily detract from the area's landscape character and values. The principal area that best might accommodate some appropriately scaled form of wind energy development is the land south of the M1 on the northern fringes of Lurgan and Craigavon.

Care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on highly sensitive floodplain sites and features such as church spires. The lough shore should be respected. Care should be taken to avoid any significant impacts on views to or from the lough shore. Landscape interests associated with natural and cultural heritage features and recreational resources should be respected.

Outcome of Review

While the landscape remains valued and distinctive, the evidence shows it has been subject to considerable change and relative development pressure, resulting in increased vulnerability to further change, particularly in relation to environmental integrity, scenic quality, and rural perception. It is therefore considered of high sensitivity and worthy of an additional level of protection in terms of development.

LCA 65 Upper Bann Floodplain





Newry Canal Towpath



Physical Characteristics
Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough The Upper Bann Floodplain LCA stretches from Portadown, southwards along the River Bann and Newry Canal, reaching into Tandragee and towards Gilford and concluding at Scarva Lough. The entire LCA lies within the Borough and does not share a boundary with any other local government district.
Topography, and Drainage The Upper Bann Floodplain LCA follows the course of the Upper Bann between Scarva and Portadown. The area includes the extensive areas of moss on the river floodplain, in particular, Brackagh Bog. The railway line follows the course of the river between Scarva and Portadown. The landscape consists of well defined, broad river terraces containing large pastures above Dynes Bridge and extensive areas of moss. The River Bann has been constrained by flood embankments (often 6m high) and many smaller banks and straight drainage ditches run laterally towards the river across the adjacent pastures.
Land Cover and Field Pattern The landscape is defined by the river terraces and floodplain of the River Bann, featuring extensive flat pastures and moss lands interspersed with scattered, irregular tree cover. While the area offers long, open views along the river corridor, the river itself often appears remote and visually subdued. To the south, steep embankments contain the river valley, adding a sense of enclosure to an otherwise expansive and low-lying landscape. Features of biodiversity interest • Floodplain of the Upper Bann with adjacent low hills • Predominantly improved pastures but of varying quality with some containing abundant rushes • Large areas of fen, bog and damp grassland with rare species of flora and fauna • Woodland relatively scarce and found as wet woodland in fens and in estates
Natural Heritage Sites Brackagh Bog ASSI and Nature Reserve is located just south of Portadown. Pockets of priority habitat include peatland and woodland. Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest (SLNCIs) designated in the Craigavon Area Plan is: • Park Bog
Landscape Features
Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings The Upper Bann Floodplain LCA stretches from Portadown and extends southwards to include a large portion of Tandragee and a small portion of Gilford to the east.

Within the rural area, ribbon development and small clusters of housing have emerged in several locations. Along many roads small groups of dwellings with a mix of recently constructed and well-established housing are not overly intrusive and blend well with the strong built character of this LCA. On the outskirts of Tandragee, linear development resulting from urban sprawl includes numerous dwellings of varied design, style, and finish. While some traditional cottages and farmsteads remain, more recent constructions with modern massing detract from the rural character.

On the lower river terrace slopes, several incongruent dwellings are partly screened by the topography, however there are examples that demonstrate good integration using natural planting, while others shows poor integration with minimal screening. Tree planting to screen dwellings is evident however they appear incongruent due to the use of quick growing, non-native species.

Built Character

The landscape presents a complex mix of rural and urban features, with the railway line, canal infrastructure and bridges, that have largely settled into their surroundings, contributing positively to the overall unique characteristics of this LCA. However, visual clutter is introduced by pylons, electricity poles, and telecommunication masts that criss-cross the area. Rural dwellings vary in style, scale, and design, with a mix of clustering but predominantly linear development along road lines. Some dwellings are relatively well screened, particularly those along the river terrace.

Agricultural buildings also reflect a more modernising rural character. The presence of a quarry and a turbine in the distance, each located outside of this LCA adds to the visual clutter.

Quarries

No quarries within this LCA

Built Heritage Assets

The recorded built heritage interest in the Upper Bann Floodplain LCA include:

- Nearly 20 historic sites and monuments
- Over 10 scheduled monuments such as Cloghmore Standing Stone and numerous Pill Boxes
- 3 Historic Parks, Garden and Demesne
- Over 60 Industrial heritage sites, primarily associated with the Newry Canal
- Over 15 defence heritage sites
- Approximately 30 Listed Buildings/Structures including Money Penny's Lock and the Parish Pump at Stramore Road.

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

In addition to the community assets associated with the settlement of Portadown this area also enjoys the benefits from a rail line, historic canal and towpath.

The Newry Canal was built to link the Tyrone coalfields (via Lough Neagh and the River Bann) to the Irish Sea at Carlingford Lough near Newry. Opened in 1742, it was the first summit level canal

to be built in the British Isles. Some restoration has taken place, and the canal has become a haven for wildlife.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

The railway line and canal run northwest to southeast throughout the LCA. Class A roads include the A51 between Gilford and Tandragee and the Mullahead Road.

The river Bann, tributaries of the Cushier river and the Newry Canal provide a variety of water-based recreation activities. A small portion of the Ulster Way is located near Tandragee and along the canal towpath there is a section of the Nation Cycle Network.

Located just south of Portadown, the Brackagh Bog NR and ASSI offers the opportunity to experience and learn about peat land management and historic uses of peat.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

The River Bann floodplain is the area's most scenic landscape feature, offering pleasing views, recreational value, and a sense of open tranquillity. While vistas are generally limited by the low-lying, corridor-like nature of the land, the wetlands contribute to a calm and inspirational atmosphere. The landscape presents a mixed aesthetic, where natural elements like grasslands, mature hedgerows, and cultural features such as the railway and canal contrast with modern intrusions from single dwellings, commercial developments, and energy infrastructure. Overall, the area maintains a pleasant and interesting character, shaped by the floodplain and the gently rolling land towards Gilford.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The Upper Bann Floodplain LCA is predominantly low-lying and, as its name suggests, performs a vital role in accommodating, regulating and containing flood waters associated with the River Bann and surrounding catchment area.

Some large-scale residential and industrial agricultural development has in some instances significantly compromised its character. Field patterns range from expansive open fields on the floodplain to more enclosed terraces defined by mature hedgerows, although modern fencing and drainage interventions have altered some areas. Increasing instances of small-scale rural dwelling development along roads, combined with visual clutter from pylons, masts, and poles, further influence the landscape. The Belfast–Dublin railway line runs north south through the LCA but remains relatively unobtrusive.

Despite these pressures, the floodplain retains a tranquil and distinctive character, shaped by the River Bann, the historic canal, and the railway. Views are generally contained by the topography but extend towards the Craigavon Plateau and Scarva Church in the distance. In the vicinity of Newry, gently sloping grasslands and embankments contribute to scenic quality, although modern

single rural dwellings, industrial units, and scattered agricultural buildings detract from the overall visual integrity.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Growth in number of larger scale, designed and style of residential properties and the associated large curtilages.
- Linear sprawl and clustering of modern single dwellings-along rural roads and junctions.
- Modern agricultural sheds contribute to a greater industrial perception rather than agricultural.
- Electricity infrastructure in the central area adds visual clutter.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) has provided evidence of low development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in the northern two thirds of this LCA, with the remaining third experiencing medium development pressure.

The pressure analysis also indicates that there are many localised areas within the LCA that have experienced medium – high development pressure for rural housing between 2010-2024. However, in terms of landscape character the scale, design and materials of housing are the priority elements that threaten local landscape character by reflecting housing types that would be more common in an urban setting.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- The remote character of the river valley may be conserved by restricting major access proposals and the careful siting and design of new infrastructure. New built development to the west of the road would restrict and detract from river views and would adversely affect the distinctive landscape character.

Additional guidelines may include:

- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular rural influences.
- Appropriate native tree and hedgerow planting should be encouraged, where appropriate.

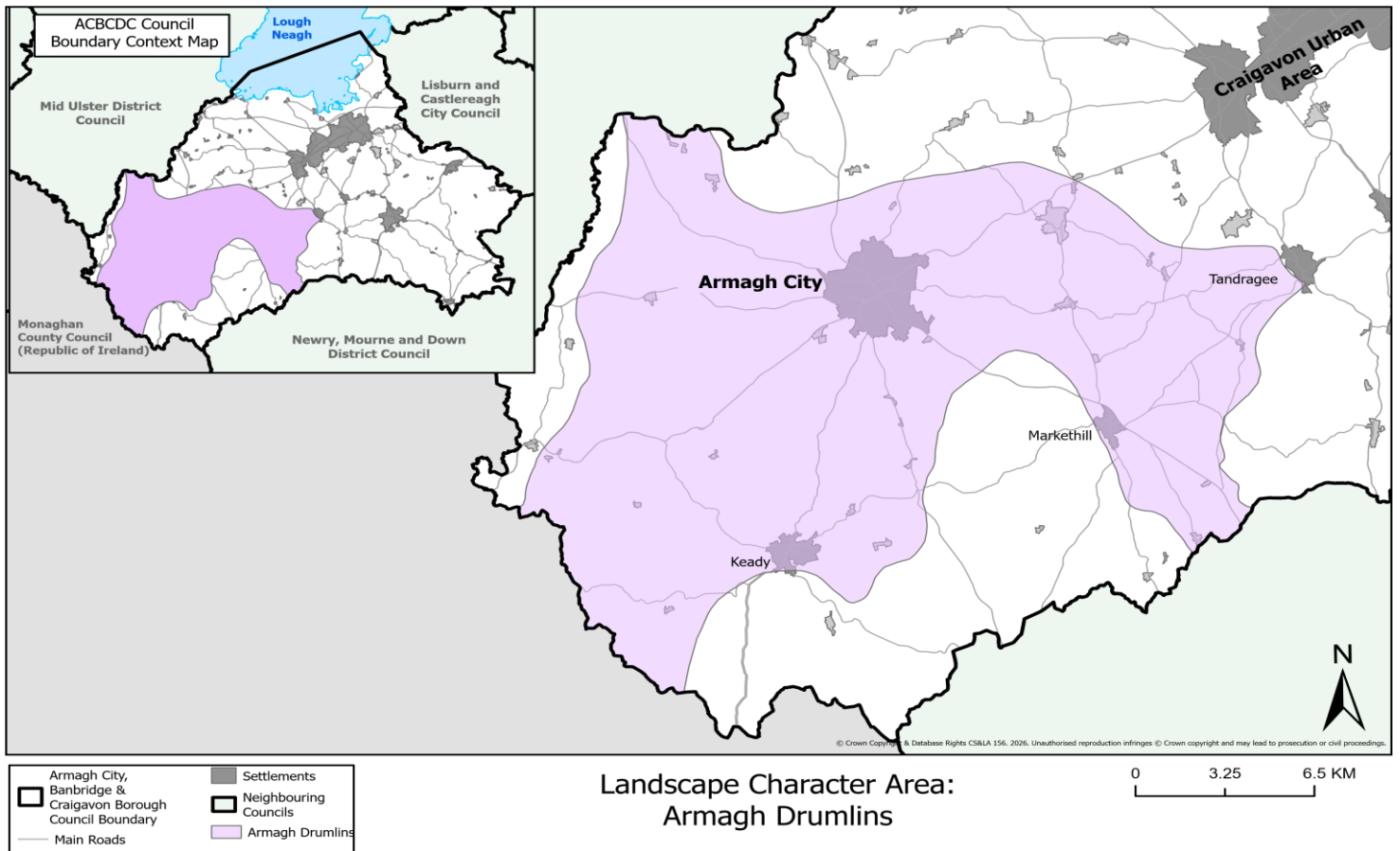
Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that

- This LCA has an open character of river valley and floodplains in which it is difficult to accommodate wind energy development.
- The edges of the LCA would be the most likely areas for some form of turbine development. It is recommended that any turbine development be associated with and reflects the scale of groups of buildings and trees.
- Care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on the highly sensitive key landscape and visual characteristics and values.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Upper Bann Floodplain LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 66 Armagh Drumlins





Extensive area of rolling drumlins



Numerous scattered dwellings and farms connected by network of winding, hedge-lined roads.



Wooded historic estate and park landscapes

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The entire landscape character area of the Armagh Drumlins lies within the Borough. It is a large area, stretching from the River Blackwater at Milltown southwards towards Derrynoose and the boundary with the Republic of Ireland, including Keady. Stretching eastwards the LCA includes the settlements of Armagh, Hamiltonsbawn, Markethill and Richhill.

Topography and Drainage

The Armagh Drumlins cover an extensive area of rolling north - south orientated drumlins. They are overlooked by the Carrigatuke Hills to the south and fall towards the Loughgall Orchard Belt and fringes of Lough Neagh to the north. The area is drained by numerous small winding streams, frequently tributaries of the Callan River. Occasional loughs and sedgy mosses occupy the hollows between drumlins. The landform becomes progressively lower and the drumlins more pronounced to the north. Land use is dominated by improved pastures, which are separated by overgrown hedgerows and tree belts. Mature hedgerow ash trees are common.

Land cover and Field Pattern

Agricultural land is mostly improved grassland managed by modern agricultural techniques and machinery, resulting in a low biodiversity value. There remains some rough grazing and wet grassland in lower ground, between drumlin hills which provide some biodiversity interest. Fields are generally medium sized and spread in regular pattern. There are also a number of historic wooded and estate parklands scattered throughout the LCA.

Farms are a mix of medium to large scale with a growing frequency of more modern agricultural buildings.

There are well managed mixed species hedgerows which are thick and provide a secluded character in parts of this LCA. Field pattern boundaries are mixed between medium and large and are an irregular pattern. Some mixed shelter belts around housing.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Pockets of woodland, almost all is broadleaved or mixed and most are associated with present or former estates
- Almost all estate woodlands are 'long-established', i.e. present by 1830s and several contain semi-natural elements
- Grassland covers the vast majority of this LCA of which improved pastures of generally low biodiversity predominate.
- Patches of wet grassland occur in inter-drumlin hollows and alongside small streams; these can be important for wetland birds especially in association with adjacent fen
- Numerous small fens, which form part of the belt across Down and Armagh; the remaining fens of these counties, as well as those in Fermanagh, are a significant proportion of the UK total; fens in this LCA should be seen as not only of local importance for biodiversity, but also as of national importance
- Many lakes affected by nutrient enrichment, but examples of rare types including marl lakes

Designated Natural Heritage Sites:

ASSI Designations are: Benburb-Milltown ASSI, Annacramph Meadows ASSI, Kiltubbrid Loughs ASSI, Drumarg ASSI, Moyrourkan Lough, Crossbane Lough and Drumcarn.

Small areas of Priority habitat such as peatland, woodland and fen. Numerous small fens, part of the belt across Down and Armagh; these along with those in Fermanagh, are a significant proportion of the UK total; fens in this LCA should be seen as not only of local importance for biodiversity, but also as of national importance (NILCA 2000).

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs):

- Annacramph Lane and Carganamuck Quarry
- Benburb/Milltown
- Carryhugh Fen
- Castle Dillon Lough
- Clare Glen Woodland
- Drumarg Cliff and Karst
- Gosford Forest Park
- Loughnashade
- Marlocoo
- Milford Cutting
- Milltown Benburb
- Mowillin South
- Mowillin South West
- Navan Fort

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings:-

Settlements include: Armagh, Richhill, Hamiltownsbawn, Markethill, Mountnorris, Keady, Derrynoose, Tassagh, Milford, Killylea, Milltown/Benburb, Milltown (Ahory) Ahory, Clare, Loughgilly, Tullygoonigan, Salters Grange, Artasooly, Carrickaness, Madden, Drumhillery, Lisnadill, Ballymacnab

In many areas, in particular along major roads there is evidence of notable linear development of single rural houses, many of which are of non-vernacular design or scale and present a suburban, incongruent element in many areas. Away from these pockets of residential development dwellings are less numerous however the incongruent scale, design and curtilages of many new dwellings is not in-keeping with traditional settlement design.

Built Character

There is a large mix of development within this LCA. Wind turbines are scattered throughout and have a significant visual impact in this rolling landscape. Rural economic enterprises also appear along major routes.

Along many roads there are areas of concentrated linear development of single dwellings with large curtilage areas and of very modern, more complex designs and scale. Stone cladding of sandstone variant is a common design feature and does not reflect traditional materials. The combination of house design, entrance walls & gates and gardens creates a very suburban character and perception.

In addition to linear development large incongruous dwellings have been introduced around farms and on agricultural land, not associated with existing farm buildings.

Large farms and groups of farm buildings and the introduction of industrial style sheds and buildings are also introducing an element of change in the built character of this LCA.

Quarries:

The following quarries (5) are located within this LCA:

- Annacramph Quarry;
- Achesons Tynan Quarry;
- King Bros Quarry Ltd;
- Leer Quarries Ltd;
- Outlack Quarry

Built Heritage Assets

Armagh Drumlins has a notable wealth of historical sites and places of interest which reflects the long settlement history and human connection to this landscape. The recorded built heritage interest includes:

- Navan Fort ASAI and candidate UNESCO site.
- Over 400 Historic sites/monuments, of which...
- 52 are Scheduled and include sites such as Devlin's Fort, Gordan's Fort, a Megalithic Tomb at Drumacranver and a rath and artillery fort at Mountnorris.
- Over 400 Listed Buildings/Structures
- 13 HPGD, including The Palace, Armagh, Gosford Castle and Benburb Manor House
- Over 350 Industrial Heritage sites, many of which are linked with the disused rail links.
- 3 Defense Heritage sites

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

There is a long history of settlements within this LCA and as such there are many cultural and community assets within its many settlements, these include:

- Navan Fort one of Ireland's most famous and important archaeological sites, the legendary Emain Macha. Legends say that Macha, the ancient goddess of war and fertility, scored the earth with her brooch pin and traced the famous outline of this sacred stronghold of the hero Cu Chulainn, home of the famous Red Branch Knights and Ulster Cycle of tales.
- Ecclesiastical Centre of Ireland – Armagh is home to two Primate of all Ireland (RCC and COI) and has been home to many archbishops of Armagh. St. Patrick is said to have started the church in Armagh and the two cathedrals named after him.
- Armagh has some of the most important groupings of Georgian architecture in Northern Ireland. Armagh Observatory and Planetarium are key landmarks.

- Armagh city is associated with traditional music, and is home to the well-known Armagh Pipers Club music school.
- The Old Callan Bridge, on the outskirts of Armagh, is depicted in one of the best-known paintings by the Belfast-born artist John Luke. Painted in 1945, it depicts the old bridge over the River Callan with St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral seen in the background. The bridge remains, and with other stone bridges is a characteristic feature of the landscape.
- The village of Keady was an important centre in the flourishing linen trade in the mid 18th century when the use of waterpower led to the growth of great linen mills and factories. The Keady Monument was erected by the local people to honor William Kirk, who through his mills at Keady and Darkley, provided so much economic prosperity in the area.
- At Markethill a livestock market is held here three times a week and each summer the world's largest Lambeg drumming contest takes place in the village.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- This is a large area with a good road network radiating from Armagh city in all directions.
- The Ulster way and the National Cycle Network cross the LCA from Tandragee, through Markethill to Armagh and beyond to the Blackwater Valley.
- Public open space, footpaths and recreation areas are available in many of the settlements.
- The wealth of historic monuments and interpretative information adds to the accessibility and enjoyment of this landscape.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Overall this landscape is in good condition with a pleasant perception and scenic quality. Views within the LCA are framed or channelled between rolling drumlins with some instances of long distance views towards Armagh City and the Carrigatuke Hills from drumlin tops.

Within this LCA there is a mixed perception and scenic experience due to its size, the influence of the numerous settlements, the wealth of historic content, the influence of Armagh City and its natural features. There is a contrast in scenic perception between areas such as the north west where the influence of the Blackwater River and historic connections as well as good tree and hedgerow management provide a very pleasant and tranquil scenic experience and area close to the major roads which have experience a greater deal of domestic and economic development and subsequent loss of rurality.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

There are sensitive areas with this landscape such as the settings of the numerous important archaeological sites. Many of which are concentrated to the south and west of Armagh and include Navan Fort. Local skylines and drumlin summits can also be particularly sensitive,

especially where these include the location of ancient raths. Shared topographical features such as the river Blackwater in the north west corner of this LCA and the consequent influence of this riparian landscape on the surrounding settlements and countryside also make this section of the LCA sensitive to change

Within this LCA agricultural land is primarily improved grassland with small areas of rough grazing managed through modern techniques. This LCA also exhibits many medium to large scale fields which provide an irregular pattern and are defined by bushy, mature hedgerow and tree boundaries. There are a number of historic parklands within this LCA e.g. Gosford Castle and Castle Dillon, which helps to reinforce the attractive scenic perception of this area.

There is evidence of a degradation in the pleasant scenic quality through the growth in scattered and linear clusters of large residential properties, especially when sited on drumlin summits and along major transport routes.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- The profusion of large scale, modern and complex designed and finished dwellings and curtilages has degraded the aesthetics of many areas within this LCA.
- Incidences of linear development of primarily residential properties but also small-medium businesses.
- The number of large wind turbines is notable, especially in the east / south of the LCA.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The changes in landscape condition have had a minor impact on the overall landscape characteristics of the Armagh Drumlins, as set out in NILCA 2000. In relation to the cultural, perceived and intangible aspects of landscape character some changes such as the often non-rural design and scale of dwellings and the move towards larger, industrial style agricultural buildings is beginning to erode at local characteristics and becoming uniform throughout the rural area.

The introduction and notable number of wind turbines scattered throughout the LCA are influencing scenic quality, whether this is in a negative or positive way is a subjective decision, however they do signal a shift in landscape character as a consequence of their unique, modern and bold scale and design.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) has provided evidence of medium – high development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in some sections of this LCA. Pressure for wind turbine development can be seen to the east and south of Armagh City.

For rural housing, development pressure has been low-medium between 2010-2024. Within such a large LCA, the areas that have experienced medium to high pressure are between Richhill and Hamiltonsbawn and some medium pressure between Keady and Armagh.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- New development can be integrated into the landscape if it is sited on the mid-slopes of drumlins, or close to the break of slope.
- Existing hedgerows should be retained or replaced in and around building sites to maintain a continuous landscape pattern and help integrate the edges of new development into the landscape.
- Scattered development in the countryside can be accommodated if located sympathetically between trees and hills
- There are some opportunities for the restoration and reuse of traditional older buildings.

Additional guidelines should include

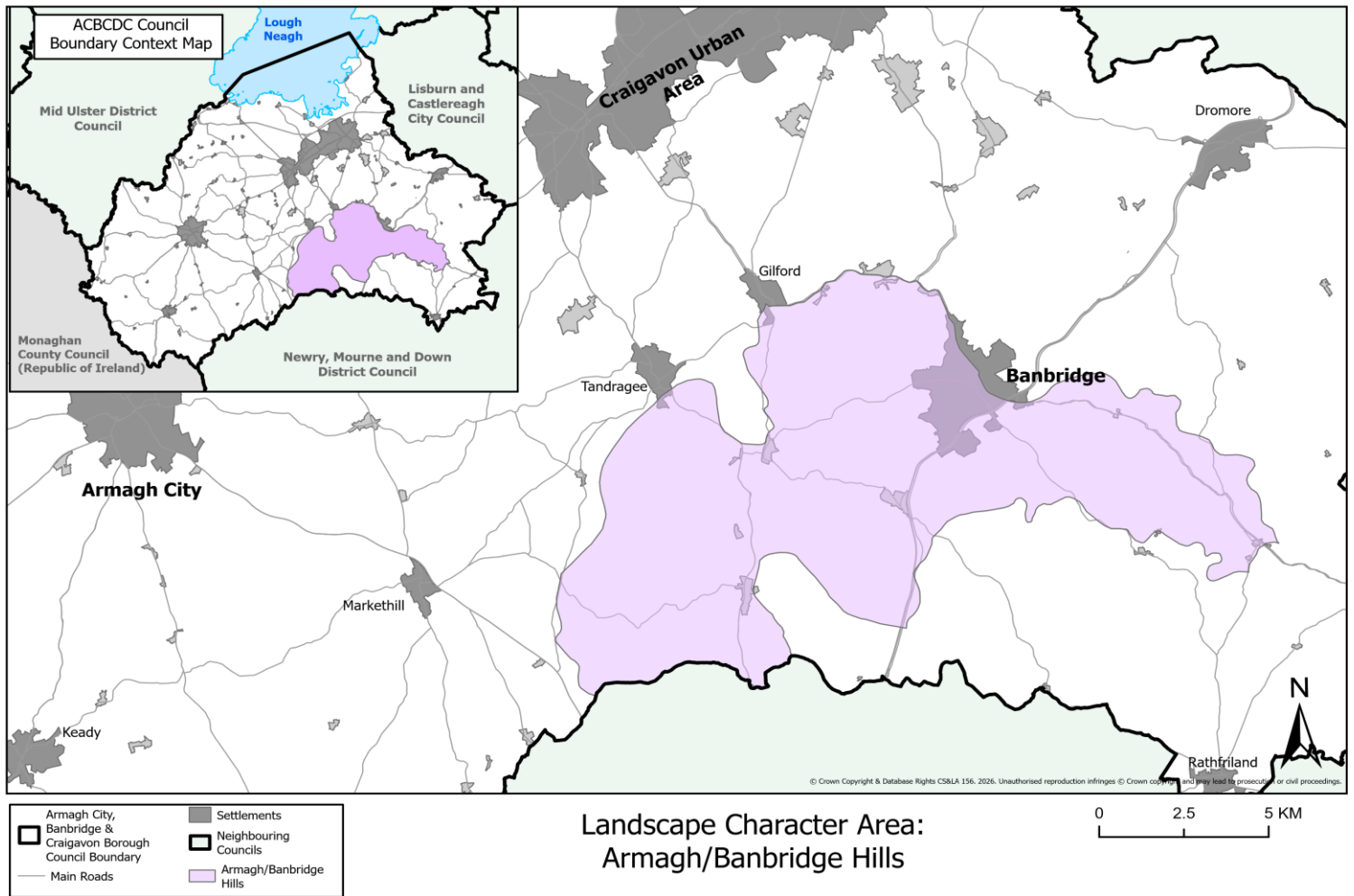
- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular rural influences.
- The area to the north west, close to the river Blackwater should be highlighted as part of the wider Blackwater Valley special landscape and an extra layer of policy protection be applied.

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that the foothills of Carrigatuke Hills in the south-west of the LCA may offer the best capacity within the LCA for some form of wind energy development. Consideration could be given to siting turbines on the middle or lower slopes of drumlins rather than on drumlin tops. Care should be taken to ensure that turbine development does not dominate the generally small scale, complex landscape patterns or individual hills or drumlins within this LCA (possibly by using careful spacing). Particular care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on important archaeological and historic landscapes as described in this section. Hill tops and notable landscape features should be respected

Outcome of Review

From the evidence gathered it is clear that a section of the Armagh Drumlins LCA, close to the river Blackwater is part of a unique and valued landscape. Given that, this landscape demonstrates a high criteria of scenic quality alongside many cultural and historic characteristics it is considered worthy of a greater level of protection in terms of the impact of built development.

LCA 67 Armagh / Banbridge Hills





Varied patchwork of fields, woodlands, hedgerow trees, with a diverse texture and pattern.



Relatively open landscape, with long views from local ridges.



Large farmsteads are prominent landscape elements

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The entire landscape character area of Armagh/Banbridge Hills lies within the Borough. The area stretches from Gilford to Scarva, along the south of Tandragee south to Clare and further south to include Poyntz Pass, ending at the boundary with Newry, Mourne and Down. The LCA also stretches eastwards, taking in the western side of Banbridge, Loughbrickland and along the A50 towards Katesbridge.

Topography and Drainage

The Upper Bann corridor runs north-south along this border from which hills rise eastwards towards Banbridge and westwards towards Markethill. The landscape is characterised by rolling hills, ridges and shallow valleys. Most slopes have a relatively smooth profile but there are rocky outcrops on the slopes leading up to the summit of Knock Iveagh to the south.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is characterized by rolling hills and ridges that vary in scale, with broad, shallow slopes to the west and rocky outcrops marking the southeastern margins near Knockiveagh. A rich and diverse patchwork of fields, woodlands, hedgerow trees, and areas of regenerating scrub creates a textured and visually engaging environment. Within the valleys, flat pastures are interspersed with drainage ditches, damp woodlands, and occasional patches of bog, adding to the ecological variety. Prominent throughout the area are large farmsteads accompanied by traditional stone outbuildings, which serve as notable features in the landscape. The terrain remains relatively open, offering open views from the local ridges.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Predominantly rolling drumlins and ridges with hollows between
- Varied patchwork of small fields in lower, damper areas, larger fields on better drained soils; improved pastures dominate
- Valleys and hollows have flat pastures with drainage ditches, areas of wet woodland and patches of fen
- Woodlands largely in demesnes and former mill properties along the Bann corridor

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

There are no national or international environmental designations. There are a number of local wildlife sites and pockets of priority habitat such as peatland, small pockets of fen and woodland. SLNCIs are scattered throughout the LCA, these were designated through the Armagh Area Plan and the Craigavon Area Plan:

- Beechwood
- Blue Bog Road
- Chinauley Woods
- Clare Glen Woodland
- Corbet Lough
- Drumaran Lake
- Drumiller
- Edenderry Woodland
- Huntly Plantation and Havelock Woods
- Katesbridge Wetland
- Kernan Lake
- Lough Brickland
- Lough Shark
- Loughbrickland House
- Mullabrack Fen
- Park Bog
- Scarva Pond

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

The area features a sparse distribution of modern single rural dwellings, primarily located around road junctions. While not numerous, these homes are often suburban in appearance and of contemporary design, massing, and materials. Some are associated with farms and remain sympathetic to the traditional rural character. However, there are also noticeable clusters of single dwellings that introduce a suburban perception to the this rural area, with large gardens and urban styles. Although a small proportion of these dwellings adopt some traditional forms that align more closely with the local vernacular, the overall impression is one of limited rural character.

Built Character

The landscape is predominantly agricultural, marked by large, industrial-style farm outbuildings and an increasing use of wire fencing. Some evidence of wind turbines on prominent hilltops and pylons criss-cross the area add to the visual clutter in this rural setting. Scattered throughout are single rural dwellings and older, large farmsteads that reflect a more traditional character. Some distinct clusters of modern, single dwellings of more traditional form and scale are present along some rural roads. In addition, there are small outbuildings and rural tracks that maintain a strong rural character. Some light industrial buildings and businesses add a further layer of non-agricultural land use to the area.

Quarries

- Glebe Hill Quarry

Built Heritage Assets

This LCA covers a large area but the wealth of historic sites located within it is very notable. The number and variety of sites is indicative of the historic connection to this landscape. The recorded built heritage interest in this LCA include:

- Nearly 1500 Historic Sites/Monuments
- 40 scheduled monuments which include standing stones, Lisnagade Fort, The Danes Cast and Katesbridge Mound
- Approximately 175 Listed Buildings/Structures
- 6 HPGD, including Loughbrickland House and Lawrencetown House
- Approximately 160 Industrial sites, many of which are associated with the Newry Canal
- 16 Defence Heritage Sites
- 9 Areas of Archaeological Potential, including Poyntzpass, Gilford, Scarva and Banbridge

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

A wealth of historic monuments, sites and listed buildings indicate the long connection to this landscape. Many of these assets can be visited and appreciated by the general public, further adding to a sense of belonging and association with this area.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

This LCA is a large area and benefits from an extensive road network of both major and minor roads.

The train line passes through Scarva and Poyntz Pass

A portion of St Patrick's Way passes through this LCA.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Scenic quality is moderately pleasant. The landscape has framed views, a medium-scale and semi-enclosed character, with some diversity, colour and textured qualities, the overall perception is relatively pleasing. Large modern farm buildings, occasions of security and/or wire fencing, enlarged fields, hedge removal, pylons, wind turbine and the road network all detract from the traditional rural character appreciation.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is predominantly composed of improved grassland and mixed arable farming, with irregular, medium-to-large field patterns. Some hedgerow boundaries have been altered, with broken sections often replaced by modern wire fencing. Tree shelter belts and areas of mixed woodland are scattered throughout, while wetland fen, wet woodland, and priority wet grassland—particularly near Church Bog—add ecological diversity. Changes in agricultural practices and processes have impacted the area, introducing large industrial-style outbuildings, expanded fields, hedge removal, and security fencing. Infrastructure such as pylons, wind turbines, and busy roads further disrupt the traditional rural character. Settlement is marked by scattered single rural dwellings, typically modern and suburban in design. While some clusters exhibit a suburban character with large gardens, older farmsteads still reflect traditional rural dynamics. Overall, the landscape remains visually pleasing, though modern developments have reduced its sensitivity.

Changes in Landscape Condition

Some changes in farming techniques and infrastructure such as larger, modern agricultural sheds, and the enlargement of field sizes have impacted the perception of rural character. These changes, combined with the visual intrusion of distant pylons and wind turbines, have negatively affected the overall perception of the area. The clustering of single rural dwellings, particularly those that are modern in scale and design has begun to shift character from traditional rural to a more suburban or urban-fringe appearance. Additionally, the presence of light industrial and commercial developments further contributes to this shift, degrading the rural identity and reinforcing a perception more aligned with suburban outskirts than with a traditional farming environment.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

- Scattered single dwellings are generally modern and affluent in design.
- Some accumulations have a suburban character with large gardens which have negatively impacted the rural perception
- Intensification of farming has led to large industrial-style outbuildings. Hedgerow removal and field expansion and some security fencing.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) shows that wind turbine development pressure within the LCA was largely medium between 2010 and 2024, with pockets of high pressure in the south-west, extending into the Armagh Drumlins LCA.

For rural housing, development pressure has been largely low between 2010-2024. Within such a large LCA, there have also been local areas that have experienced medium and high pressure, particularly to the west of Banbridge.

However in terms of landscape character the scale, design and materials of housing are the priority elements that threaten local landscape character by reflecting housing types that would be more common in an urban setting.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- The conservation of existing hedgerows and the re-establishment of hedgerows where they have been removed, would ensure that the varied pattern of the landscape is retained and that it becomes less sensitive to future change.
- Broadleaf woodland planting would help to reinforce the small-scale character of parts of the landscape and to contain recent and future built development.
- The use of local building materials, in particular local stone, will help to integrate new buildings into the landscape.

Additional guidelines may include

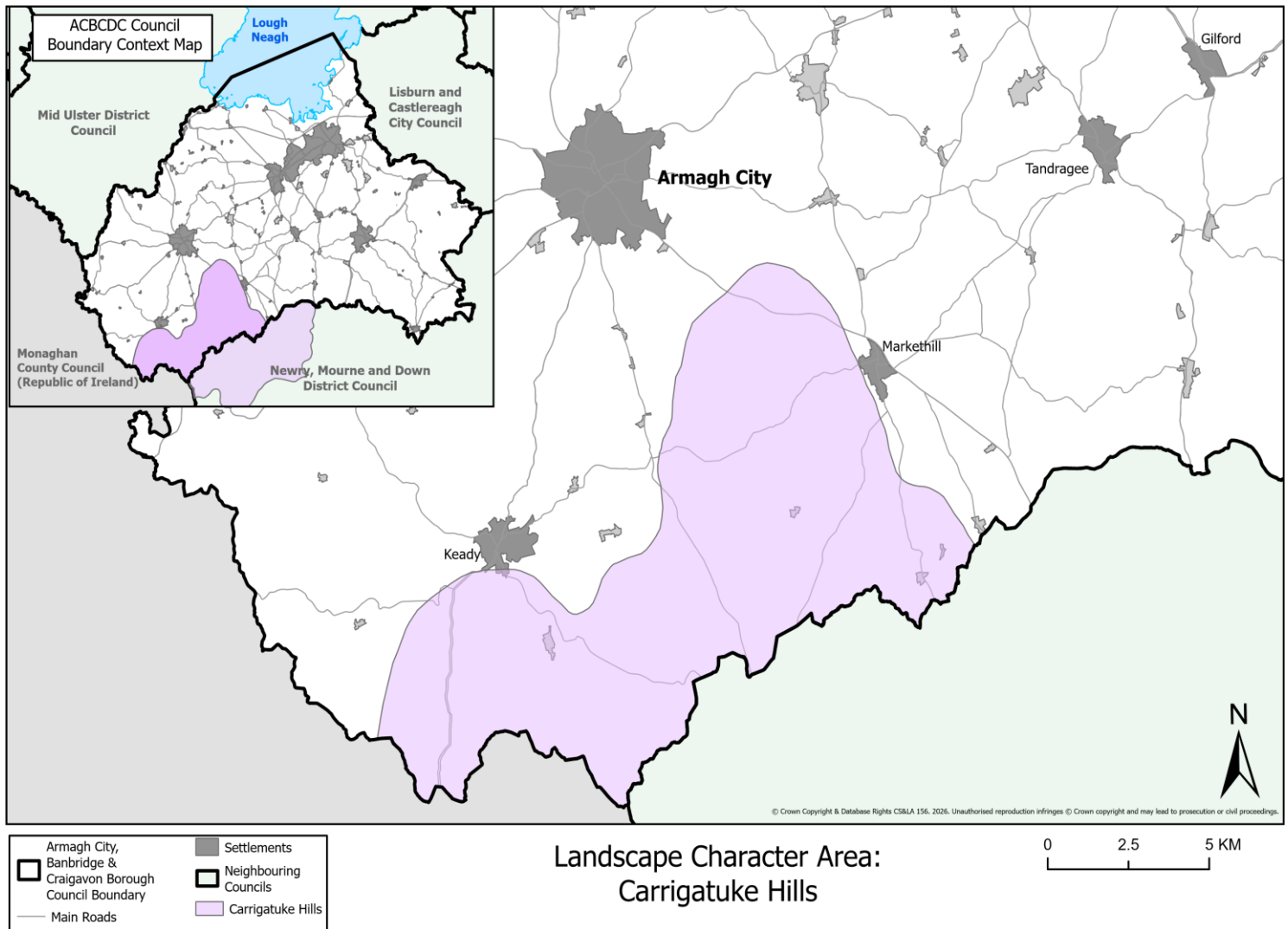
- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular rural influences.

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that the majority of the area has a rolling landform and good tree cover and in that sense is not particularly sensitive to change. However the complex, varied landscape patterns, with mixed farmland and horticulture, including extensive orchards on sheltered drumlin slopes, are unusual and heighten the LCA's sensitivity. Orchard landscapes in particular are increasingly rare, this being the only example in Northern Ireland. The key constraint, however, is the small landform scale. This means that wind energy developments could easily dominate and 'flatten' the landscape. The more open land on lower slopes adjacent to the floodplains of the Blackwater and Bann and their tributaries is very sensitive to wind energy development of all types and scales.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Armagh/Banbridge Hills LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 68 Carrigatuke Hills





Large scale, smooth rolling hills and deep wooded valleys



Extensive conifer plantations and residual peaty moorland create a series of geometric blocks on the highest and wildest hills

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

Within the Borough the Carrigatuke Hills LCA stretches from south of Keady northwards between Armagh and Markethill and eastwards towards Mountnorris.

Approximately half of this LCA is within the Borough, the remaining portion is within Newry, Mourne and Down.

Topography and Drainage

The Carrigatuke Hills extend across southern Armagh from the Ring of Gullion in Newry, Mourne and Down to Keady. This is a large scale landscape of smooth rolling green hills and deep wooded valleys. The higher hills have a wild exposed character, with areas of blanket bog and heather moorland. The hills form a broad continuous upland area with few valleys. The rounded summits are separated by broad upland plateaux. Wooded streams and loughs are attractive features of the valleys that drain from the hills.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is defined by large-scale, smooth rolling hills interspersed with deep, wooded valleys, creating a varied and expansive terrain. At the highest and most remote elevations, extensive conifer plantations and remnants of peaty moorland form distinct geometric blocks, adding a structured contrast to the natural contours. The lower hills are enriched with mature trees, tree-belts, and small woodlands, contributing to the area's ecological diversity and visual interest. Scattered throughout the rolling countryside are large houses, farms, and other buildings, all connected by a network of winding rural roads. From these elevated vantage points, long panoramic views extend across the surrounding lowlands, enhancing the scenic quality of the area.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Extensive conifer plantations and residual blanket peat create a series of geometric blocks on the hills of the south-centre and west
- Some planted, landscaped, deep wooded valleys
- Many shelter-belts and small woodlands on lower hills
- Fens and damp grasslands in hollows in the lowlands; fens probably of greatest interest to biodiversity in this LCA

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

There are three ASSIs that lie entirely or partly within the LCA: Straghans Lough, Crossbane Lough and Drumcarn. Priority habitats include peatland, fen and small pockets of woodland.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest (SLNCIs) designated in the Armagh Area Plan are:

- Aughnagurgan Lough
- Carnagh Forest and Lakes
- Carrigatuke Fen
- Clay Lake
- Darkley Reservoir
- Gentle Owens Lake
- Outlack Bog
- Tullynawood Lake

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Settlements include: Keady, Darkley, Cladymore, Glenanne, Glenanne (Lisdrumchor)

The area features very sparse single rural dwelling development, much of which is well integrated into the landscape with the use of shelter belts. While some dwellings use non-traditional materials, their limited number means the overall visual impact is minimal. Farms dwellings generally remain in keeping with the rural character, often surrounded by outbuildings. Some dwellings appear in small clusters, with the topography offering a degree of visual integration, though many are large, non-traditional in style, and at times incongruent with the surrounding landscape. Modern, suburban curtilages and boundary treatments further contribute to a suburbanised appearance in certain areas.

Built Character

The built character of the area is generally subtle, with very sparsely scattered, older single rural dwellings. However, this rural character is disrupted in some locations due to some large businesses such as a distribution yard, large agricultural and industrial-style sheds and additional lighting. While the number of dwellings is not significant, many feature suburban-style curtilages and modern boundary treatments, such as post-and-wire fencing, which further erode the traditional rural perception. Farms are a mix of traditional and industrial-style agricultural buildings. The influence of infrastructure, such as masts, poles, and the removal of some hedgerows, adds to the visual disruption. Additionally, the presence of quarry, wind turbine, telecoms infrastructure, and associated earthworks significantly degrade more local rural character, introducing a more industrial and fragmented appearance to some areas.

Quarries:

- Clady Quarries;
- Cavanagrow/ Cootes Quarry;
- King Bros Quarry Ltd;

- Loughran Rock Industries;
- Mc Kernan Contracts;
- Outlack Quarry

Built Heritage Assets

The recorded built heritage interest in this section of the Carrigatuke Hills LCA include:

- Approximately 50 Historic Sites and Monuments
- 8 are Scheduled monuments and include a passage tomb: Vicar's Cairn at Carnavanaghan and a standing stone at Corran
- Approximately 20 Listed Buildings/Structures
- 41 Industrial Heritage Sites

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- This is a large rural area, some services and community facilities are located in Keady, Markethill and even further away in Armagh.
- The highest point in the Fews is in the district of Armaghbrague [false Armagh] in the townland of Carrigatuke [hawk's rock]. It rises to 1024 feet and was of note even in pagan days.
- Local tradition credits St Patrick for building his first church here with the stones from the cairn on Carrickatuke and tells of a ghostly bull that pushed over each night all that Patrick had erected by day so that in the end he deserted the spot and built in Ard Macha instead. Some old locals still mourn that 'the owl bull bate him away'.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

The road network includes both A and B class road linking settlements but there is a large network of smaller, minor roads throughout the LCA.

Access to public open space and recreation is found within larger settlements.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

The landscape offers a rich and varied scenic experience, shaped by smooth rolling hills, deep wooded valleys, and contrasting textures from woodland plantations, shelter belts, and scrubby outcrops. Small streams and lakes, particularly within areas like the Carnagh Estate, enhance the visual appeal of the valley floors. Mature trees and scattered woodlands contribute to a strong rural character, creating a calm and pleasant atmosphere. In many areas, the landscape retains a subtle and interesting quality, with limited modern development allowing for uninterrupted enjoyment. Distant views, including those toward the Ring of Gullion AONB, provide expansive and attractive vistas.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is in moderate condition overall, with a strong rural and scenic character that has been increasingly affected by modern development and infrastructure.

Rolling uplands, wooded valleys, rocky outcrops, streams, and small lakes create a diverse and visually attractive landscape with a rich texture and strong biodiversity interest. Woodland planting and scattered deciduous trees contribute positively to landscape character, while pleasant long-distance views, particularly towards the Ring of Gullion, enhance its scenic quality. However, landscape condition has been weakened in places by the decline of traditional field boundaries, including gappy, overgrown, or replaced hedgerows, and by the introduction of modern infrastructure such as wire fencing, floodlighting, masts, poles, and suburban-style residential curtilages. Industrial-style farm buildings, quarries, industrial units, wind turbines, and telecom masts have further eroded rural character.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- The large number of large scale, suburban designed and finished dwellings and curtilages has degraded the aesthetics of many areas within this LCA.
- Incidences of linear development of primarily residential properties but also small-medium businesses.
- The number of large wind turbines is notable, especially in the south of the LCA.
- Industrial-style farm buildings, quarries, industrial units, wind turbines, and telecom masts have further eroded rural character

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The cumulative effect of these changes has resulted in an erosion of the rural character and landscape quality of some portions of the LCA. The number of large-scale dwellings with suburban designs, materials and extensive curtilages has weakened the traditional agricultural character and introduced an increasingly urbanised appearance across many areas. Linear residential and commercial development has fragmented the landscape pattern, reducing its sense of openness and creating a more developed and visually cluttered environment. The presence of large wind turbines, particularly in the southern part of the LCA, has increased the prominence of modern infrastructure within the landscape, while industrial-style farm buildings, quarries, industrial units and telecom masts have introduced large-scale built elements that are often at odds with the area's traditional character.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis has provided evidence of medium – high development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this LCA. Pockets of high pressure can be seen just south of Keady and south of Armagh.

For rural housing, development pressure has been largely low between 2010-2024 with some local pockets of medium pressure in the northern portion of the LCA.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that the large scale of the uplands within this LCA, combined with rolling slopes and the presence of coniferous forestry, tend to reduce this LCA's sensitivity to wind energy development. Conservation and recreational interests are not as extensive as in many other LCAs. Parallel north-south ridges create areas of reduced close range visibility (although the upland tops are a part of many long range views over a wider area). The lower and

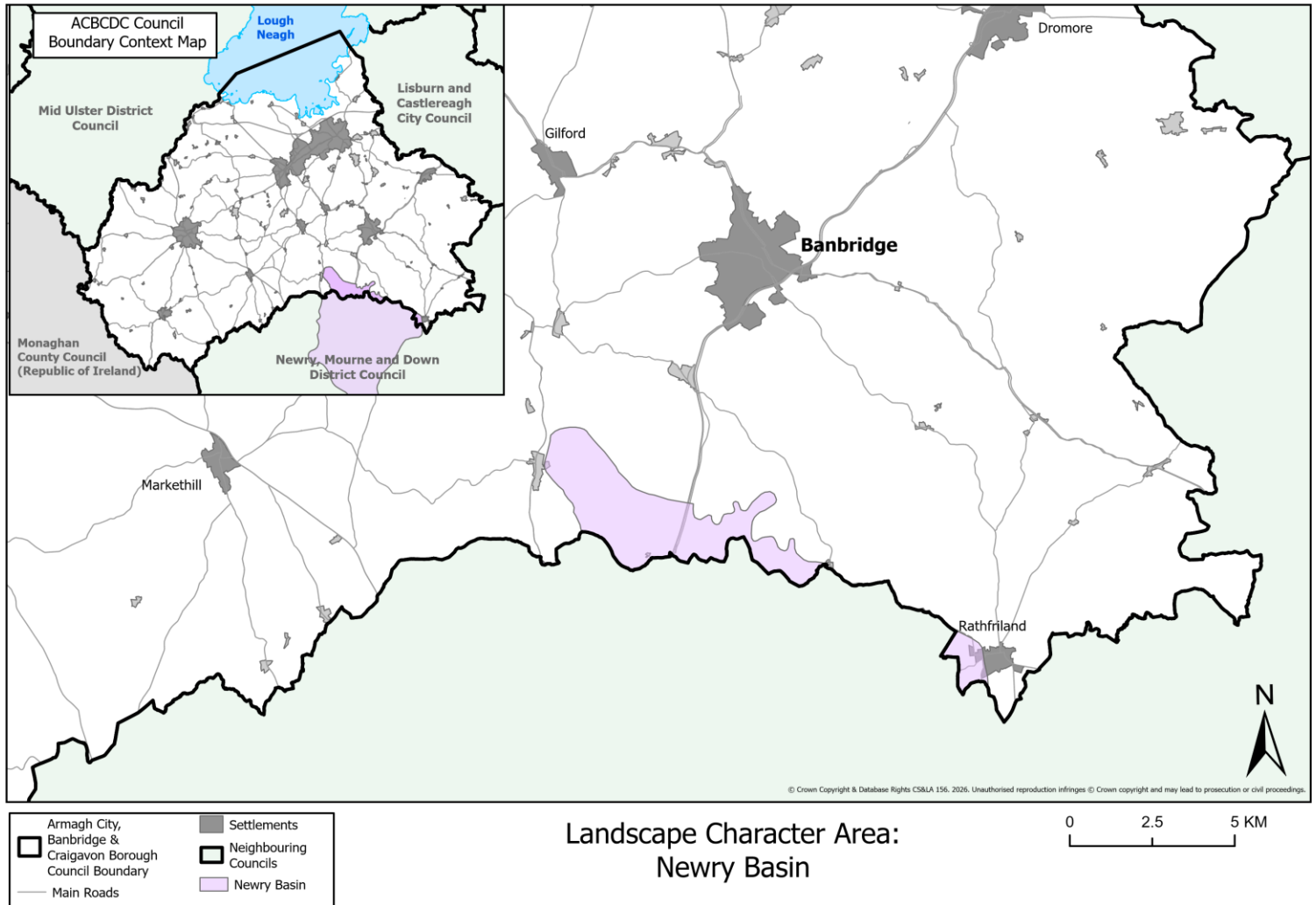
more prominent slopes to the north and east of the area are more sensitive in this respect as they lie closer to Armagh and Newry than the central and southern sections of the hills. In addition, the south-east of the LCA is particularly sensitive because of its proximity to the Ring of Gullion.

Overall, though, this is a landscape of only moderate sensitivity to wind energy development. The central section of the hills, away from the more prominent edge landscapes, is least sensitive.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Carrigatuke Hills LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 69 Newry Basin





Rolling, improved pastures in good condition



Network of narrow hedged and hedge-banked roads within the drumlins.

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The majority of this LCA lies within the Newry, Mourne & Down District Council area with just the northern most section falling within the Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough. Within the borough this LCA extends from Poyntzpass in the west, rising gradually to the east and encompassing Ouley Road. The settlement of Glen lies in the southern portion of the LCA, close to the border with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Topography and Drainage

Overall, the Newry Basin LCA is a large scale rolling drumlin landscape situated between the Ring of Gullion and the Mourne Mountains. The area is drained by tributaries of the Newry River which flow in attractive river valleys.

There are occasional panoramic views of the Mourne Mountains from the tops of the drumlins. The landscape appears open and exposed on ridge-tops and enclosed and sheltered within the valleys. There is a network of sunken and hedge banked winding roads connecting major roads and individual farms and houses which are, at times quite disorientating.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is characterized by a large-scale drumlin terrain, intricately drained by tributaries of the Newry River. Rolling, well-maintained pastures dominate the area, presenting a lush and orderly appearance. Fields are neatly divided by well-kept hedgerows and tree belts, contributing to a cohesive and unified rural scene. Scattered across the drumlin tops are individual residential properties and expansive farms, adding a sense of human presence without disrupting the natural flow of the land. A network of narrow, hedge-lined and hedge-banked roads weave through the drumlins, enhancing the area's traditional charm. Occasionally, the landscape opens up to offer distant views of the Mourne Mountains, adding a dramatic backdrop to this serene countryside.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Large scale drumlin landscape drained by tributaries of the Newry River
- Improved pastures cover the drumlin country, but rough grazing is found on rocky areas and in damp hollows
- Although woodland occupies a very small portion of this LCA.
- Hedgerows are the major field boundary; of varying management with some well - trimmed, but other merging into the gorse heath of rocky areas

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

No international or national environmental designations within this portion of Newry Basin.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs):

- Danes Cast Fen

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

There are no large settlements within the portion of this LCA within the Borough. However there are the small settlements of Glen and Glasker and the western portion of Rathfriland.

Traditional farmsteads and vernacular designed buildings and homes are evident within the LCA however the influence of these buildings is becoming diluted by inappropriate residential development. Within this rural area, there is a notable number of modern single dwellings, however what threatens the character is the large scale and suburban design of properties. Non-traditional design and use of materials in addition to suburban style gardens and curtilage boundary treatment have introduced a frequent suburban element into an otherwise rural area. Many of these properties are generally located on drumlin mid slopes or drumlin hilltops, which exacerbates their incongruence.

Built Character

Built character ranges from being evident or at times conspicuous within the landscape due to the combination of nontraditional materials, design and scale of residential properties, the industrial scale of some agricultural buildings, such as large chicken houses and single wind turbines. The pattern of residential development, in particular linear, roadside development and large, inappropriate designed housing on drumlin slopes and drumlin tops also results in a more conspicuous built character.

There are however many areas within this LCA that due to the mix of traditional buildings, smaller scale housing and the influence of the well maintained hedgerows and scattered mature trees and shelter belts that built character is quite subtle, providing good examples of the type of development this landscape can absorb.

Quarries

There are no quarries or landing sites located within this LCA.

Built Heritage Assets

The Newry Basin is a very diverse area, with a rich heritage of historic landscapes and archaeological sites. Although only a small section of the overall LCA lies with the ABC Borough the quantity of historic features within this small area is relatively high.

Within the Borough there are:

- Approximately 25 Historic sites and monuments, a large proportion of which are enclosures.
- 8 scheduled monuments, including part of the Dane's Cast, Tierny Fort and the Newry Canal
- Approximately 8 Listed Buildings
- 4 Industrial Sites, three of which are mill sites.
- 1 Area of Archaeological Potential at Poyntzpass

In addition to these recorded assets there are also examples of vernacular farm buildings and dwellings, some of which include stone walls. These remaining assets also provide a link to the methods of farming and construction that are no longer in common use and serve as a reminder of a more sustainable way of life.

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Evidence of traditional farming past with remaining outbuildings some of which are in use, others in a derelict state of repair.
- In addition to the rich archaeological resources, historic points of interest include the Newry Canal, the first summit level canal in the UK (1742) built to link with the coal fields in Tyrone.
- The significant earthwork the Dane's Cast and the large proportion of historic monuments indicate a long history of human interaction and connection with this landscape.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

The canal towpath provides access in the west of the LCA and is part of the National Cycle Network and Ulster Way.

A1, A25, B3 and a network of small rural roads ensure access to views of this landscape and beyond.

Public access is limited to shared open space within the small settlements.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Overall this LCA has a very interesting, sometimes challenging perception landscape. Some elements of built development such as turbines, large scale buildings and houses can detract from this overall pleasant and simple landscape.

Within the Borough there are open views towards the Mourne mountains but when this is not the case the scale of the landscape can be relatively enclosed, unified and peaceful.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is generally in good condition. Medium scale drumlin, rolling farming landscape with a mix of improved, rough and arable field use with well managed mature hedgerows and tree shelter belts. The cumulative effect of this creates an intact and unified landscape pattern. Modern influences are relatively subtle, with the main observations being some areas of improvement in field drainage and grassland conditions, a suburban, residential element which is at odds with the traditional rural perception. Single wind turbine development is also evident. Overall this is a relatively pleasant area with distant views towards the Mournes.

Within the relatively small section of this LCA that lies within the Borough there is a high concentration of archaeological sites reflecting a long history of connection to this landscape.

There is some historical character present through traditional vernacular stone outbuildings. Modern development has been restrained through the subtle amount and impact of single dwellings and appropriate natural integration.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- The scale, design and materials of single rural dwellings are, in many instances incongruent within this local, rural landscape. This drumlin landscape can integrate well-positioned, scaled and designed residential development however further ribbon development must be curtailed.
- Wind turbines are present but do not dominate the Borough's portion of this LCA .
- The replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fencing and the drainage and enrichment of waterlogged inter-drumlin areas is creating a monotony of the landscape alongside a loss of biodiversity.
- The introduction of large, industrial scale agricultural buildings and chicken houses is evident. This is often associated with a larger, more formal hard standing and hard landscaping, thereby increasing the perception of a more industrialised land use.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The cumulative effect of these changes has led to a gradual decline in the distinctiveness and traditional rural character of the landscape. While the drumlin landform is can accommodate appropriately sited and designed dwellings, the scale, design and materials of many single rural houses are often incongruent with the local landscape, and continued ribbon development has increased visual intrusion. The loss of hedgerows and their replacement with post-and-wire fencing, together with the drainage and agricultural improvement of inter-drumlin wetlands, has reduced landscape diversity, creating a more uniform and simplified appearance while also diminishing biodiversity value. In addition, the introduction of large agricultural sheds has increased the prominence of built development and contributed to a more industrialised perception of the countryside. Although wind turbines are present within the LCA, they do not generally dominate the landscape; however, in combination with other modern development, they contribute to the ongoing transition from a traditionally rural landscape towards one with a stronger contemporary and urbanised character.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis has provided evidence of low-medium development pressure for wind turbines between 2010/2024 in this LCA. The few turbines within this area are large in scale and are conspicuous in this largely rural, rolling landscape.

For rural housing, development pressure within this Borough's portion of this LCA has been primarily low between 2010-2024.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from **NILCA 2000** that continue to be relevant for this portion of the LCA are:

- Single dwellings in the countryside could be integrated more easily if located on lower slopes amongst native vegetation. Non-native species are inappropriate. It is important to keep views of the Mourne open. Restoration of old stone cottages would be beneficial.

This guideline could be expanded to include the use of appropriate building materials, a minimizing of the scale of hard landscaping and ancillary buildings as well as adopting more simplified house designs that provide balance within this rolling landscape.

- Large new elements would be visible but the rolling landform can easily accommodate carefully sited development, providing that it is associated with new planting which is designed to link with local field patterns.

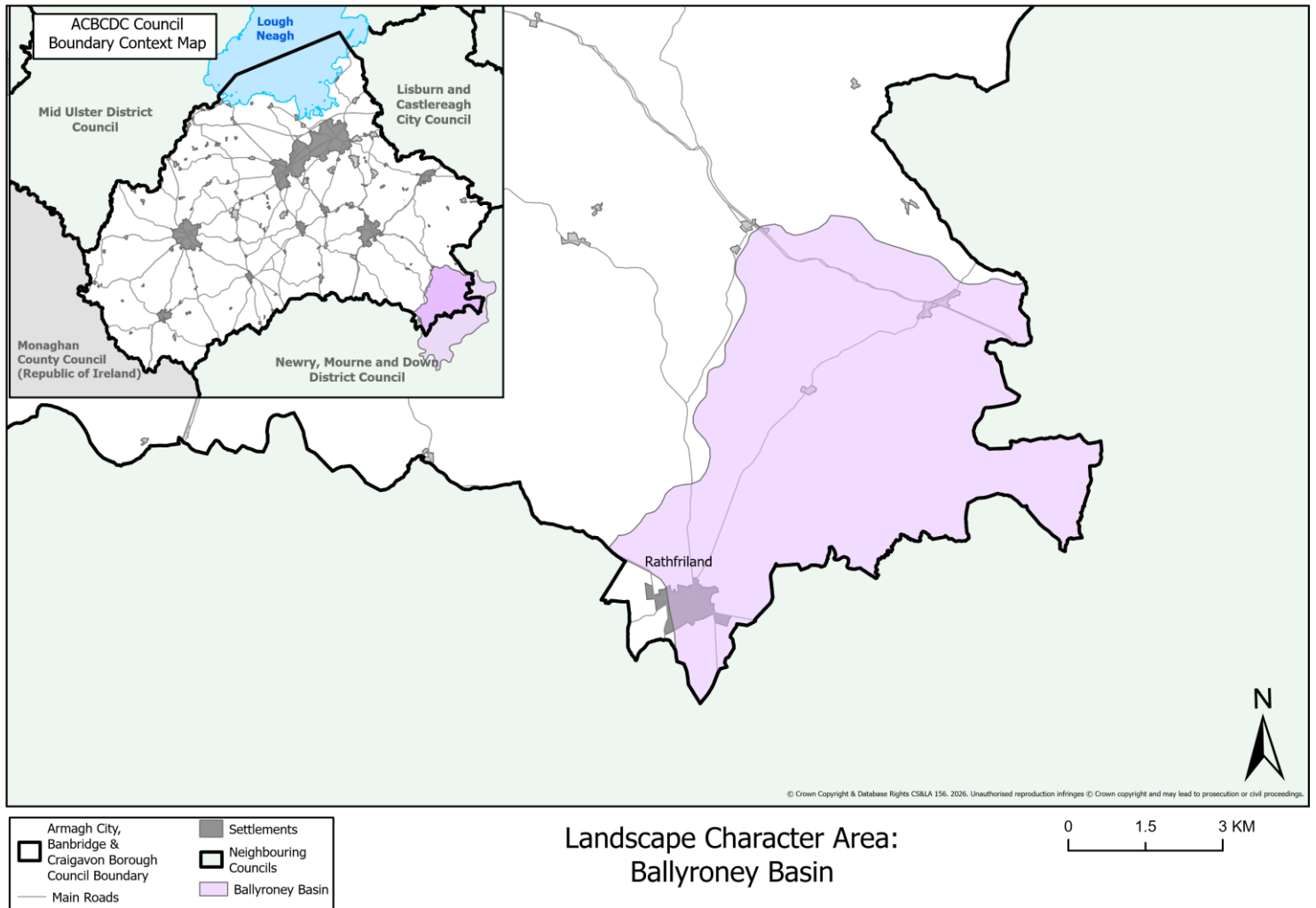
With the presence of modern, large, industrial scale agricultural buildings within this LCA being quite conspicuous this guideline is particularly relevant.

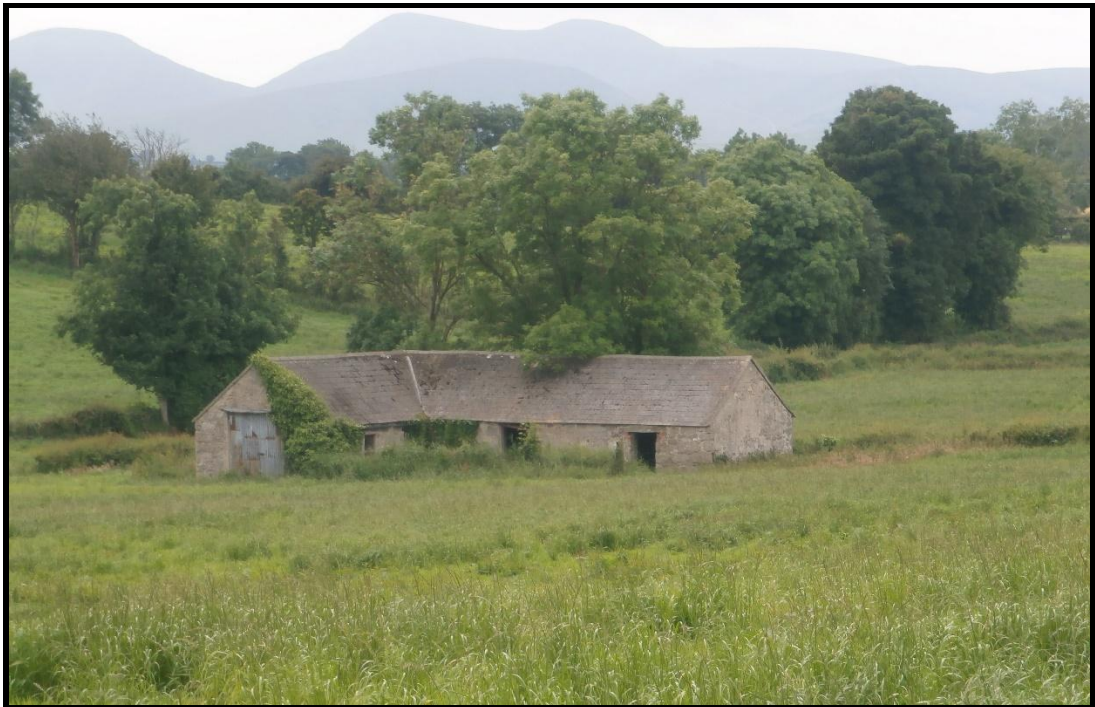
Guidance from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** states that consideration should be given to siting turbines on drumlin side-slopes rather than tops and to taking advantage of screening afforded by low north-south ridges and tree groups. Care must be taken to avoid significant impacts on views to and from the Mourne and archaeological sites such as hilltop raths.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Newry Basin LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 76 Ballyroney Basin





Lowland basin containing the courses of the Rivers Bann and Drumadonnell.



Prominent hill is the site for the striking hill top town of Rathfriland



Flat waterlogged areas of birch moss, marshy pasture.



Views are enclosed by drumlins and dense birch growth on areas of moss.

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The Ballyrone Basin occupies a lowland waterlogged area of land enclosed by the Slieve Croob Summits to the north-east, the Mourne Mountains to the south-east and the Iveagh Slopes to the west.

Within the Borough, Ballyrone Basin includes Rathfriland in the south, extending northwards, along the river Bann towards Katesbridge and eastwards to include the settlements of Moneyslane and Ballyrone.

The Mourne Mountains form a striking backdrop to the Basin as a whole. The remainder of the LCA lies within the Newry, Mourne and Down District.

Topography and Drainage

The Ballyrone Basin occupies a lowland waterlogged area of land enclosed by the Slieve Croob Summits to the north-east, the Mourne Mountains to the south-east and the Iveagh Slopes to the west.

The area is underlain by a solid geology of intrusive igneous rocks, resulting in a flat and waterlogged landscape of extensive moss and loughs, which is interrupted by distinct drumlins. Where it remains, the moss supports rushes and sedges, heather, gorse and scrubby woodland consisting of regenerating birch and willow. The River Bann inconspicuously passes through the basin, between drumlins and under stone bridges.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

Agricultural land is mixed, including rough grazing, improved grassland and small scale arable land. Some evidence of wet grassland being improved and/or drained to provide improved grassland for high yield grass/silage production. Improved grassland indicated modern, intensive agricultural practices with modern machinery and low biodiversity value.

Fields are predominately medium in size and form an irregular pattern across the drumlin landscape. Fields are generally marked by mature, sometimes broken hedgerows and widely scattered mature trees. In many areas broken hedgerows have been replaced with post and wire fencing. Areas of wet grassland also contain pockets of wet woodland and a wide array of wild flowers. Within the Borough Lackan Bog ASSI (88ha) lies at the centre of this LCA.

Agricultural land within the area comprises a mix of rough grazing, improved grassland and small-scale arable land. There is evidence that some wet grassland areas have been drained and agriculturally improved to support higher-yield grass and silage production, reflecting the adoption of more intensive farming practices. While these improvements have increased agricultural productivity, they have also resulted in a more uniform landscape with reduced biodiversity value.

Fields are predominantly medium-sized and form an irregular pattern that reflects the underlying drumlin landform. They are generally enclosed by mature hedgerows, some of which are fragmented or in decline, and are complemented by widely scattered mature trees that contribute to landscape structure and visual interest. In several locations, traditional hedgerows have been replaced by post-and-wire fencing, reducing the strength of field boundaries and the overall sense of enclosure. Areas of wet woodland support a diverse range of wildflowers, providing important ecological interest.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Flat lowland waterlogged basin with several lakes
- Dominated by old cut-over bogs and small pockets of fen
- Very little woodland; some small wet woodland areas of birch and willow associated with bogs and fen.
- Lackan Bog ASSI a significant nature conservation asset that contributes to the area's biodiversity and landscape value.
- Dominated by improved pasture but significant amount of acid grassland.

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

Lackan Bog ASSI, to the east of Ballyroney, represents one of the largest single blocks of lowland peatland left in County Down.

Shannaghan Hill ASSI – this area, which partly lies within this LCA, provides access to exposures of a granite-like rock called granodiorite and Silurian sedimentary rocks.

Aughnavallog ASSI - provides access to exposures of a granite-like rock called granodiorite. These sites, together with a number of other sites describe the Newry Igneous Complex.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs):

- Annahunshigo
- Ballyroney Lake
- Gargarry Fen
- Gibson's Hill Woods and Fen
- Hunshigo Lake
- Lisnisk
- Rathfriland
- Shannaghan Hill

Landscape Features**Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings**

The settlements of Ballyroney and Moneyslane are sited on drumlins, close to the River Bann and Drumadonnell River respectively. Built development tends to be clustered on drumlins and is linked by roads which cross the waterlogged basin on high embankments.

Rathfriland provides the dominant visual presence to the SW of the area due to its position on top of a prominent hill which rises out of the surrounding flat plain and the very distinctive landmark that is the water tower which acts as a radial focus for public roads across the Basin.

Throughout this LCA a pattern of linear development along embanked roads has emerged. Modern additions are often large, suburban style dwellings with large curtilages and incongruent fencing walls replacing hedgerows and trees as boundary treatments. The massing, design and scale of a large number of these dwellings are non-traditional and are influenced more by modern, incongruent, complex styles, this also marks a shift towards a more suburban character. Recent residential developments may have occurred through the replacement of existing dwellings which has led to the dereliction/ underuse of some traditional stone buildings.

Built Character

The water tower in Rathfriland is a very prominent man-made feature which also provides a landmark to both residents and those travelling through.

Wind turbines are very evident to the south and east of the LCA.

Linear development of single dwellings along major and minor/rural roads. Newer dwellings tend to have large, ornamental and suburban style curtilages and modern, non-traditional design and finishes. Integration can be poor due to the flat landform.

Large, industrial style sheds are present in small numbers, indicating modern and intensification farming practices.

Quarries

No active quarries within this LCA

Built Heritage Assets

A notable scattering of traditional gates marking entrances to fields, as well as a number of stone cottages/farm out buildings and, in some places, stone walls.

The recorded built heritage interest in this section of the Ballyroney Basin LCA include:

- Nearly 50 monuments including raths, enclosures, motte & bailey, Neolithic settlement and standing stones.
- Six scheduled monuments
- Approximately 40 Listed Buildings
- 24 Industrial Heritage sites, some of which associate with the rail line, others include mills and tannery.
- 4 Defense Heritage sites
- 2 Areas of Archaeological Potential at Moneyslane and Rathfriland

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Community assets are primarily within settlements, in particular Rathfriland.
- Wealth of archaeological features in addition to some examples of remaining stone cottages, walls and farm buildings.

Notable People from this area:

Margaret Byers (April 1832 – 21 February 1912) was born in Rathfriland, an Irish educator, activist, social reformer, missionary, and writer. She was the founder of Victoria College, Belfast. Byers was involved in philanthropic work, with especial reference to the training of the young. She wrote many papers on different phases of the progress of girls' education in Ireland, on Irish industrial schools, and on temperance.

John McCredy McAlery (29 November 1848 – 3 December 1925), born in Rathfriland, was an Irish association football pioneer. His accomplishments include organizing the first ever properly organized football match in the history of Irish football in 1878, founding the first Irish football club in 1879, helping found the Irish Football Association in 1880, and wearing the captain's

armband in Ireland's first ever international match in 1882. He is known as the "father of Irish association football."

Captain Mayne Reid, the writer, was born on 4 April, 1818 in Ballyroney. He led a colourful and unconventional life after sailing for America aged 20. Dare devil and eccentric Mayne Reid involved himself in many and various activities from hunting buffalo, trading with Native Americans, acting as a war correspondent and fighting in the Mexican War (where he achieved the rank of Captain). He took up writing, becoming, in his lifetime, a popular, prolific and highly successful writer of adventure stories, many of which were based on his experiences.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- The A50 crosses the north of the LCA, between Katesbridge and Moneyslane. The B10 and B7 connect to the northern side of Rathfriland.
- Access within this LCA includes the Ballyroney Lake and Bog Walk, which takes in public rights of way and public roads in the area. The walk crosses Lackan Bog via – ‘The Green Road’ – an old bog rampart and asserted public footpath which runs for approx. 1 mile across the bog from Lackan Road to Dickson’s Hill Road/ Dodd’s Hill and provides great views over this bog habitat.
- Access and enjoyment of this landscape can also be achieved with activities associated with the River Bann.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Views are typically short and sometimes framed as they are interrupted by drumlins and the dense pockets of gorse and birch on the waterlogged land.

Overall the contrast between the smooth, farmed drumlins surrounded by the rough scrub and wet woodland pockets is an interesting perception, providing a pleasant scenic experience.

The introduction of a number of large turbines is beginning to challenge the scenic quality of some aspects of this landscape, their scale not reflecting the drumlin topography and therefore dominating vistas. The Mourne Mountains form a striking backdrop to the Basin as a whole.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is in moderate condition, retaining a strong drumlin landform and field pattern, but showing evidence of decline in some of its traditional characteristics. The farmed drumlins are predominantly managed as improved grassland for intensive grazing and silage production, resulting in a relatively uniform land cover. Medium-sized fields follow an irregular pattern that reflects the underlying topography and are generally enclosed by mature hedgerows and scattered mature trees. However, many hedgerows are fragmented, neglected or have been

removed and replaced with post-and-wire fencing, particularly in wetter areas, weakening the structure, enclosure and visual cohesion of the landscape.

The influence of modern development is also evident, with suburban-style dwellings along rural roads introducing urban style built form, scale and materials that are often at odds with the traditional rural character. In addition, wind turbine development, while not widespread, is locally prominent and influences the scenic quality and perception of these local landscapes. Collectively, these changes have begun a gradual erosion of landscape distinctiveness, although the area continues to retain its distinctive drumlin character and rural setting.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Growth in number of inappropriately scaled, designed and style of residential properties and the associated large curtilages.
- Introduction of large, industrial scaled agricultural sheds and buildings. The improvement of areas of wet grassland/rough grazing alongside the frequent absence of in tact hedgerows is evident.
- The number of large wind turbines is notable, especially in the south east of the LCA.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The changes in landscape condition have had a minor to moderate impact on the key characteristics identified within NILCA 2000, with the fundamental drumlin landform and agricultural pattern remaining largely intact. However, changes to the cultural, perceptual and intangible aspects of landscape character are becoming increasingly evident. The introduction of dwellings that are often suburban in scale, design and materials, together with a growing prevalence of large, industrial-style agricultural buildings, has begun to erode local distinctiveness and weaken the traditional rural character of the area. As these forms of development become more commonplace, there is an increasing sense of uniformity across the countryside, reducing the unique qualities and sense of place.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis has provided evidence of low -medium development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this LCA. The number of turbines within this area is notable and are conspicuous in this largely rural, rolling landscape.

For rural housing, development pressure has been predominantly low between 2010-2024, however in terms of landscape character continued ribbon development and the scale, design and materials of housing are the priority elements that threaten local landscape character by reflecting housing that would be more common in an urban setting.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from **NILCA 2000** that continue to be relevant for this portion of the LCA are:

- New development will be most inconspicuous if it is concentrated around existing settlements rather than spreading across the rural countryside, or as dense ribbon development along the roads.

This guideline could be expanded to include the use of appropriate building materials, a minimizing of the scale of hard landscaping and ancillary buildings as well as adopting more simplified house designs that provide balance within this rolling landscape.

In terms of wind energy infrastructure, it is already evident how the scale of such infrastructure can influence the scenic quality of this landscape. Wind or any other large scale energy infrastructure must be scaled appropriately so as not to overwhelm the scale of this drumlin landscape.

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that wind energy development should reflect the relatively small scale landscape and settlement features and drumlins. Care should be taken to prevent overcrowding turbines on individual drumlin hills and to seek balanced patterns of development where a site might extend onto a number of adjacent drumlin hills.

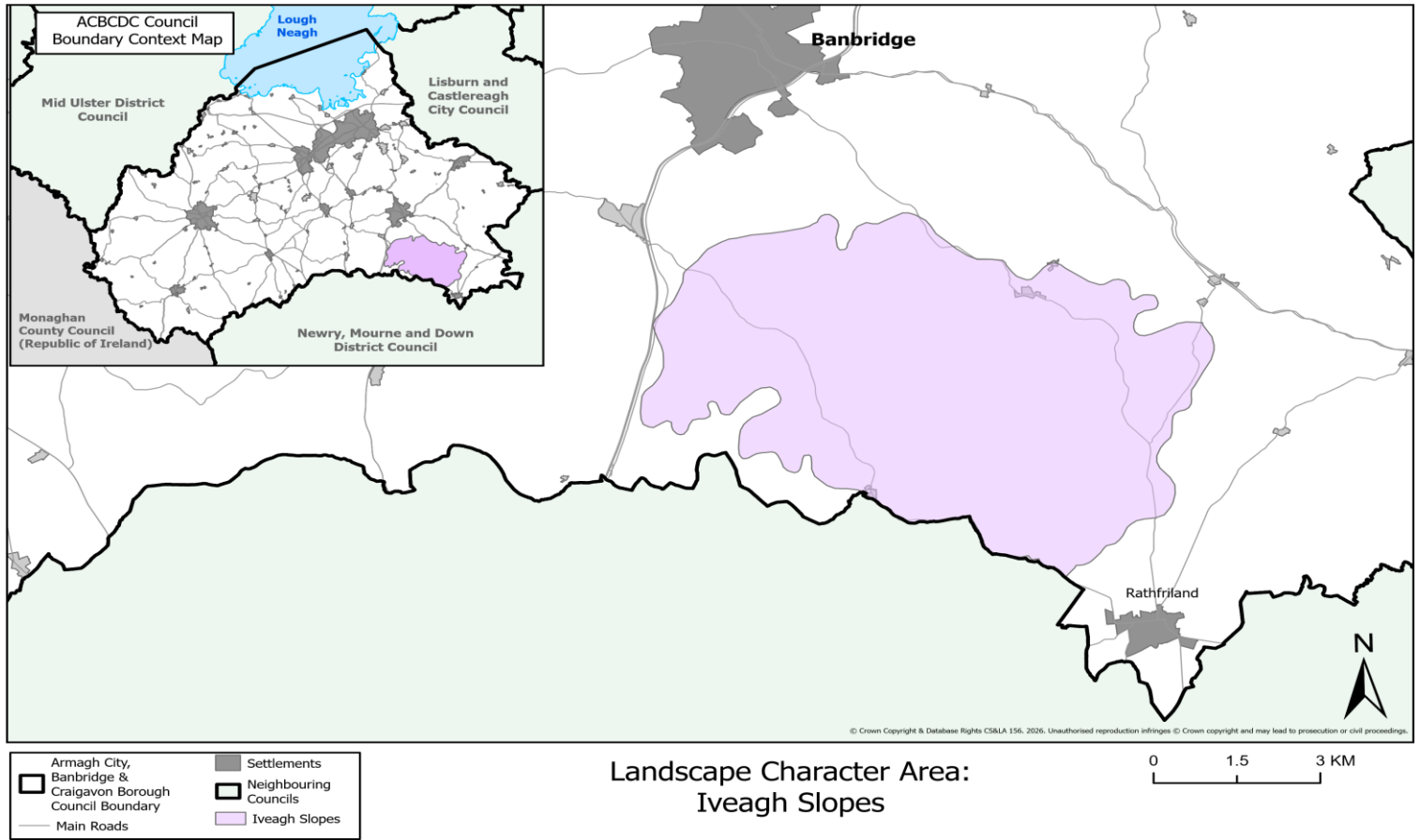
Particular care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on areas with distinctive views to the surrounding mountains and foothills of the Mourne, on the character and setting of Rathfriland and on prominent drumlin summits.

Capacity for further wind turbines in some areas is limited due to existing turbine development and in some cases the scale of existing development.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within Ballyroney Basin LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 77 Iveagh Slopes





Distinctive, undulating upland plateau textured with pastures, with patches of gorse.



Long views to Mourne mountains



Strong horizontal field pattern on upper slopes.

Physical Characteristics

Location of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The entire Iveagh Slopes landscape character area lies within the Borough. A portion of its southern boundary aligns with the boundary between Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council and Newry, Mourne & Down Council area.

Topography and Drainage

Knock Iveagh Hill is located in the east of this LCA. This LCA includes the upper slopes of Knock Iveagh, this is a rugged landscape, where numerous rocky outcrops interrupt the terrain. These natural features contribute to the area's distinctive topography, offering a pleasing contrast to the smoother, lower elevations and adding visual interest to the upland scenery.

Tributaries of the Upper Bann river are designated in the northern portion of this LCA.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The Iveagh Slopes landscape character area includes the steep, northern slopes of Knock Iveagh. They support marginal pasture which is grazed by sheep and cattle; scattered patches of gorse add texture to the landscape. The upper plateau is undulating, with areas of bog within the numerous shallow depressions.

The upper slopes of Knock Iveagh are littered with rocky outcrops. There is a distinctive elongated field pattern, with hedgerows running parallel to the slope contours. The landscape is relatively open, with scattered mature trees, particularly on lower slopes. While many of the narrow roads have a more sheltered character due to overgrown hedgerows and some mature trees. Farm dwellings and their associated buildings are often situated at the end of long, straight lanes which sets them back from the road.

Key elements biodiversity interest

- Generally low in diversity of habitats and species
- Woodland very scarce and only a few small patches of fen
- Improved pastures dominate, but there are large areas of rough grazing with patches of gorse

Natural Heritage Sites

No international or national environmental designations

No Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs)

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

The settlements of Annaclone and Glasker are located within this landscape character area.

The settlement pattern predominately consists of evenly dispersed farmsteads with their associated outbuildings, and groups of single dwellings, some of which have developed around key road junctions.

Built Character

In some areas, there is a noticeable concentration of individual dwellings that feature more urban style designs and a diverse range of building materials, rather than the simpler, traditional rural styles. These properties often have expansive domestic curtilages, and the presence of boundary walls and ornamental gardens further diminishes the rural character of the surroundings.

Examples of other built development within this LCA include industrial sheds, a large business yards, some public utility infrastructure and a large turbine which is located on the summit of Knock Iveagh all of which can be considered as prominent features within this landscape.

Quarries

No active quarries in this LCA

Built Heritage Assets

The recorded range of built heritage interest in this landscape character area is as follows:

- Over 100 Historic Monuments
- 6 scheduled historic monuments, including Knock Iveagh
- Over 25 Listed Buildings
- Over 20 Industrial heritage sites
- 1 Defence heritage site
- 3 Areas of Archaeological Potential

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

Some historic and cultural links to this area include:

- Bronte Homeland, birthplace of Patrick Brontë, father of the three famous literary siblings, Anne, Charlotte and Emily.
- Knock Fairies – Cave in Knock Hill stretches from the cairn to Rathfriland, local folklore says that this cave is used by fairies as means of escape during times of warfare, can be heard singing and dancing around cairn in winter.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- The picnic site at Knock Iveagh provides a location from which the rolling hills and views of the Mourne Mountains can be enjoyed. The picnic area occupies the ruins of a former shebeen. The Mournes provide a scenic backdrop.

- Opportunity to enjoy and access Bronte Homeland include: A scenic drive, covering all of the sites relevant Public Right of Way Emdale Road to Imdel Cross. Bridle Path Bronte Road to Emdale Road and a Right of Way Bronte Road to Ballinskeagh Road.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

In general, this is a high quality landscape, with sporadic attractive stone buildings and well-managed, unspoilt farmland. The upland, open character and remote, unspoilt qualities of the landscape results in its relatively high sensitivity to change.

There are long views across Northern Ireland to the Sperrins and the Mourne when visibility is clear.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is characterised by a mixed grassland agricultural pattern with medium-sized fields enclosed by hedgerows and post-and-wire fencing. While the underlying rural character remains evident, it has been increasingly influenced by suburban-style dwellings, large-scale commercial and distribution facilities, and associated traffic, which detract from the traditional countryside setting. In some areas, fragmented hedgerows and their replacement with fencing have weakened landscape structure, while the growing presence of wind turbines impacts on scenic perception and views. Upland areas retain a stronger sense of openness and rurality, with rough grazing, gorse and relatively well-integrated farmsteads, although masts, turbines and water infrastructure reduce scenic quality. Overall, the landscape remains moderately attractive and functional, but modern development and infrastructure are gradually eroding its distinctiveness and rural character.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Modern distribution, storage and agricultural developments have significantly reduced the semi-natural character of the landscape.
- Clusters of single dwellings and light industrial uses have introduced suburban influences and weakened rural character.
- The growing presence of wind turbines is contributing to changes in landscape character and visual perception.
- Masts, turbines and water infrastructure have reduced landscape unity and naturalness, altering traditional character.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The number of turbines within this area is notable and are conspicuous in this largely rural, rolling landscape. Modern agricultural developments, together with clusters of single dwellings and light industrial uses, have reduced the rural character of the landscape and introduced suburban

influences into the countryside. Collectively, these developments have begun to diminish the area's its sense of place and local distinctiveness.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicates low development pressure for wind turbines across the central portion of the LCA 2010 and 2024, this pressure increased to medium on its western and eastern margins.

In relation to rural housing, between 2010-2024, the pressure analysis indicates a largely low development pressure with a few small, localised medium pressure areas in the northeast portion of the LCA.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from **NILCA 2000** that continue to be relevant for this portion of the LCA are:

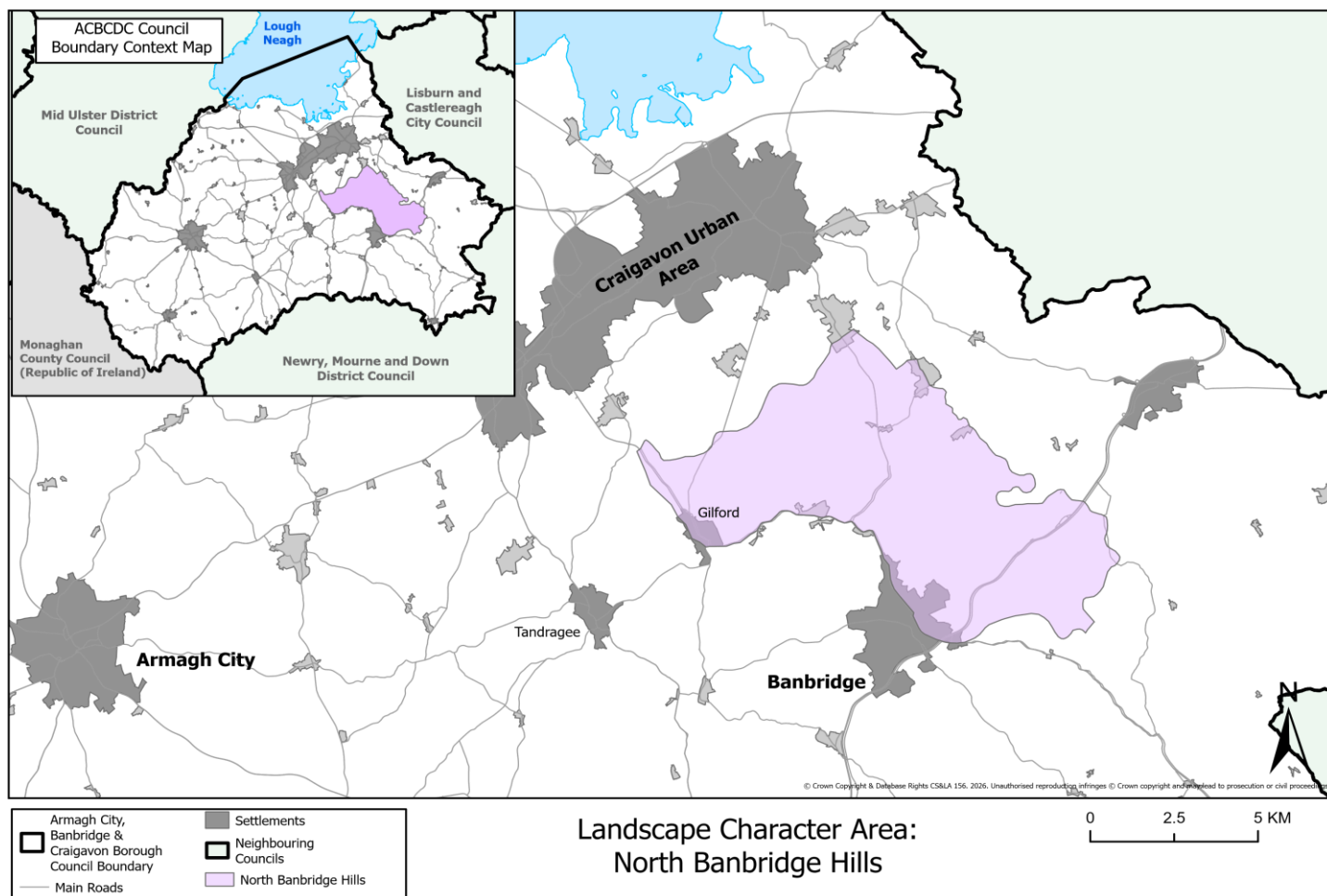
- The siting of built development at the end of long driveways, set back from the road, is appropriate to the character of the area.
- Siting new development on the lower slopes will ensure that the wild rocky character of the upland areas is conserved.
- The use of natural stone for built development and farm outbuildings is characteristic of this upland area.
- Small clusters of dwellings are sited at road junctions; ribbon development spreading out from these junctions is not typical of the area

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that the elevated nature and visual prominence of this LCA relative to other surrounding low lying landscapes, and the distinctive ridge of Knockiveagh, make this landscape sensitive to poorly sited wind energy development. Cultural heritage features and their settings are also sensitive particularly those sites that form local landmarks. However the medium scale, open and elevated nature of the central plateau, and its clear visual separation from the landscapes of the Mourne and Slieve Croob reduce the sensitivity overall.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within Iveagh Slopes LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 78 North Banbridge Hills





Smooth, rounded hills, ridges and drumlins



Attractive field pattern with hedgerows often running down slopes and along ridgelines



Diverse landscape pattern with many contrasts in texture

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The North Banbridge Hills LCA is located entirely within the Borough and includes the north eastern portion of Banbridge. Extending northwards the LCA includes the southern portion of Waringstown and Donaghcloney, the northern portion of Gilford in the west and the settlements of Lawrencetown, Lenaderg and Seapatrick.

Topography, Geology and Rivers

The North Banbridge Hills comprise a landscape of elongated ridges and gently rounded drumlins, interspersed with small valleys and areas of moss. The area extends northwards and eastwards from Banbridge towards the Craigavon Plateau and the Donaghcloney Valley LCAs. The hills are divided by narrow, winding valleys and broader low-lying areas, where pockets of marsh and wet meadows are common and often dissected by drainage ditches. The steep-sided valley of the River Bann forms the southern boundary of this LCA.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The LCA crosses the A1 linking Dromore and Banbridge. Overall the LCA consists of smooth, rounded hills and ridges interspersed with drumlins with areas of rough grazing, rushes and scrub on the lower ground, proving a notable contrast in landscape texture. This varied landscape includes a mix of improved grassland and arable farming. Fields are medium in scale and differ in shape and size, with most hills and drumlins divided by dense hedgerows and numerous hedgerow trees, creating a strong field pattern. Farms and houses are typically located on ridgelines or upper slopes and are often accompanied by shelter planting, with small mixed woodlands scattered throughout.

The steep valley of the River Bann forms the southern boundary and has historically been a focus of both industrial and residential development. Historic mills, stone buildings, churches and mature trees create a distinctive and attractive sequence of landmarks along the valley.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Areas of fen and wet pasture in hollows and low-lying ground add important biodiversity interest within an otherwise extensive improved grassland.
- Pockets of woodland associated with estates and former mills, in particular along the River Bann are important to biodiversity.

Natural Heritage Sites

There are no national or international environmental designations within this LCA.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest (SLNCIs) include:

- Clare Bog
- Knocknagore Fen
- Glass Moss

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Settlements that are located within this LCA are the northern portion of Banbridge town, Blackskull, Ballynabragget, the northeastern portion of Gilford, Lenaderg, Seapatrick, the southern portion of Waringstown, Lawrencetown, and the western side of Donaghcloney.

The area contains a relatively dense pattern of rural single dwellings of varied design and scale, reflecting a long-established history of rural settlement. However, the presence of numerous residential clusters and pockets of more recent linear development, typically characterised by more modern scale, design and finishes, has an increasing impact on rural character in many areas.

Built Character

The LCA contains a wide variety of built development. This includes a solar farm, sports grounds, commercial yards, wind turbines and agricultural structures/buildings such as polytunnels. At road junctions notable clusters of single dwellings and occasionally light, commercial uses add to the erosion of rural character.

Many dwellings are relatively small-scale but of non-traditional design with more recent dwellings becoming greater in scale and massing with less vernacular design features.

Quarries:

The following quarries are located within this LCA:

- Magherally/ Gibson Bros Ltd;
- Tullyraine Quarry

Built Heritage Assets

The recorded built heritage interest in this Landscape Character Area is as follows:

- Over 100 historic monuments, 8 of which are scheduled
- Over 100 Listed buildings
- 6 Historic, Parks Garden and Demesne
- Approximately 40 Industrial heritage features
- 6 Defense heritage sites and
- 3 Areas of Archaeological Potential

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Community assets including parks, public paths, health, education and local government facilities are available in both Gilford and to a larger extent, Banbridge.
- A concentration of historic sites can be found within the wetlands and meadows of the valley floor of the River Bann suggesting a dense settlement settle pattern during Early Christian period.
- Banbridge town owes its success to the linen industry and its location on the river Bann, it was at the heart of Ireland's principal linen producing district in the later 18th century.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- The A1 connects the A50, via Banbridge, crosses the, A26, A50, B3, B9 southeast corner of the LCA, connecting Banbridge to many smaller settlements and Newry.
- A network of B-class roads and smaller, rural roads provide access throughout the remainder of the LCA.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Overall, this LCA exhibits a complex and, at times, visually challenging landscape. While the underlying landscape is generally attractive, the cumulative presence of built development detracts from its overall quality. Rounded hilltops, together with mature hedgerows and trees play an important role in providing visual screening and helping development integrate into the landscape. The presence of pylons and turbines, particularly on more elevated sites, has a dominant influence on the visual aesthetic, in addition, quarrying activity also introduces a notable industrial element within the landscape.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape exhibits a complex and dynamic visual character, defined by constantly shifting viewpoints across varied drumlin landforms, an enclosed field pattern and diverse vegetation, all of which provide some capacity to visually integrate development. While many hedgerows remain intact, they are generally under-managed, and the loss of mature hedgerow trees has reduced overall landscape quality and visual structure, although some dwellings still benefit from screening by mature deciduous vegetation. Visually sensitive areas include ridges, larger drumlin slopes and the Bann Valley, where recent development has been particularly prominent along ridgeline roads. The special character and visual amenity of the Upper Bann Valley, to the north-west of Banbridge, is further threatened by continuing linear development. In addition, pylons have a significant visual impact, especially where they traverse ridgelines.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Introduction of a mix of developments including solar farms, turbines and large commercial and industrial buildings have had an impact on the rural perception and visual amenity of the LCA.
- Extension or introduction of linear development along many roads.
- Intensive agricultural practices resulting in the loss of hedgerows and trees as well as the introduction of large scale agricultural buildings.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The changes in landscape condition are individually adversely impacting on rural character and collectively they are degrading the scenic amenity and enjoyment of this LCA. The loss of hedgerows and trees as well as the introduction of power infrastructure has a damaging impact on local visual amenity and sense of place.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicates low development pressure for wind turbines experienced across the majority of this LCA between 2010 and 2024.

In relation to rural housing, the pressure analysis indicates that there are many localised areas throughout this LCA that have experienced medium – high development pressure between 2010-2024.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Large-scale development which has been sited following careful visual analysis and associated with extensive native planting will be more easily accommodated. In general, large-scale development should be restricted on upper slopes and local ridgelines, where it is likely to be prominent.
- The conservation of hedgerows and replacement of hedgerow trees will help to retain the distinctive and varied field pattern; priority should be given to hedgerow tree planting along ridgeline roads, to reduce the landscape sensitivity of these prominent and vulnerable sites.
- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular rural influences.

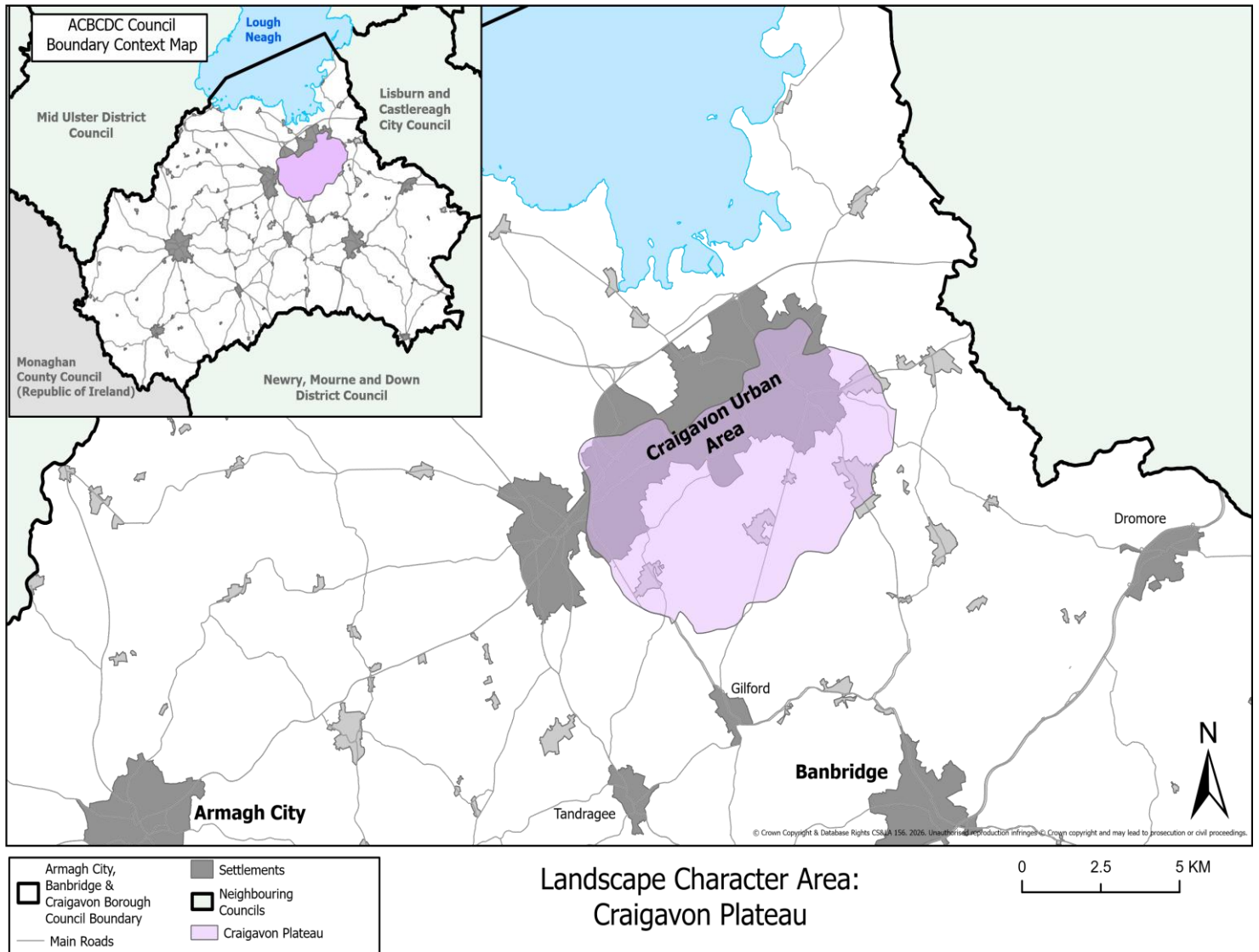
Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are

- The higher hills in the east and south-east of the LCA may have the best capacity for wind energy development, particularly in areas where the landscape is already affected by development such as quarrying.
- Consideration could be given to carefully siting turbines within the hilltop undulations. It is recommended that wind energy development reflects the scale of the relatively low hills that are found in this LCA.
- It is recommended that attempts be made to minimise the siting of turbines where they will be seen in close proximity to electricity transmission lines.
- Particular care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on hilltops and landmark features of natural or cultural heritage interest, particularly close to the River Bann where mill buildings form landmarks. Open wetland areas and drumlin skylines should be respected.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the North Banbridge Hills LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 79 Craigavon Plateau





Open plateau with distant views across Lough Neagh towards the Sperrins.



Treed shelter belt to the rear of modern home

Physical Characteristics

Location of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

Located entirely within the Borough, Craigavon Plateau, a relatively elevated flat area, encompasses the large urban areas of Lurgan, Portadown and Craigavon as well as a number of larger residential settlements.

Topography and Drainage

The Craigavon Plateau is located at the south western edge of the Upper Ballinderry Plateau area. It is found to the south of the Lough Neagh Peatlands landscape and the M1 Motorway and includes the extensive urban areas of Lurgan, Craigavon, and east Portadown. The plateau has a gently rolling or undulating landform, with steeper slopes on the margins of the Donaghcloney Valley, to the north east where there are a number of small drains and streams flowing into the River Lagan and to the valley of the Upper Bann to the south. Small, winding, steep-sided valleys are attractive features on the southern edges of the plateau.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is an undulating plateau with steeper slopes on the edges of the Donaghcloney Valley and the Upper Bann Valley LCAs and small, winding, steep-sided valleys on the southern slopes of the plateau. It presents a varied pattern with pasture, paddocks, small-holdings, and some larger farms and estates. Numerous hedgerows and roadside trees add to the scenic characteristics. However, extensive development including infrastructure works on the periphery of larger villages and the urban fringe, has altered some local areas to have a more urban perception. Nevertheless, there are many areas that remain abundant in rural characteristics and pleasing aesthetic qualities. The long history of settlement has given rise to some prominent churches, which serve as local landmarks.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Woodland occupies a small proportion of the land cover and is mainly found on former demesnes or in small, planted areas that are part of the planned layout of Craigavon.
- Making up the majority of rural land use is grassland which is improved and therefore of low biodiversity value.
- Semi-natural woodland and less improved grassland is located mainly between Lurgan and Portadown and occurs as undeveloped land and planned open space in Craigavon. These provide pockets of habitat and ecological linkages.

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

No national or international environmental designations

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs):

- Lurgan Park Lake

Landscape Features

Settlements and Rural Dwellings

Settlements located within this landscape character area are: Waringstown, Bleary, Drumnacanny, Dollingstown, Gibson's Hill and parts of the Craigavon Urban Area (including a large proportion of Portadown, Craigavon and Lurgan).

The higher proportion of urban area within this LCA, including both large and small villages and settlements has led to many occasions of linear residential development along major and minor roads as well as large groupings of dwellings close to the edge of settlements. While some dwellings have shelter belts that aid their integration, others are more conspicuous. Many dwellings are of more complicated, suburban styles and scale compared to the simple, traditional rural designs. Notably, at the edge of some larger villages the dwellings have followed a more urban pattern, design, scale, massing, and use of materials.

Despite the high proportion of development within this LCA there are many areas, particularly in the south, that retain many rural characteristics and a tranquil experience.

Built Character

Along major roads there is a high number of commercial businesses and associated large sheds and industrial scale buildings and infrastructure. Turbines, pylons, masts, and poles traverse this LCA.

Frequent occurrences of linear residential development of dwellings which tend to be suburban in their scale, layout and design. This is also experienced along the edges of larger urban areas and villages. The variety of styles and materials used in residential development reflects the long history of demand for rural dwellings in this LCA

Many listed buildings offer an historic context to this rural landscape and there are many examples of traditional agricultural buildings that again reflect the long history of settlement in this landscape.

Quarries

No active quarries

Built Heritage Assets

Long history of settlement has provided a wealth and variety of historic features

- Over 40 historic monuments
- Approximately 10 defense heritage sites
- 4 Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesne
- Over 60 Industrial Heritage sites
- 5 Scheduled Monuments
- Over 120 Listed Buildings

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

Many community assets such as hospitals, parks, schools and recreation are associated with the urban areas. However the rural area also benefits from a rich and diverse range of historic

and cultural expression at many scales in the landscape, from the entire LCA to individual townlands and communities.

The numerous historic settlements contribute strongly to the area's sense of place, providing residents and visitors with a tangible connection to its history, heritage and cultural identity. Each settlement possesses its own distinct character and identity, and this individuality plays an important role in shaping perceptions of the local landscape and fostering a sense of belonging and attachment.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- Rail link with stations in Lurgan and Portadown.
- Dense network of B class roads and minor roads in the northern portion of this LCA becoming more sparse in the southern portion.
- A large number of parks and open spaces are associated with the urban areas.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Although this landscape assessment review focusses primarily on the rural areas of the Borough it is important to note that the large urban area impacts significantly on the scenic and sensory perception of this landscape character area. Nevertheless there are also many opportunities within these towns and villages to appreciate their unique visual amenity and their many natural and historic features.

The plateau offers some opportunities for open and long range views, in particular to the Sperrins which provides a pleasing perception and gives context and a sense of place to the area in terms of its position to the south of and overlooking the Lough Neagh region.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is in moderate condition, retaining a largely rural character supported by a varied agricultural pattern, extensive hedgerows, roadside trees, and a strong historic built heritage. However, urban expansion, linear residential development, commercial activity along major transport corridors, and the widespread presence of infrastructure such as turbines, pylons, masts and large agricultural or industrial buildings have introduced urbanising influences and weakened landscape cohesion in places. Despite these pressures, many areas continue to exhibit high visual amenity, a strong sense of history, and attractive rural views.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Development sprawl and instances of linear development are notable.
- The effects of more modern farming techniques are somewhat lessened by the retention and re-use of many traditional farm buildings.

- Utilities infrastructure is perhaps more prominent due to individual turbines throughout the LCA.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The changes in landscape condition have had a medium impact on the overall landscape characteristics of Craigavon Plateau LCA, as detailed in NILCA 2000 when it was noted that there was growth of residential development on the fringes of some settlements. This growth has continued and developed into further linear development along some roads. In relation to the cultural, perceived and intangible aspects of landscape character some changes such as the often non-rural design and scale of dwellings and the move towards larger, industrial style agricultural buildings erodes at what remains of local rural characteristics and risks more suburban characteristics throughout the rural area.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicates low development pressure for wind turbines in the rural portion of this LCA between 2010 and 2024. It should be noted that the Craigavon Urban Area makes up a large proportion of this LCA.

In relation to rural housing, the pressure analysis indicates a high – medium development pressure throughout much of the LCA between 2010-2024, with a large concentration of applications in the central portion of this LCA.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this landscape character area are:

- The existing character of the smaller villages and plateau settlements is threatened by extensive, relatively homogeneous new development; further new development could be subject to a local design guide which identifies and analyses the traditional patterns and relationships between landscape and settlement so that these can be used as a model for the future.
- There is little scope for further built development on the edges of the Lagan and Upper Bann valleys unless it is very carefully sited and designed and associated with new hedgerow and tree planting; elsewhere, new development can be integrated within the landscape if it is planned strategically and grouped in clusters rather than along roads.

In terms of wind energy infrastructure **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** states that the small scale landscape patterns and densely settled character of this LCA tend to increase its sensitivity. Any significant wind energy development could be both out of scale with the landscape and highly visible. The steeper slopes and more rural areas on the margins of the River Bann and the Donaghcloney valley are the most sensitive and visible parts of the landscape; but parts of the plateau are also sensitive due to visual clutter and lack of a clear structure. Sensitivity is reduced, however, by the presence of widespread existing man-made influences; it is lowest in areas of derelict or brownfield land and along heavily developed transport corridors.

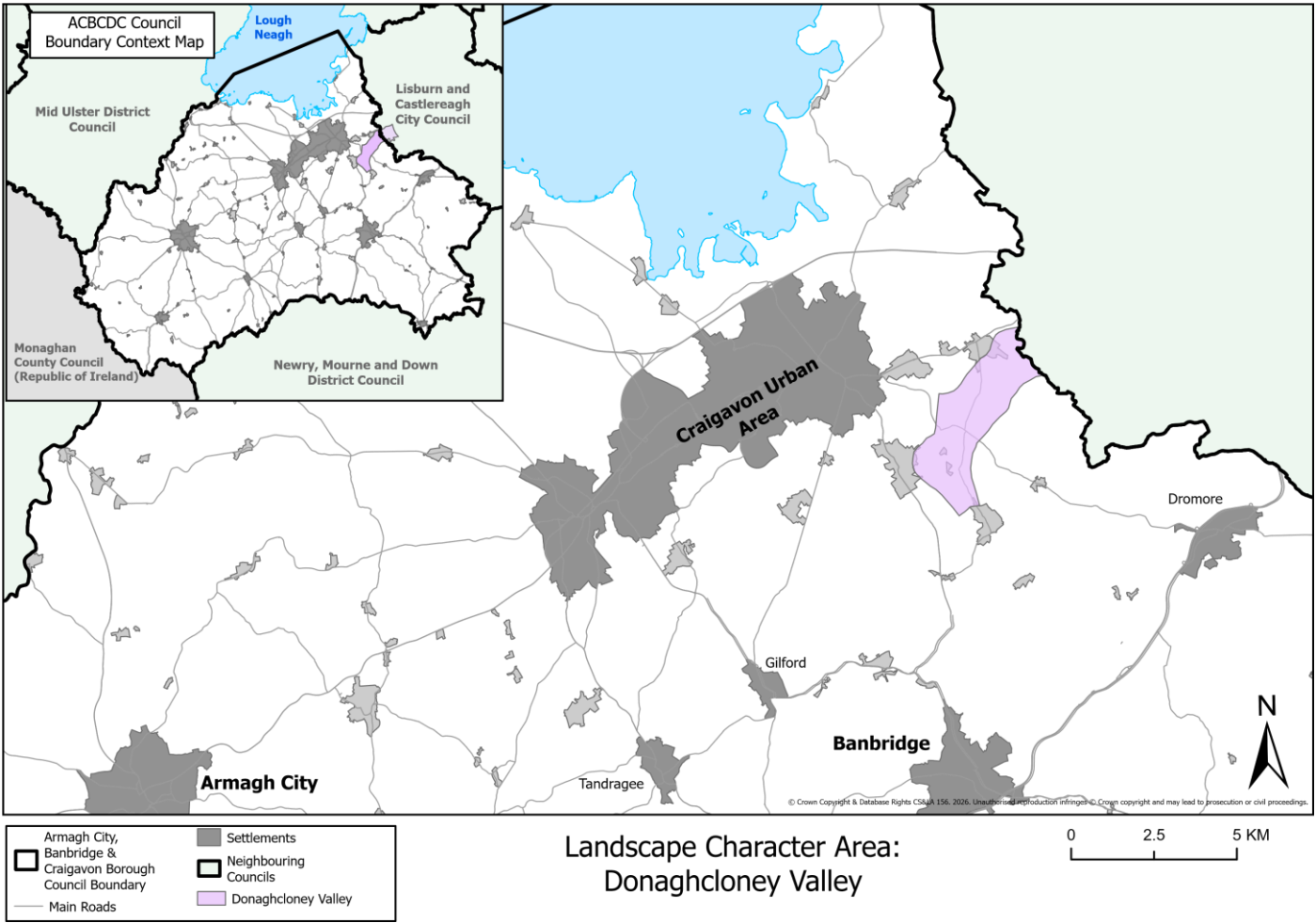
Suitable sites for some form of wind energy development are most likely to be found in areas of derelict or brownfield land, in developed areas such as industrial estates and transport corridors,

and in open farmland. It is recommended that any turbines should fit well in terms of siting, scale and design with existing built structures. Care should be taken to minimise visual impacts from dwellings and public open spaces. Care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on sensitive landscape features such as river corridors, particularly in the southern part of the LCA.

Outcome of Review

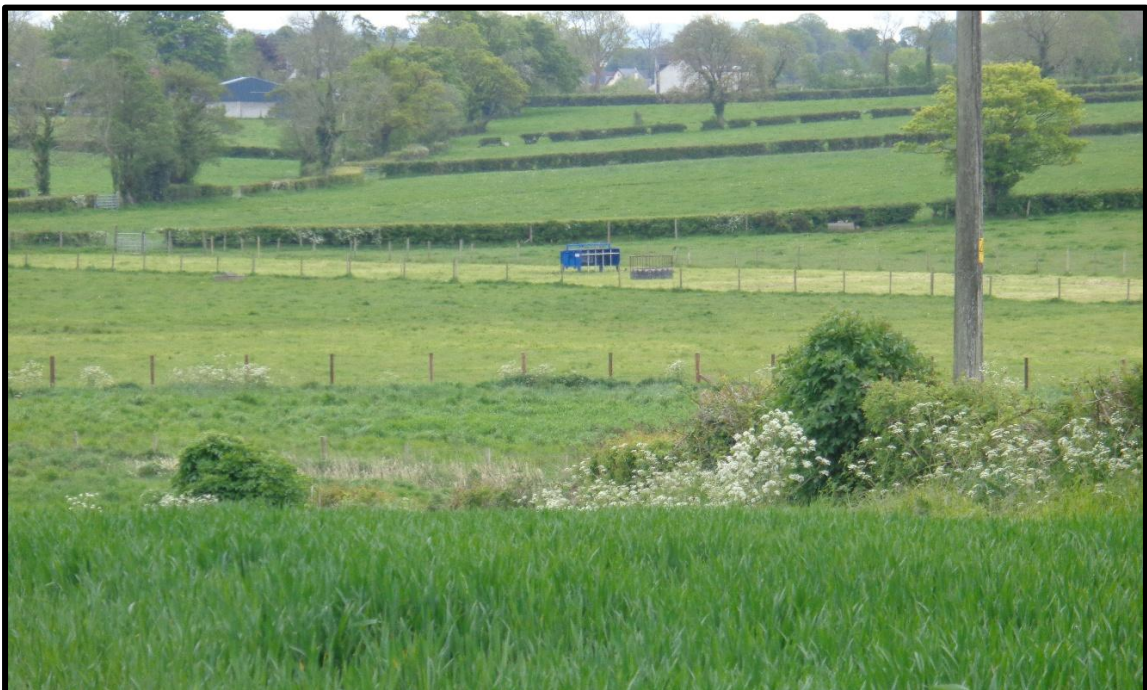
It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Craigavon Plateau LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 80 Donaghcloney Valley





Scattered hedgerow trees and slightly open character



Large, geometric fields divided by low hedgerows.



Rural character but with some large scale industrial development

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The majority of this LCA is located within the Borough with only its northern most section extending into Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. The valley is associated with the section of the river Lagan that flows from just north of Donaghcloney through Waringstown and on to Magheralin.

Topography and Rivers

Broad, flat bottom valley with meandering, narrow river channel, which lies between the Upper Ballinderry Plateau and the Kilwarlin Plateau

There are no strong topographical barriers in the region, boundaries tend to be subtle. Lowland areas south of Lough Neagh are dominated by extensive 'drumlin swarms'

Within the Donaghcloney Valley the River Lagan meanders tightly at the entrance to the broad valley in the north east and is a prominent focus in views.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is predominantly rural and agricultural, centred around the River Lagan, which flows through a mix of grassland and arable farmland. It features a broad, open field pattern with expansive views across open grassland. Fields are generally large, bordered by hedgerows and scattered trees, with geometric boundaries that become more enclosed moving eastward. In the southern part of the LCA, larger fields are often subdivided with electric fencing. Most field boundaries are defined by well-maintained hedges and occasional trees, though there is a noticeable shift toward modern boundary markers such as wire fencing and galvanized steel gates. At the head of the valley, hedgerows become increasingly sparse and broken.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Agricultural grassland is dominated by improved pasture of low biodiversity value
- Notable proportion of arable land which offers habitats for birds such as thrush.
- No significant areas of wetland
- There is very little woodland, with no active or commercial forestry.
- There are some scattered mature, deciduous trees within hedgerows and inner field boundaries.

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

There are no national and international environmental designations within this LCA.

There are no Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) located within this LCA.

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Within this LCA there are parts of four settlements: Magheralin, Waringstown, Ballymacmaine and Milltown (Co. Down).

The edge of Magheralin has witnessed significant growth, predominately through single rural dwellings resulting in ribbon development. Along the roads and rural laneways within the center of the valley there is further evidence of the growth of ribbon development. A large proportion of the single rural dwellings are more modern in design, massing and materials, often with large suburban style gardens which do not take account of the traditional rural characteristics. There are however some traditional style stone farms steads remaining.

Built Character

Within this LCA some, small commercial enterprises located in the rural area have an incongruent appearance, often resembling industrial-style sheds. Farm sizes vary across the area, with a mix of both small and large holdings. Larger farms are generally characterised by clusters of industrial-style sheds and silos, while smaller holdings tend to retain a more traditional aesthetic, featuring older outbuildings constructed from stone. Additionally, there are two major and prominent industrial sites (Glambia near Magheralin and Polypipe near Waringstown) within the LCA, contributing to an industrial character.

Quarries

There are no operational quarries located within this LCA:

Built Heritage Assets

Within this LCA there is an array of monuments, scheduled sites, listed buildings and industrial heritage:

- There are over 10 historic sites or monuments
- There are approximately 8 listed buildings including Newforge House and Banoge House.
- One scheduled site - Ballymacateer
- One supplementary Historic Park Garden and Demesne site at Strawhill
- There 10 industrial heritage sites, including mill, weaving factory and bridges
- There are no defense heritage or Areas of Archaeological Potential in this LCA.

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Community assets associated with the settlements, e.g. community halls, schools etc.
- There are no obvious community assets within the LCA, outside of the settlements.
- Magheralin- original name was Lann Rónáin Fhinn (Church of Ronan Finn). A saint from the famous tale Bile Shuibhne (The madness of Sweeney).

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

Access within this LCA is limited to open space associated with settlements, footpaths between villages, fishing permit holders along the River Lagan and along transport corridors. There are no public Rights of Way.

The area is adjacent to the River Lagan and roads traverse over historic bridges these have a positive influence due to historic aesthetics and associations with the river. As a result of modern development this landscape offers differing enjoyment between challenging and pleasant.

Within this LCA overall the roads are minor and focused around the centre of the LCA. There is the B9 Newforge Road between Magheralin and Donaghcloney, the B2 Dromore Road and a wide array of rural roads.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

In general, this rural farming landscape has a pleasant scenic quality. There are enjoyable views over the river channel and scattered trees along river banks. Additionally, the open rural character lends itself to long distant views into the Kilwarlin Plateau. However, the cumulative impact of modern development and urban sprawl has interrupted the enjoyment of this LCA and created some challenging influences through large agricultural sheds, intensification of single rural dwelling development and growth of industrial sites. This has created a diverse and transitional LCA.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

This LCA lies within a broad valley dominated by the River Lagan, which serves as a key topographical and visual feature. The landscape is defined by large, geometric fields with low hedgerows, supporting open grassland and some small-scale arable farming. Modern agricultural practices have introduced large, industrial-sized sheds and subdivided pastures, which detract from the area's traditional rural characteristics.

Large industrial units and associated heavy traffic have a dominant influence on rural perception and scenic enjoyment.

The spread of modern, single dwellings and ribbon development predominantly along B roads has further eroded the agricultural characteristics, moderately reducing the scenic quality and enjoyment. Despite these pressures, the open nature of the valley still offers pleasant views, particularly towards the Lagan Valley and along the riverbanks.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Significant residential growth to the south east of Magheralin with an extensive range of styles and finishes. Many dwellings are large in scale with ornamental gardens adding to the perception of a suburban area.
- The presence of large agricultural buildings, the use of heavy machinery, and the removal of hedgerows have contributed to a more open and exposed landscape which is accentuated by the scale of the built structures.
- Large industrial sites with expansive, reflective materials used in manufacturing and storage is a significant effect on visual amenity, sensory experience and rural perception.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The individual changes in landscape condition are adversely impacting rural character, however collectively these changes are degrading the scenic amenity and enjoyment of this LCA. The loss of hedgerows and associated trees is leading to a more open river valley within which large structures are more prominent.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicates low development pressure for wind turbines experienced across the majority of this LCA within the Borough between 2010 and 2024.

In relation to rural housing, the pressure analysis indicates a low-medium development pressure between 2010-2024.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Further development might be accommodated if it is concentrated in existing residential areas and associated with carefully designed planting which links to existing hedgerow patterns. However, new development should be subject to careful visual analysis, taking account of views from adjacent higher land.
- New buildings along the roads in the centre of the valley would be extremely prominent and the rural character of this sensitive area should be conserved.
- The use of more subdued and natural building materials would help to ensure that modern industrial and agricultural buildings are not obtrusive.
- The practice of storing brightly coloured industrial products (such as piping) under cover will help to screen these distracting elements from views across the valley.

Additional guidelines should include

- Additional planting along settlement margins will help prevent the urbanizing impact of the growing settlements from affecting the immediate rural area, this will also aid establishing a clear distinction between settlement and rural area in terms of scale, design and type of development.

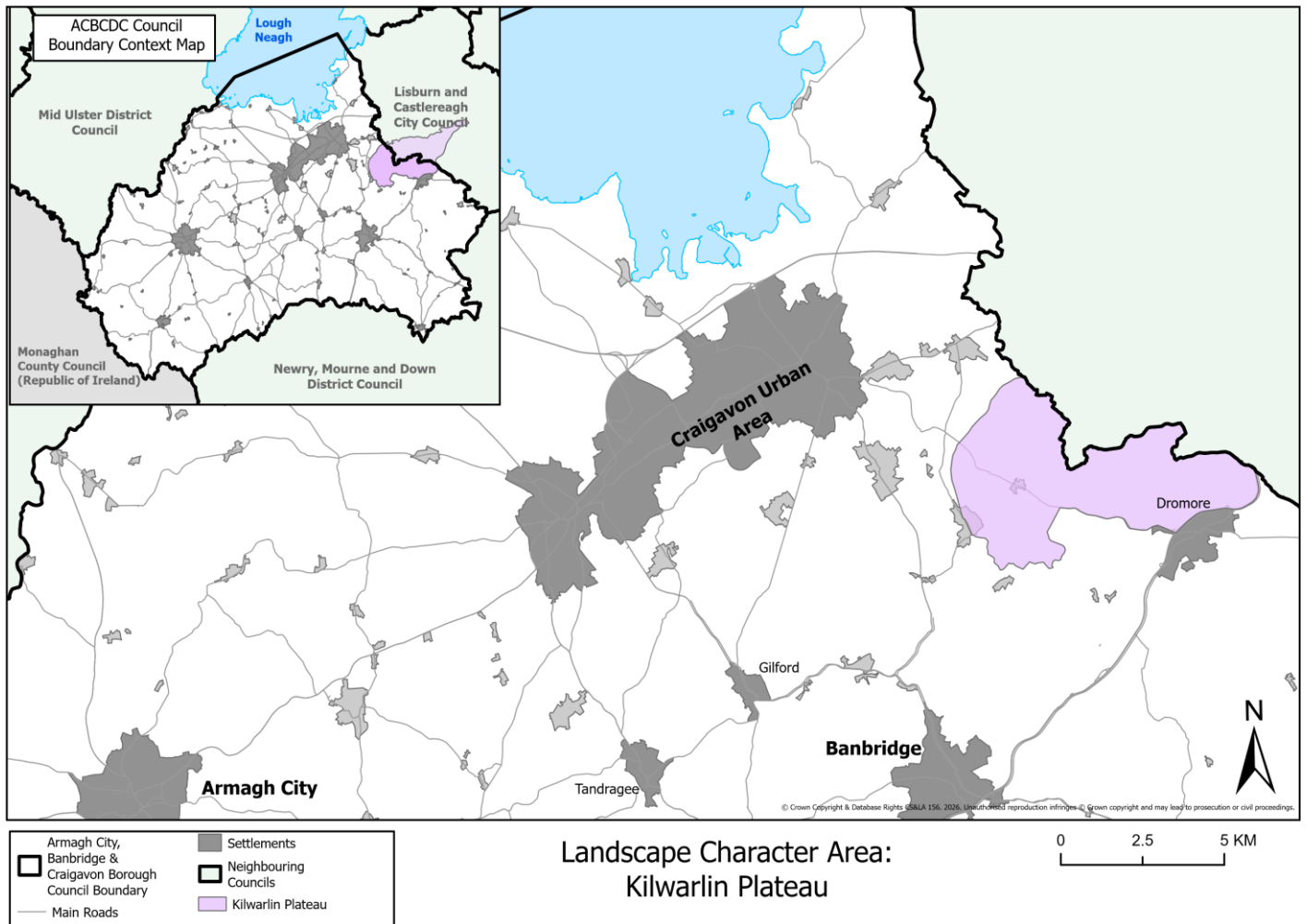
Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are:

- This very small LCA has little space for wind energy development, which could easily be out of scale and out of place in the open floodplain landscape.
- The area is closely overlooked by the settlements of Magheralin and Moira. It is highly sensitive overall.
- The centre of the valley is most prominent and open and therefore particularly sensitive to any wind energy development.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Donaghcloney Valley LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 81 Kilwarlin Plateau





Broad plateau, with rounded summits



Smooth, consistent landscape pattern, with very few patches of unused land.



Mature stands of mixed woodland shelter traditional farmsteads.

Physical Characteristics

Location of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

Approximately half of the Kilwarlin Plateau LCA lies within the Borough, the remaining area extending NW towards Hillsborough in Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area. Within the borough the LCA includes the settlement of Gamblestown and the eastern side of Donaghcloney.

Topography and Rivers

The landscape can be summarised as a broad plateau, with rounded summits and an escarpment overlooking the Lagan Valley. The escarpment slopes of the Kilwarlin Plateau overlook the Lagan Valley and extend from Hillsborough to Moira. Within the LCA, the plateau dips very gradually to the west. It has an undulating surface, with rounded summits echoing a drumlin form.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is characterised by a neat patchwork of relatively large, geometric fields divided by hedgerows. Hedgerow boundaries are generally well maintained with thick, mature hedgerow species and scattered mature deciduous trees. On the more elevated ground hedgerows have more gorse. Hedgerow removal is evident and in some cases the introduction of wire fencing for subdivision of larger, pasture fields. Traditional farmsteads are sheltered by mature stands of mixed woodland. Extensive areas of improved grassland associated with modern, intensive agricultural practices exist alongside some pockets of arable farming. This intensification has a negative impact on biodiversity. Old stone wall boundaries remain in a few locations.

Key elements of biodiversity interest

- Agricultural land is dominated by improved pasture with a sparse scattering of rough and acid grassland
- Fens have been lost to pasture due to drainage
- Generous scattering of mature deciduous trees and mature, well maintained hedgerows, in particular, between field boundaries.

Natural Heritage Sites

No national or international environmental designation is located within the borough's small portion of this LCA.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs):

- Islandderry Lough

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Just a small area of the Kilwarlin plateau lies within the borough. Settlements include just Gamblestown and the eastern portion of Donaghcloney

While the area is predominantly characterised by dispersed single dwellings, there are noticeable instances of ribbon development and small groups of housing, resulting in a more irregular and fragmented settlement pattern.

The cumulative impact of this increase in the number of dwellings has resulted in a shift towards a more sub-urban appearance and perception. This is further enhanced by urban style walls and large, ornamental gardens. There are some positive steps at integration through small scale screening with deciduous semi-native hedgerows.

Built Character

The local landscape is increasingly affected by groups of modern, suburban-style single dwellings, particularly around road junctions, contributing to a fragmented and suburbanised character. These dwellings are at times in ribbon development form and have suburban boundary treatments such as cement or stone-clad walls, post-and-rail fencing, and manicured gardens. While some elements remain relatively in keeping with the rural setting, the cumulative effect is one of visual fragmentation.

The accumulation of development is further compounded by the intensification of agricultural practices, including high-yield grassland production, intensive dairy farming and the increased use of large agricultural machinery, all of which influence the visual character and experiential qualities of the landscape. The operation of an anaerobic digester also contributes to changes in sensory perception, while wind turbines introduce prominent vertical features that are locally influential within the landscape.

Quarries:

- There are no quarries or landing sites located within this LCA.

Built Heritage Assets

Despite being quite a small portion of land, this section of Kilwarlin Plateau contains a generous number of historic features:

- Over 50 Historic sites and monuments
- Approximately 10 Listed buildings
- 2 Scheduled Monuments
- 1 Historic Park Garden and Demesne (Gill Hall)
- Over 10 Industrial heritage sites
- 1 Area of Archaeological Potential. (Gamblestown)

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

A high number of historic sites and monuments suggest that the area is rich in historic assets and cultural contributions.

The entire Lagan valley is generously scattered with historic industrial sites, some of which are located within this LCA. The village of Donaghcloney's link to the linen industry dates back to 1742 with William Liddell – the biggest Irish linen company in Ireland which made the linen used on the Titanic.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

- Lurgan to Dromore B class road and a network of smaller rural roads
- Private fishing facility at Islandderry lough
- Edenmore Golf club

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

This is an open and diverse landscape with distant views towards the Mourne AONB and over the Lagan valley. This is a relatively busy, fragmented landscape but it retains a rural tranquillity within this section of the LCA within the borough has been retained in a large part due to well maintained, thick and mature hedgerows and trees throughout. Overall, this is a pleasant landscape distant views towards the Mourne Mountains.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is characterised by a well-maintained pattern of large fields enclosed by mature hedgerows and scattered trees, creating a strong sense of structure and enclosure. While the overall field pattern remains intact, some hedgerow loss and replacement with wire fencing is evident. Intensive grassland management predominates, resulting in generally low biodiversity value, although pockets of woodland and arable land provide some variation. Landscape character has been increasingly affected by groups of modern, suburban-style dwellings, particularly around road junctions, which often occur as ribbon development and are accompanied by suburban boundary treatments, garden layouts and curtilages that contribute to a more fragmented and urbanised appearance. The presence of large agricultural sheds, an anaerobic digester and associated machinery has further weakened the traditional rural character and slightly diminished scenic quality.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Linear sprawl and clustering of newer, modern dwellings along rural roads and road junctions.
- Many new dwellings are more complex in design and scale than traditional rural housing and are often with ornamental gardens that disrupts a simple, uniform landscape.
- Presence of industrial sized agricultural buildings and equipment (anaerobic digester) and turbines is a scale of development that requires careful siting, particularly in the central flat of this plateau.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The changes in landscape condition have had a medium impact on the overall landscape characteristics of the Kilwarlin Plateau, as set out in NILCA 2000. In relation to the cultural, perceived and intangible aspects of landscape character some changes such as the often non-rural design and scale of dwellings and the move towards larger, industrial style agricultural buildings is beginning to erode at local characteristics.

The introduction of larger structures such as anaerobic digester and wind turbine have highlighted the potential impact of what more of such new technologies may have on landscape characteristics.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

The pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicates a medium development pressure for wind turbines across the majority of this LCA within the Borough between 2010 and 2024.

In relation to rural housing, between 2010-2024, the pressure analysis indicates a generally low development pressure with just a few localised areas of medium development pressure.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Views from the Lagan Valley should be carefully considered in siting new development, bearing in mind that buildings close to the broad ridge-top may be prominent.
- Built development has a negative impact in this rural area; buildings which are set back from the road and sheltered by trees can be integrated more easily and should ensure that the tranquil, unspoiled character of the countryside is conserved.
- Stands of trees which contain Scots Pine are characteristic of the landscape and may create appropriate settings for built development

Additional guidelines should include

- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular, rural influences.
- Linear and clustering of dwellings should continue to be controlled.

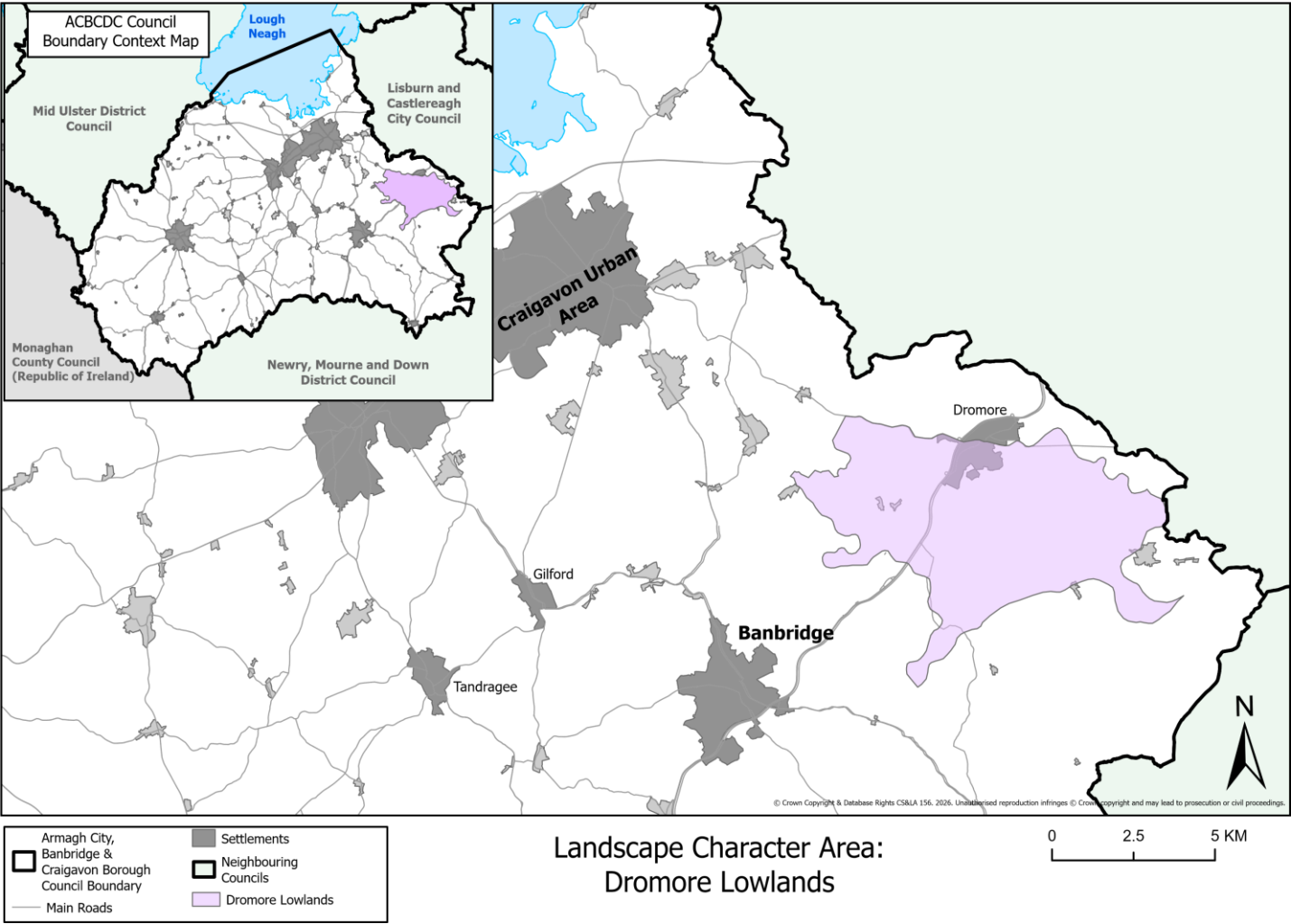
Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that its broad form and long horizontal profile parts of the Kilwarlin Plateau landscape character area might be well suited to accommodate some form of wind energy development. The interior of the plateau might offer the best capacity for wind energy development, utilising the rounded slopes and ridges as screening. Mid slope locations would be the most appropriate.

The northern escarpment is very sensitive and particular care should be taken to avoid unacceptable visual impacts on views from the Lagan valley or on the landscape interests of natural and cultural heritage features. Notable landscape features and drumlin tops should be respected.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Kilwarlin Plateau LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 82 Dromore Lowlands





Small rounded drumlins surrounded by extensive, low-lying areas of moss and regenerating scrub.



Principal roads follow low ridge-lines

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The Dromore Lowlands LCA lies entirely within the Borough. It includes the southern portion of Dromore and stretches from Blackskull in the east to Waringsford in the west.

Topography and Drainage

The Dromore Lowlands is a relatively low-lying landscape to the south of the Kilwarlin Plateau. This is an area of small, rounded drumlins surrounded by low-lying rough pastures, moss and regenerating scrub. The drainage pattern of the numerous tributaries to the upper Lagan is very distinctive, and shows strong evidence of underlying geological control. Typically these streams flow west-southwest to east-northeast along valleys between bedrock ridges that are aligned along a series of faults. The streams then execute in a series of right-angle turns, to break through the ridges, join the Lagan and ultimately flow north-westwards

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is characterised by small, rounded drumlins of improved grassland interspersed with extensive low-lying areas of moss and regenerating scrub, creating a varied and textured landscape. Principal roads and farm tracks tend to follow the natural contours of low ridge-lines. Strong linear elements are present in the form of hedgerows, marking the boundaries of medium size fields, blocks of woodland, and shelterbelts, with scattered hedgerow trees contributing to the unity of the landscape. Hedges are generally well maintained and in good condition however there is evidence of hedgerow removal and replacement with wire fencing. Some mid field boundaries have been broken and remain open to extend field sizes for grazing.

A distinct contrast in texture is evident between the smooth, managed pastures on the drumlins and the rougher, scrubby bog areas, enhancing the area's visual diversity and rural character. Some small pockets of arable crops create further texture.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Small pockets of woodland within small parks, estate woodlands and wet woodland around fens
- Many areas of fen originating from cutting of peat bogs with associated scrub woodland
- Improved grassland is dominant but there are significant areas of rough, damp grassland

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

No international or national designated sites are within this LCA.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI) within this LCA are:

- Ballysallagh Fen
- Black Bog
- Corbet Fen
- Drumbroneth Fen
- Gall Bog
- Lough Moss
- Rowantree Moss
- Skillyscolban Lake and Big Bog

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Settlements within this LCA are Dromore, Blackskull and Ashfield/Gowdystown.

The area features scattered rural dwellings, some of which are older, simple buildings, sensitively integrated into the landscape and also benefit from effective screening by mature deciduous trees. However, a number of modern, larger houses detract from the rural character. There is a noticeable clustering and scattering of contemporary dwellings with mixed architectural styles and varying levels of screening

Built Character

The landscape is characterised by a dense scattering of single dwellings, with some limited clustering. While overall development is not extensive, many of the dwellings are modern and suburban in design, with the more recent additions appearing particularly incongruous and visually prominent against the natural topography. Traditional farm buildings are generally subtle and remain in keeping with the rural character and landscape dynamics. The presence of some commercial and industrial properties, along with the visual intrusion of masts and turbines detracts from the area's rural aesthetic and coherence.

Quarries

- Edentrillick Quarries Ltd

Built Heritage Assets

Dromore Lowlands has a wealth of historical sites and places of interest which reflects the long settlement history and human connection to this landscape. The recorded built heritage interest includes:

- Over 90 historic sites and monuments

- 9 scheduled monuments
- Over 40 Listed buildings\structures
- 1 Historic Park Garden and Demesne (Gill Hall)
- Over 40 historic industrial sites
- 1 defense heritage site
- 1 Area of Archaeological Potential

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Monuments and industrial heritage sites highlight the importance of this area and this landscape to the linen industry
- Many community facilities are located in Dromore. Throughout the rural area there are smaller community assets such as halls, churches and recreational facilities.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

A1 Dual Carriageway splits the LCA east/west and a network of 'B' roads lead off the A1. B roads also feed into the southern portion of Dromore.

A Right of Way is located off Rowantree Road and extends northwards towards Lower Quilly Road.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

The landscape offers a generally pleasant and sheltered rural experience, with rolling topography, strong hedgerow networks and long-distance views towards the Slieve Croob and Mourne Mountains contributing positively to scenic quality and local distinctiveness. However, the clustering of modern dwellings, ribbon development, wind turbine development, agricultural sheds and utility infrastructure has introduced visual disruption and a degree of urban influence, reducing landscape harmony and weakening the area's traditional rural character. Despite these pressures, the drumlin landform and well-structured field pattern continue to provide an attractive and distinctive landscape.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The area features a varied landscape of rounded drumlins with improved grassland, interspersed with mosses and regenerating scrub. Strong linear features like hedgerows and shelterbelts define medium-sized fields, though some hedgerows have been replaced with wire fencing. There's a visual contrast between smooth pastures and rough bogs, with occasional arable crops adding texture.

The landscape is dotted with single dwellings some of which are modern and of a larger scale than traditional rural housing, which can disrupt the rural character. Historical reference is held within the remaining traditional farm buildings which blend well with this small scale drumlin topography. Commercial properties, masts, and turbines detract from the scenic quality.

Despite some semi-urban influences, the landscape retains a pleasant rural character, especially in areas that enjoy attractive views of Slieve Croob and the Mourne.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- The shift towards less simple, incongruent, larger scale dwellings and curtilages has degraded the rural characteristics and some scenic value of a number of areas within this LCA.
- The visual intrusion of some wind turbines is notable, some of which are located outside of this landscape character area.
- The introduction of large agricultural buildings and infrastructure in addition to new commercial properties has resulted in a fragmented and urbanised texture in some areas.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The changes in landscape condition have had a moderate impact on the key characteristics of the Dromore Lowlands identified in NILCA 2000. While the underlying landscape structure remains evident, changes to the cultural, perceptual and experiential qualities of the area are becoming increasingly apparent. In particular, residential development that is often suburban in scale and design, together with the growing prevalence of large agricultural buildings, is eroding local distinctiveness and contributing to a more standardised and less characteristic rural landscape.

Pressure Analysis

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) indicates medium – high development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this LCA.

For rural housing, the pressure analysis indicates a low-medium development pressure between 2010-2024.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Principles for Accommodating New Development from NILCA 200 that continue to be relevant are:

- Planting extensive mixed woodlands in association with any future building development will help to reinforce the distinctive character and quality of this landscape.
- Clustered forms of development are appropriate to the area and can be more easily integrated with the landscape than linear, ribbon development.
- The re-use of existing stone buildings will ensure their contribution to landscape character is conserved; this is preferable to the introduction of suburban styles into a rural area.

Additional guidelines should include

- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular rural scale, design and materials.
- Careful siting of any development on upper slopes and summits or within the skyline is essential to protect this unique sense of place and scenic value that the views towards Slieve Croob and the Mourne provide.

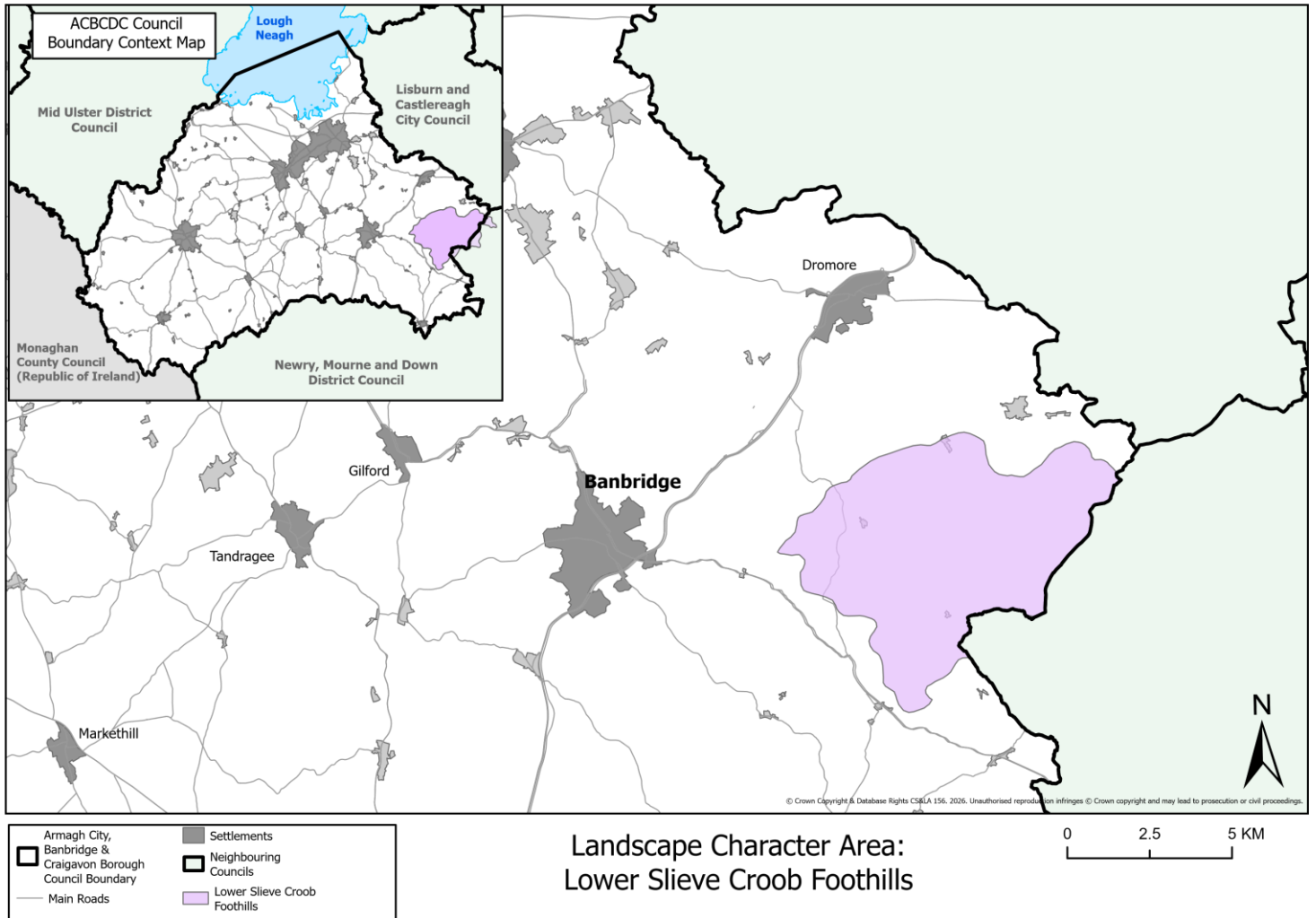
Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are:

- The south-western more open parts of this LCA may be better able to accommodate wind energy development than other areas.
- It is recommended that wind energy development reflects the relatively small scale drumlins and landscape and settlement features.
- It is recommended that attempts be made to minimise turbines being seen in the context of existing pylon development.
- Particular care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on areas with distinctive views to the surrounding mountains and foothills.
- Particular care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on the character and setting of archaeological or parkland sites, Dromore, Big Bog and the River Lagan corridor.
- Drumlin summits should be respected. If the south-western more open parts of this LCA are being considered care should be taken to avoid unacceptable impacts on distinctive drumlin landforms or drumlin tops.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Dromore Lowlands LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 83 Lower Slieve Croob Foothills





Smooth rolling ridges on the fringes of the Slieve Croob uplands with strong geometric field pattern.



Attractive views across glens and into adjacent landscapes.



Pattern of gently incised glens and ridges aligned SW-NE.

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

The Lower Slieve Croob Foothills LCA is situated in the east of the Borough, extending slightly into the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area. The LCA extends from Waringsford in the north to just north of Katesbridge in the south. From close to Lough Corbet in the west and to the boundary with the Mourne AONB in the east.

Topography and Drainage

The Lower Slieve Croob Foothills form a smooth, rolling, rural area of high ground (reaching approximately 200m) to the west of the craggy, pointed Slieve Croob Summits. It comprises rolling ridges and gently incised glens which are mostly aligned in a SW-NE direction

The drift geology map also highlights spreads of alluvial deposits associated with the floodplains of the rivers that form the headwaters of the Lagan.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

Improved grassland is the dominant land cover, with a strong pattern of large, geometric fields. These fields are generally enclosed by mature, well-maintained hedgerows and scattered deciduous trees, although some boundaries have been replaced or reinforced with post-and-wire fencing. Farming is relatively intensive, with evidence of arable cultivation on some hilltops and the widespread presence of large farm units containing numerous outbuildings, including modern industrial-scale agricultural sheds that can dominate traditional farmsteads. Wetter valley floor areas provide contrast through rough grassland, rushes and stands of beech trees. While some traditional features, such as stone boundary walls, remain evident, many newer rural dwellings are suburban in scale, design and materials, diminishing the area's traditional rural character.

Key Biodiversity Interests

- Low ridges and intervening valleys, some with flat floors within which some fens may occur
- Several fens have been drained to allow the creation of larger pasture fields, some however are maintained as rough grassland with abundant rushes
- Woodland largely absent, groups of trees confined to shelterbelts around farmhouses, along streams and on fens
- Grassland dominates the land cover

Natural Heritage Sites

Shennaghan Hill ASSI provides access to exposures of a granite-like rock called granodiorite and Silurian sedimentary rocks that together with a number of other sites describe the Newry Igneous Complex.

Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI):

- Shannaghan Hill

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

The settlements of Waringsford, Ballela and Kilkinamurray are located within this LCA.

There are numerous clusters and linear patterns of single rural dwellings, often not associated with farms buildings. There is evidence of many single storey dwellings, particularly along road frontages whose cumulative impact is beginning to degrade the landscape. A proportion of these dwellings are of modern design and scale and therefore more conspicuous than traditional rural dwellings.

In contrast to this, there is also evidence of some older, stone 2 storey dwellings and farm buildings having been renovated and brought back into use.

Built Character

There are areas within the LCA that display a great deal of built infrastructure which include: accumulation of dwellings – both single dwellings and those associated with farm units, a large number of and large scale wind turbines, large farm units with industrial size agricultural sheds. There is also some evidence of converted or renovated stone, traditional farm buildings. Local, small scale retail/filling station shops that have not been converted to nor given the signage and paraphernalia of more modern local shops and filling stations.

Masts and poles of various types and alignments are conspicuous and, in places very conspicuous.

Quarries

There are no quarries or landing sites located within this LCA.

Built Heritage Assets

Within the Borough, this LCA has:

- Approximately 40 historic monuments, 3 of which are scheduled:
 - Ganesha, Large hilltop enclosure
 - Carnes, Rectangular enclosure, Carnew Fort
 - Ballyooly, Standing stone
- 3 Listed buildings

- 9 Industrial sites, including corn and flax mills
- 1 defense site, a searchlight in the townland of Finis

There are also historic stone walls and farm buildings remaining which link to the settled heritage of this LCA.

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

Community assets such as schools, shops, community buildings and small businesses are located within the settlements of Waringsford & Ballela.

Waringsford in the townland of Tullinisky takes its name from a former house and demesne, which is recorded as 'the seat of Henry Waring Esq.' in 1744. Henry Waring was a descendant of William Warren or Waring who gave name to the village of Waringstown, 14km to the north-west.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

The area is served by a series of minor roads and laneways with the A50 located to the south of the LCA.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Overall, the landscape presents a mixed experience, with its attractive rural setting, strong field pattern and open views across surrounding landscapes increasingly influenced by modern development. Large agricultural buildings, wind turbines, masts, poles, hedgerow loss and the growing concentration of single rural dwellings have introduced visual clutter and reduced landscape cohesion, diminishing scenic quality and the traditional rural character of the area.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

Generally, the Lower Slieve Croob Foothills LCA is in good condition, retaining a strong rural character and a well-defined landscape structure. Mixed grassland agriculture, large farm units and a distinctive pattern of geometric fields enclosed by strong hedgerows create a coherent and attractive landscape. The smooth rolling ridges contribute positively to scenic quality, offering attractive views both within the LCA and towards surrounding landscapes.

Some decline in landscape condition is evident through the incremental spread of single rural dwellings, many of which incorporate suburban-style boundary treatments, ornamental gardens and materials that are out of keeping with the local vernacular. The replacement of hedgerows with post-and-wire fencing is also beginning to weaken the strong field pattern and sense of enclosure. In addition, masts and utility infrastructure introduce visually intrusive elements that detract from the landscape's rural character.

Despite these pressures, the continued presence of traditional farm units, vernacular dwellings and historic outbuildings reinforces local distinctiveness and contributes positively to the scenic quality and sense of place within the landscape.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- There is a relatively large number of very large, single turbines which is having an impact on the scenic quality of this LCA. The scale of the turbines do not take into consideration the rolling ridges of this landscape.
- The use of wire fencing in place of hedgerow boundaries is beginning to degrade the strong, intact patchwork of fields. Large, ornamental gardens are intrusive in this tranquil, rural landscape.
- Large, ornamental gardens are intrusive There is slight degradation through single rural dwelling development and the presence of large, ornamental gardens and in places natural boundaries have been replaced by modern stone /brick walls or fencing

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

The cumulative impact of wind turbines, modern development and hedgerow loss has begun to erode the traditional character and scenic quality of the landscape. Wind turbines interrupt views across the rolling ridges and glens, while the replacement of hedgerows with post-and-wire fencing and suburban-style boundary treatments has weakened the strong geometric field pattern that defines the area. Increasing levels of residential and agricultural development, often of a scale, design and appearance that is unsympathetic to the local landscape, are contributing to a gradual loss of rural distinctiveness and reducing the landscape's capacity to absorb further change.

Pressure Analysis

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) has provided evidence of medium – high development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this LCA.

For rural housing, development pressure has been predominantly low between 2010-2024 with some local pockets of medium pressure scattered through the LCA.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from **NILCA 2000** that continue to be relevant for this portion of the LCA are:

- Inappropriate building styles and ornamental gardens associated with new housing could be intrusive within the tranquil rural landscape of the glens.
- The tranquil nature of the glens should be conserved by avoiding inappropriate modern housing styles, ranch style fencing or ornamental planting schemes.

Additional guidelines should include :

- Development on ridge tops should be carefully considered in the context of the adjoining AONB and its setting.

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that wind energy development should reflect the scale of the ridges and landscape and settlement features and that turbine layouts relate well to the strong geometric pattern of field boundaries. Particular care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on areas with distinctive views to the surrounding Slieve Croob Summits and on the character and setting of archaeological sites. Ridge summits should be respected.

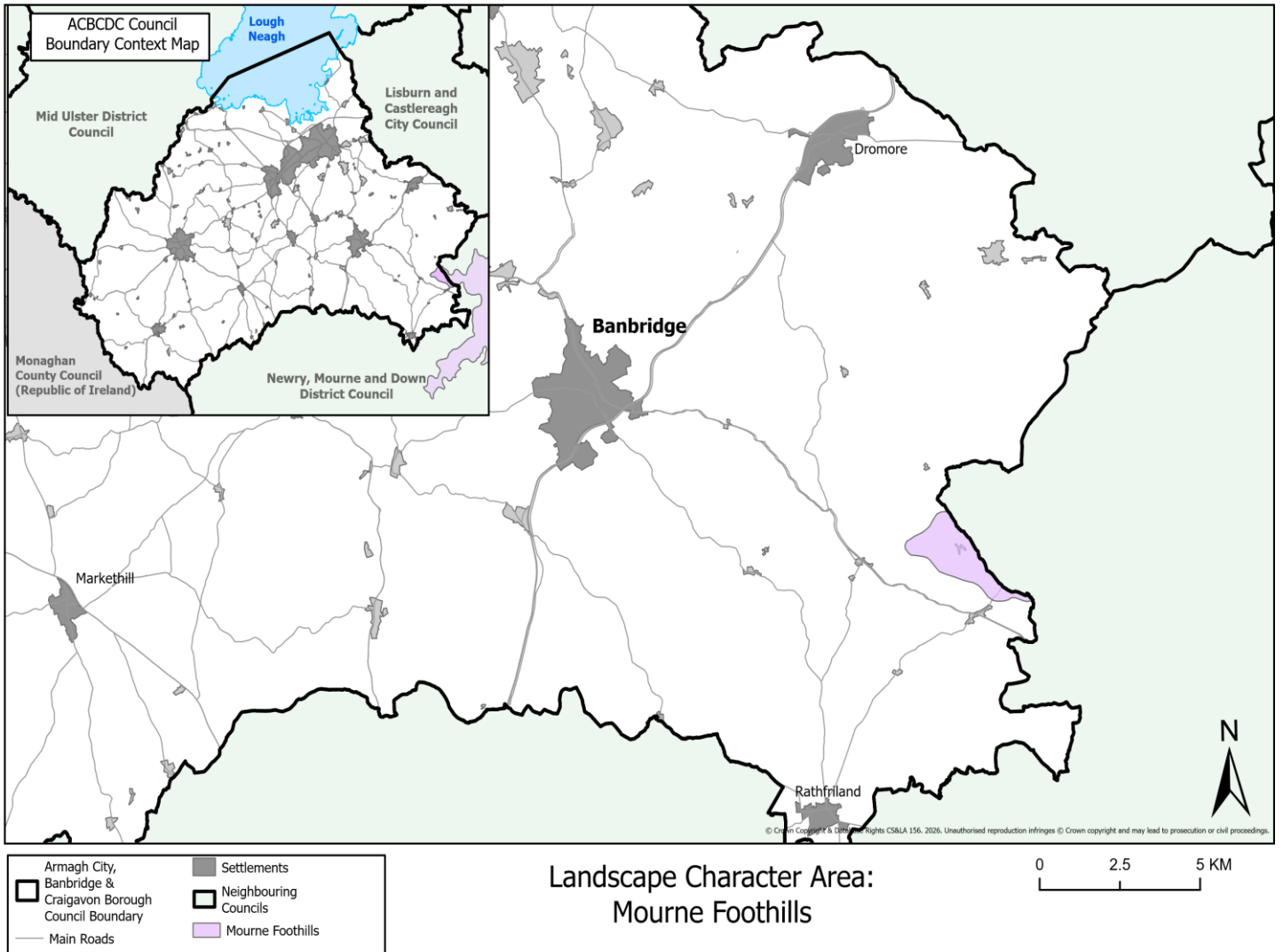
This landscape is relatively sensitive to change, further increased by its attractive long views.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Lower Slieve Croob Foothills LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

However, the proximity to the Mourne AONB must be carefully considered. Each proposal should be assessed on the likelihood of its adversely impacting its setting, in particular if that setting includes views into the AONB.

LCA 84 Mourne Foothills





Undulating foothills on the fringes of Slieve Croob and the Mourne Mountains.

Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

It is important to note that the portion of the Mourne Foothills Landscape Character Area that lies within the Borough is very small. It comprises the north western tip of the entire LCA, and lies to the east of Katesbridge and includes the settlements of Dechomet and Closkelt. This small area adjoins the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and the Mourne AONB, within which the remainder of this LCA lies.

Topography and Drainage

The entire Mourne Foothills LCA wraps around the northern fringes of the summits of Slieve Croob and the Mourne Mountains. The characteristic rugged scenery, which includes some distinctive hill summits, rocky outcrops and patches of gorse, has been molded from intrusive igneous rocks, primarily granites. A strong landscape pattern of geometric pastures is reinforced by sturdy stone walls and well maintained hedgerows, which are often boosted by gorse which add further texture to the landscape.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The overall Mourne Foothills LCA is the undulating foothills on the fringes of Slieve Croob and the Mourne Mountains, with a strong geometric field pattern defined by stone walls and hedgerows. Agricultural land use varies between improved grassland and rough grazing supporting medium-sized farms with cattle and sheep, the latter more common at higher elevations. Gorse patches and hedgerows are frequent on upper slopes and farmsteads vary from traditional stone and white-washed buildings to large metal and concrete sheds, with newer residential developments showing suburban-style boundary treatments.

Features of biodiversity interest:

- A topographically diverse area with drumlins, isolated rocky hill masses, flat-floored valleys and the lower northern slopes of the Mournes
- Lowlands dominated by improved pasture with a few small fens

Natural Heritage Sites

The area is adjacent to the Mourne AONB, however the borough's portion of this LCA is part of the much larger Mourne Foothills character area, it is important terms of providing a transitioning landscape setting and context of the AONB.

No International environmental designations.

No Sites of Local Conservation Importance.

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

The settlements of Closkelt and Dechomet are located within this portion of the landscape character area. There is increasing dominant influence from linear roadside development and hilltop dwellings, many of which are suburban in scale and design, detracting from the area's scenic quality and prominent views. While some clusters of newer housing reflect the traditional scale and form of the local vernacular, others are less sympathetic to the landscape, introducing visually intrusive elements that compete with the area's distinctive character. Collectively, these trends are reducing landscape coherence and placing growing pressure on the landscape's capacity to accommodate further development.

Built Character

Modern development within the area is overall reasonable, though sporadic, poorly scaled single dwellings, often linked to farms, can be intrusive. Clusters of houses at crossroads are sometimes well integrated, especially on middle slopes, and have not yet altered the overall character. Development near Closkelt and Dechomet reflects the influence of these settlements, with some large, urban-style homes, particularly around Moneyslane. Agricultural units tend to be large, featuring industrial-style sheds and machinery, contrasting with the area's traditional rural character.

Quarries

There are no active quarries in this portion of the Mourne Foothills LCA.

Built Heritage Assets

In terms of archaeological remains, this small area within the Borough contains:

- 6 Historic Monuments, one of which is a scheduled monument – two standing stones in the townland of Moneyslane.
- 1 Listed building, Drumgooland Presbyterian Church

Field boundaries include some historic stone walls and some traditional farm buildings demonstrate a farming legacy with some stone washed farm buildings remaining.

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Community facilities associated with the small settlements of Closkelt and Dechomet and Moneyslane.
- Cultural aesthetics of being close to the Mournes and Slieve Croob, with scenic perception and aesthetically pleasing vistas.
- Notable link to the traditional farming past on upland areas with farm buildings, stone walls and derelict cottages
- Closkelt Pipe Band: A band at Closkelt has been in existence since 1878. Originally a flute band, on Monday 10 October 1938 a group of men, some from the flute band met and were determined to learn the great highland bagpipes. In 1949 now known as Closkelt Highland Pipe Band, the band entered the contesting arenas.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

This small area is served by a network of B roads. The area is accessible in that it offers views and opportunity to appreciate the local and wider scale scenic quality of this important transitioning area on the edge of the Mourne AONB. There is a marked and signposted footpath with public right of way, however the path is in poor condition

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Located on the edge of the Mourne AONB, this character area is an important buffer area that has its own character and identity. Overall this area provides an interesting and pleasant perception. It provides distant views on a large scale over an open and exposed landscape. Diverse and textured land cover, the colourful but peaceful qualities override any negative influence from unsympathetic development of housing and wind infrastructure (which is located outside of this LCA).

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

This portion of the Mourne Foothills LCA, located at the edge of the Mourne AONB, serves as a transitional upland landscape in good condition, supporting mixed agriculture and defined by geometric field boundaries. Traditional stone outbuildings and white-washed finishes preserve its historic character, while gorse and tree shelter belts add texture to the upper slopes. Though clusters of housing at crossroads are generally well integrated, development near Closkelt and Dechomet—particularly around Moneyslane—includes large, urban-style homes and industrial-scale agricultural units, which contrast with the area's rural character.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- The proliferation of inappropriately designed single dwellings and the clustering of residential development has begun to interrupt local character. Modern, designs and scale of residential development does disrupt the sense of ruggedness of this landscape
- This shift in character is also evident in the move from traditional, small farms and outbuildings to more industrial and intensive scale of agriculture. The occasional appearance of large industrial style agricultural sheds is intrusive.
- Occasional views of wind turbines in adjoining LCAs.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

Many key characteristics of this portion of the overall LCA remain intact; however, the growing number of residential properties is increasingly noticeable. The area retains its transitional nature, shifting between rugged scenic uplands and more developed landscapes, with its accessibility and environmental value continuing to enhance its overall unique appeal.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) has provided evidence of low-medium development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this section very small section of this LCA within the Borough.

For rural housing, development pressure has been low between 2010-2024.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Traditional stone cottages should act as a reference for modern styles of housing in this area; simple designs using local materials and incorporating vernacular features are most appropriate.
- Features such as stands of pine should be conserved; they may be used to shelter dwellings in exposed positions or as a means for integrating new development.

Recommendation from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant for this portion of the LCA are:

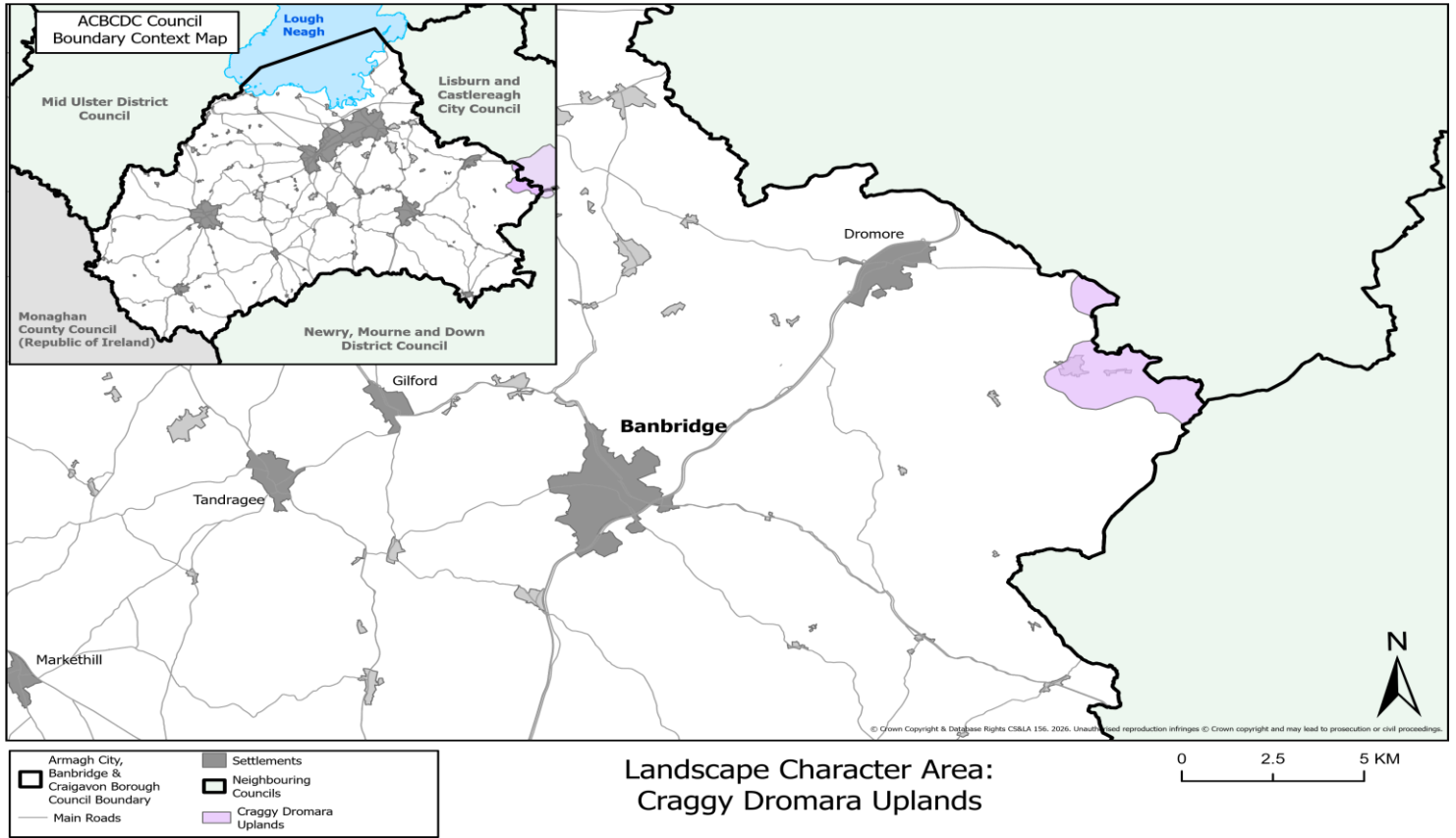
- The majority of this landscape is highly sensitive to wind energy development. It is a varied and rugged landscape of high scenic quality which performs an important role in providing an outstanding setting to other more elevated landscapes adjacent. Sensitivity is further increased by the LCA's popularity for outdoor recreation.

Outcome of the Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within Mourne Foothills LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

However, the proximity to the Mourne AONB must be carefully considered. Each proposal should be assessed on the likelihood of its adversely impacting its setting, in particular if that setting includes views into the AONB.

LCA 88 Craggy Dromara Uplands





Rolling, upland drumlin landscape



Patches of scrub, clumps of gorse and marshy land provide contrasts in texture and character.

Physical Characteristics
Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough A small, southern portion of this LCA lies within the Borough, the remainder of which extends outside of the Borough to the NE. The settlements of Kinallen and Ardtanagh, located within the Borough are located to the west of Dromara.
Topography and Drainage This LCA comprises an elevated drumlin landscape with a rugged and relatively wild character, defined by rolling uplands, rocky outcrops, gorse-covered slopes and areas of marginal farmland.
Land Cover and Field Pattern The LCA is characterised by a rolling upland drumlin landscape with scattered rocky outcrops and a rugged, textured appearance. An irregular pattern of pastures enclosed by low stone walls, overgrown hedgerows and areas of marshy ground contributes to a strong sense of naturalness. Disused agricultural buildings and more recent roadside development occur in places, but the landscape largely retains its rural character. The overlap with the Mourne AONB highlights the area's high scenic quality and distinctive upland character. Features of biodiversity interest Widespread rough grassland with some patches of gorse, rocky outcrops and shrub heath on higher ground.
Designated Natural Heritage Sites Within this small section of the LCA there are no environmental designations. Biodiversity value is located along mixed and varied hedgerows and areas of wet grassland. Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI) There are no SLNCIs located within this LCA.

Landscape Features
Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings Within the borough there are two settlements that lie within this LCA, they are Kinallen and Ardtanagh. To the eastern side, the LCA boundary concludes just outside of Dromara.
Built Character The area shows a highly visible built presence, including clusters of wind turbines on ridge lines and drumlins, large sheds linked to equestrian facilities, and scattered single dwellings that are non-traditional in scale and design. Housing pressures are evident, with some large clusters of dwellings and signs of ribbon development at crossroads featuring varied styles and materials. Telecommunication masts, poles, and overhead wires further fragment the area.

Quarries

There are no quarries located within this portion of the LCA.

Built Heritage Assets

Within this small section of the LCA there are

- approximately 10 Historic Sites and monuments,
- 4 Listed Buildings and
- 1 Area of Archaeological Potential.

Derelict farm units which reflect the traditional small holding farming past of this landscape, with curtilages and traditional stone buildings clearly visible.

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

Community facilities such as school, shops and healthcare are located within Kinallen and within the nearby town of Dromara. A community Hall is also located in the area. There is a connection to the Mourne with clear, open vistas and some traditional buildings still remain and in use for farming.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

This small area within the Borough is served by a series of minor roads and laneways.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

Overall, the perception of this character area is mixed, from the challenging influence of modern development such as large scale farm buildings, wind turbines, modern fencing and an increasing saturation of single rural dwellings within this otherwise pleasant landscape within which there are distant and open views into adjacent landscapes.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

This area represents a transitional upland landscape nestled between drumlin slopes, with land cover ranging from rough grazing to improved grassland. Field patterns are large and irregular, defined by mixed-quality hedgerows and scattered deciduous trees, alongside occasional patches of scrub and gorse. Evidence of derelict and abandoned farm curtilages is visible, blending into their natural setting.

The landscape offers high scenic quality with long, attractive views toward Slieve Croob and the surrounding AONB. However, the growing presence of single wind turbines, combined with modern, large-scale dwellings, introduces a fragmented and visually intrusive contrast, threatening the area's rural character and sense of cohesion.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Large number of turbines are evident which impacts on the landscape aesthetics.
- Limited integration of new residential development which in some instances is of incongruent large scale and of more complex, less traditional rural design.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

Many of the area's key landscape characteristics remain evident within this part of the LCA. However, the growing presence of residential development is increasingly noticeable. The area maintains an attractive transition between rugged, scenic uplands and more developed landscapes.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis has provided evidence of medium development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this section of the LCA within the Borough. For rural housing, development pressure has been low to medium between 2010-2024.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Local roads are already reaching their capacity to accommodate linear ribbon development.
- The presence of existing trees of stature and the planting of native species may assist the integration of new buildings in the landscape.
- Conservation of existing stone walls and gateposts, using local stone for repairs and building new stone walls will help to retain local identity.
- Restoration of derelict buildings and their adjacent paddocks will conserve the traditional built styles of the area.

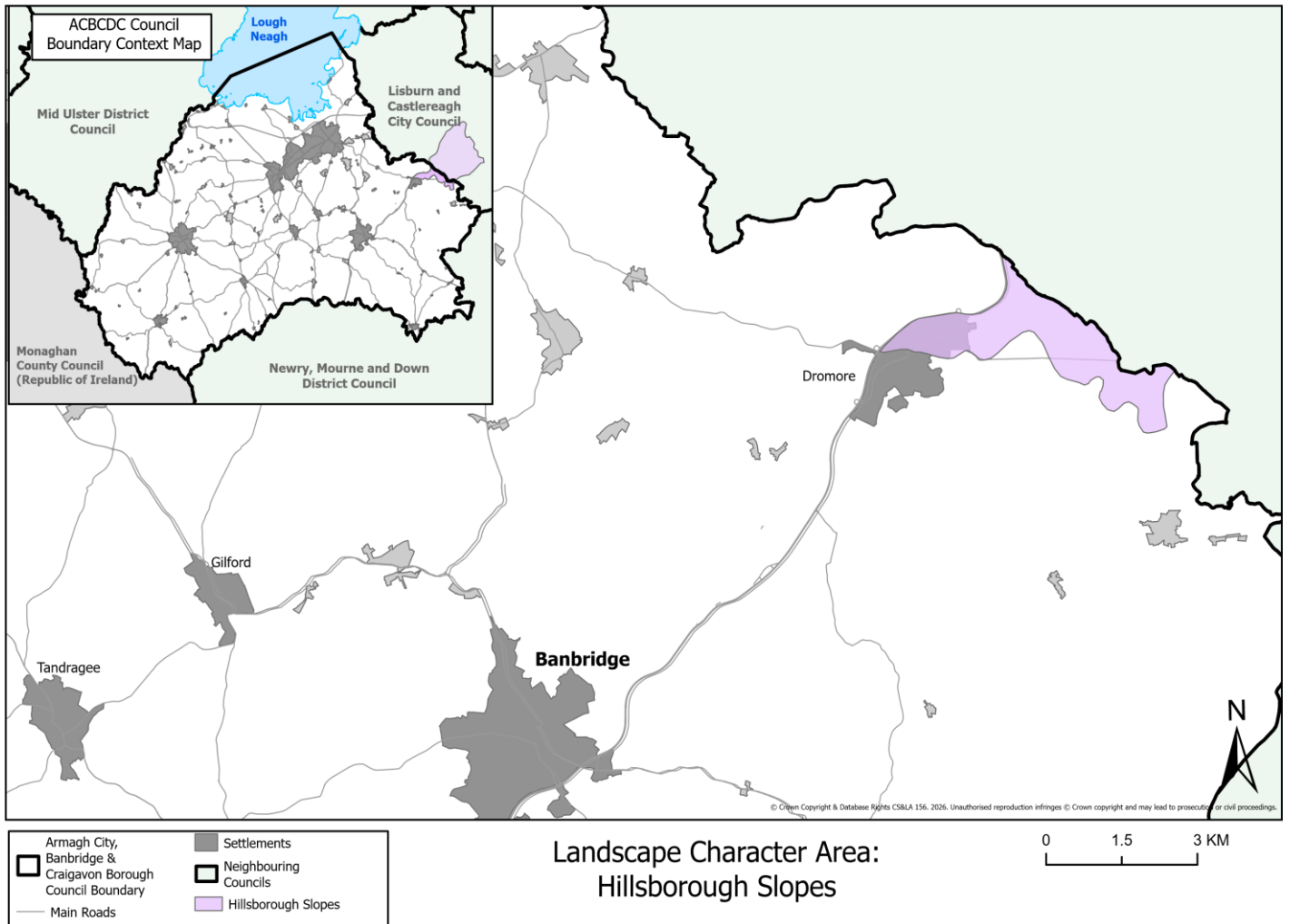
Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are

- Care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on highly sensitive prominent ridges. Particular care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts on key views to the Mourne to the south as well as the settings of landscape features such as loughs or archaeological sites. Prominent drumlins and skylines should be respected.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within Craggy Dromara LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 89 Hillsborough Slopes









Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

Upper Ballinderry Plateau is a flat area to the NE of Lurgan and extends from the east of Ahgagallon towards Moira. A large portion of Magheralin, Ballymacbredan and a section of Dollingstown and Lurgan lie within this LCA. The majority of this LCA lies within Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

Topography and Drainage

The LCA area is comprised of rounded ridges and hills on the marginal slopes of an elevated ridge on which the town of Hillsborough is sited. The gently rolling, shallow ridges and rounded hills on the slopes of this ridge have no particular alignment but the centre of the landscape character area is dominated by a number of broad, rounded ridges, each with an east-west alignment. Within the Borough, on the lower slopes, the landform is strongly influenced by the drumlin form and there are many egg-shaped and rounded summits.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is defined by rounded ridges and hills, with lower slopes shaped by drumlin formations, while the dominant ridges follow an east–west alignment. Ridge-top farmland is windswept and organized into a neat, geometric patchwork of fields, with hedgerow trees becoming more prominent on the lower slopes. A dense network of winding, narrow roads weave through the lower areas, contrasting with the straighter roads that run along the ridge-tops. Small farmsteads are scattered throughout and serve as visual focal points in the landscape. Residential development is dispersed along the road network and is often visible on the skyline.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Dominated by improved pasture with some rough grassland on higher ground
- Very little wetland remaining; areas have been lost to drainage, encroachment by scrub vegetation.
- Scattered hedgerows and trees have a strong visual influence, although they have no discernible pattern. There are however some clusters of trees around farmsteads.
- There is some evidence of domestic, in-curtilage deciduous planting however the dominant ornamental/suburban style gardens and not entirely in-keeping with the local landscape dynamics.

Designated Natural Heritage Sites

This small section of the LCA that is within the borough has no formal environmental designations.

Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI)

- Ballymaganlis Wood

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

The north east of Dromore lies within the LCA, however there are no other designated settlements.

The influence of Dromore within this LCA can be seen in the occurrence of ribbon development and urban sprawl, particularly along Ballymacormick Road to the east of the town, which is becoming dominated by residential ribbon development and a drop in density of agricultural buildings. As a result there is evidence of some small, local areas becoming suburban in character.

Throughout this small portion of the LCA the suburban influence can also be seen in the variety of large, non traditional housing and large, landscaped gardens.

Built Character

There is extensive dispersed single dwellings east of Dromore, with clusters of dwellings and ribbon development along the B2 and surrounding rural roads introducing a suburban influence that detracts from the area's rural character and scenic quality. Wind turbines and electricity pylons add further visual intrusion, while a large operational quarry and associated infrastructure in the southeast create a strong industrial presence. Evidence of both current and historic mineral extraction further reinforces the developed and fragmented character of this area.

Quarries

The following quarry is located within this LCA:

- Edentrillick Quarries Ltd

Built Heritage Assets

This small section of Hillsborough Slopes LCA contains:

- 7 Historic Sites/Monuments, 1 of which, located within Dromore is a scheduled monument.
- 18 Listed buildings
- 6 sites of Industrial Heritage
- 1 AAP - Dromore

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

With the close proximity to Dromore many community facilities and assets are located with the town.

Despite the small area within the Borough there is a proliferation and wide range of historic sites and monuments.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

The northern portion of Dromore is located within this small section of the overall LCA. The B2 road divides the area between north and south.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

The cumulative impact of dispersed development has slightly diminished landscape enjoyment and scenic quality, with clusters of suburban-style dwellings, wind turbines, masts and utility infrastructure introducing visual clutter and weakening the area's rural character. While attractive views towards the Mourne Mountains and Monaghan remain an important feature, modern development increasingly competes for visual attention, creating a more fragmented landscape. Nevertheless, the enclosing drumlin landform provides some containment of these influences, helping to retain aspects of the area's scenic appeal.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is characterised by rounded drumlin ridges and a strong patchwork of fields enclosed by hedgerows and scattered trees. Improved grassland dominates, with large fields managed for intensive grazing and silage production, while smaller paddocks, rough grazing and pockets of scrub provide some variation. Traditional farms remain prominent features within the landscape; however, dispersed housing, wind turbines, pylons and quarrying activity have introduced suburban and industrial influences that have fragmented the landscape, weakened its rural character and impacted scenic quality.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Modern farming practices have intensified and simplified the landscape.
- Dispersed housing and ribbon development have introduced a more suburban character.
- Wind turbines reduce visual quality and alter landscape character.
- Quarrying and mineral extraction have created a strong industrial influence, particularly in the southeast.
- Collectively, these changes have fragmented the landscape, weakened its rural identity and diminished scenic quality.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

Modern farming practices and inappropriate residential development have impacted the landscape, contributing to a shift from a rural to a more suburban character. This transformation is further driven by the intensive clustering and infilling of , urban-style single dwellings. The visual quality of the area is also impacted by the widespread presence of individual wind turbines scattered across the landscape. In the southeastern part, large-scale quarrying and mineral extraction dominate, adding to the industrial feel. Collectively, these developments have resulted in a fragmented and chaotic visual environment, degrading the overall scenic quality and diminishing the area's traditional rural identity.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) has provided evidence of low- medium development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this section of the LCA within the Borough.

For rural housing, development pressure has been predominantly medium between 2010-2024.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Consideration should be given to local views from ridge-tops when assessing the potential visual impact of proposed new development.
- If new development is sited on the lower slopes, avoiding local skylines, it may be less prominent and visually less intrusive.
- The use of existing housing sites would be preferable to further ribbon development; rural views and local identity may be protected by retaining extensive 'gaps' between houses.

Additional guidelines may also include

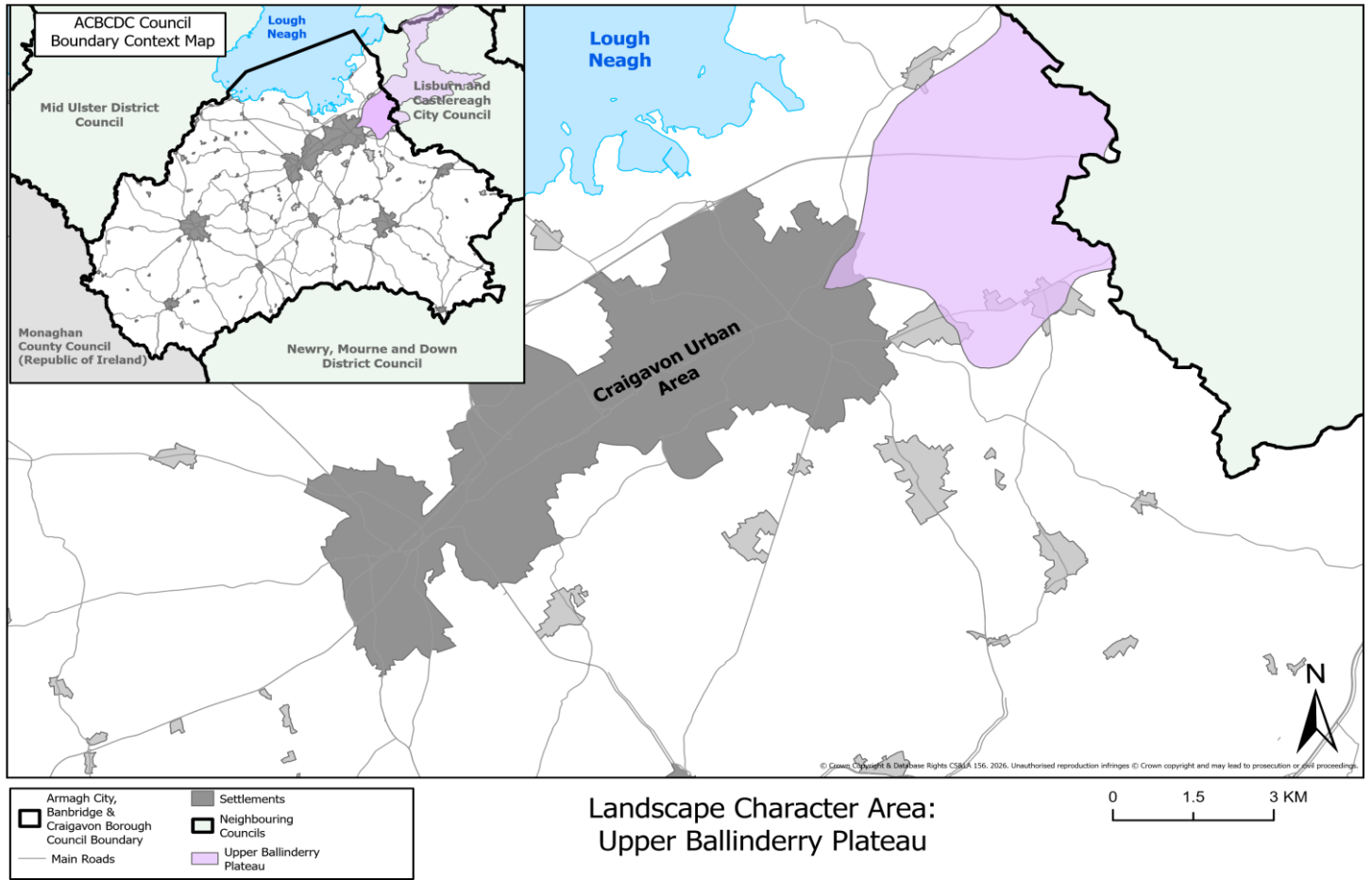
- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular rural influences.

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that the rounded gently rolling ridges of this landscape are in theory suited to wind energy development, the visual prominence of these ridge tops and small scale of the drumlins on the fringes, along with the overall settled character of this LCA, make much of the area very sensitive to change. Parts of this LCA contain important designed landscapes while other areas perform an important role as a setting to landmarks or settlements and this further heightens sensitivity. From the elevated areas of this LCA there are significant views to the Mourne Mountains and Slieve Croob. Nevertheless this area is not of high scenic value and the pattern of the landscape is in places fragmented. Away from the ridge tops and main settlements the landscape is slightly less sensitive to change and there might be some scope for appropriately scaled wind energy development in these areas if carefully sited.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Hillsborough Slopes LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

LCA 109 Upper Ballinderry Plateau









Physical Characteristics

Description of Landscape Character Area within the Borough

Upper Ballinderry Plateau is a relatively flat area, which extends from the north-east of Lurgan towards Moira. A large portion of Magheralin, the settlement of Ballymacbredan and a section of Dollingstown and a small portion of the north-east of Lurgan lie within this LCA. It should be noted that this LCA traverses the local government boundary with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

Topography and Drainage

The Upper Ballinderry Plateau is a rolling, relatively prosperous farmland landscape. There is a steep escarpment along the southern margins of this LCA, overlooking the broad Lagan Valley which is dissected by a number of incised streams creating steep-sided glens.

Land Cover and Field Pattern

The landscape is characterized by rolling farmland interspersed with numerous hedgerow trees and small coppices, creating a patchwork of greenery. Relatively large farmsteads and estates are scattered throughout the area, contributing to its rural charm. A steep escarpment marks the southern edge of the plateau, offering views over the Broad Lagan Valley. The settlement pattern consists of scattered farms and houses, with compact nucleated villages and some linear development. Distinctive features of the area include beech tree lined avenues and dense stands of mature trees, particularly prominent within country estate landscapes.

Features of biodiversity interest

- Woodlands occupy only a small percentage of the land cover, most of which is broadleaved and associated with country estates and large farm holdings.
- Grasslands account for the majority of the land cover, most in improved pastures of low biodiversity.
- No significant heaths or bogs in the LCA and few fens

Natural Heritage Sites

There are no national or international environmental designations in this section of the Upper Ballinderry Plateau.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) are:

- No current SLNCI designations

Landscape Features

Settlement Setting, Fringes and Rural Single Dwellings

Within the borough the settlements of Ballymacmaine, Magheralin, a small portion of Dollingstown and the NE corner of Lurgan lie within the Upper Ballinderry Plateau LCA.

he landscape is characterised by dispersed dwellings, some associated with farms, which are generally modest in scale and, in some cases, screened by shelterbelt planting, limiting their visual impact. However, a more pronounced linear pattern of development has emerged along the edge of Ballymacmaine and the Old Kilmore Road, where larger, suburban-style dwellings have introduced a stronger built presence and begun to alter the area's traditional rural character.

Built Character

The area is predominantly rural in character, marked by sparsely scattered single rural dwellings, many associated with farms, alongside an increased accumulation of agricultural outbuildings and smallholdings, of mixed traditional and modern design. Agricultural intensification is evident through the presence of large industrial-style sheds, including poultry units, some of which are visually prominent. Hedgerow removal and replacement with post-and-wire and ranch-style fencing has impacted field pattern. Additionally, some areas of conifer planting are locally conspicuous. Large, suburban style dwellings with expansive curtilages occur in places, particularly around Old Kilmore Road, to the west of Moira, where linear development displays a notable variation in scale and design. The motorway and railway corridor form dominant features within the surrounding landscape.

Quarries

- No active quarries in this portion of the LCA.

Built Heritage Assets

Within the Borough's section of this LCA there are:

- Approximately 30 Historic sites and monuments
- Over 10 listed buildings
- 1 scheduled monument
- Over 10 industrial heritage
- 1 defence heritage site

Community Assets and Cultural Quality

- Community assets are primarily within nearby settlements, Dollingstown, Magheralin, Moira and Lurgan.
- Wealth of archaeological features in addition to remaining stone cottages, walls farm buildings

In 1836, an Act of Parliament was passed granting the Ulster Railway Company licence to "lay a line of rails from the town of Belfast to the city of Armagh". The line traverses the LCA running approximately east-west, leaving a significant visual influence on the landscape and infrastructure.

Infrastructure, Access and Enjoyment

The Belfast to Dublin railway line traverses the LCA however, there are no halts, the nearest halts being located in Lurgan and Moira.

The M1 motorway also traverses this LCA however, there is no direct access onto this, the nearest motorway junctions being located close to Lurgan and on the outskirts of Moira.

While not within this LCA the main route north to the international airport is a short distance to the east. A limited network of minor roads also provide access throughout this section of LCA.

Sensory Perception and Scenic Quality

The landscape exhibits a pleasant rural farmland character, dominated by improved grassland with some areas of arable cultivation. A gently sloping landform, punctuated by mature trees and small woodland blocks on higher ground, provides structure and visual interest, while historic estate influences are evident through tree-lined avenues and shelter belts. Long, distant and attractive views towards Lough Neagh and the Sperrins contribute strongly to scenic quality, resulting in a landscape that retains an interesting and appealing scenic perception despite the presence of modern influences.

Landscape Condition, Sensitivity and Principles for Landscape Management

Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is predominantly characterised by intensively managed agricultural land, with extensive improved grassland, limited arable cultivation and generally low biodiversity value. Traditional rural character has been weakened by agricultural intensification, including the proliferation of large industrial-style farm buildings and modern agricultural practices. Hedgerows have become fragmented through removal, decline and replacement with post-and-wire fencing, reducing landscape structure and enclosure. The clustering of large, non-vernacular rural dwellings has further eroded landscape cohesion, while motorway and railway infrastructure introduces noise, movement and visual intrusion. Despite these pressures, mature trees, shelterbelts, woodland pockets, historic estate features and the stone boundary walls associated with Grace Hall provide valuable landscape structure and help retain some local distinctiveness.

Changes in Landscape Condition

- Clustering of large, suburban-scale and non-traditional style and scale dwellings, often unrelated to farmsteads, reducing rural integration.

- Prominent industrial-style agricultural sheds with reflective finishes detract from rural character.
- Motorway, railway and poorly defined settlement edges fragment the landscape and erode the rural–urban transition.
- Introduction of linear residential development along a number of roadside locations.

Overall Impact on Landscape Character

Large farm estates continue to provide a strong landscape structure through avenues and shelterbelts; however, this is increasingly eroded by the growth and clustering of large, suburban-style dwellings that are often detached from farms and rural settlement patterns. The expansion of industrial-scale agricultural sheds, together with the motorway and railway corridors, has introduced prominent built and infrastructural elements that fragment the landscape and increase visual and sensory perception. In addition, poorly defined settlement edges have blurred the distinction between urban and rural areas, contributing to a gradual erosion of rural character and local distinctiveness.

Pressure Analysis and Capacity

Pressure analysis (Technical Supplement 8) has provided evidence of low development pressure for wind turbines between 2010-2024 in this section of this LCA within the Borough.

For rural housing, between 2010-2024 development pressure in this section of this LCA has been predominantly low with just a few localised areas of medium development pressure.

Capacity to Accommodate New Development

Guidelines from NILCA 2000 that continue to be relevant for this portion of this LCA are:

- Linear development along roads is not characteristic of the area.
- Large scale structure planting of deciduous native species close to new agricultural buildings would help to integrate them within the surrounding landscape and to restore a more sheltered landscape character.
- Clustered settlements are characteristic of the area, with views to church spires and avenues of trees. It is important to ensure that new development is carefully sited to maintain the nucleated character of the settlements and to conserve the relationship between the built form of the village and neighbouring designed landscapes.

Additional guidelines may include

- The scale and design of residential development should take into account local, vernacular rural influences.

Recommendations from the **Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes** that continue to be relevant are that consideration could be given to siting turbines away from small scale, designed landscape features that might accentuate their scale. Care should be taken to avoid unacceptable impacts on the skylines, settings and views from the M1, the mainline railway and Lough Neagh. Open ridges should be respected.

Outcome of Review

It is considered that the reviewed locations within the Upper Ballinderry Plateau LCA have not been identified as areas of high sensitivity and, therefore, the area does not warrant additional planning policy recognition or protection at this time.

Appendix 2: Desktop Survey Template

Landscape Character Assessment Desktop Study

Physical and human influences that have shaped the landscape of the Borough. It is essential to consider the past and current influences of the area to ensure that the most important character features can be managed and safeguarded from future land uses.

LCA Name:

LCA Number: LCA

Brief LCA Description from NICLA 2000:

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Geology/ Geomorphology The underlying geology has had a significant impact on the topography, soil structure and cover, habitats flora and fauna	
Soil Conditions- Soil types and quality help to define the land uses within the LCA. (Use GSNI soil data).	
Land Form- What is the general description of the landform from the type to the height of	

the area. (I.e. Drumlins, Uplands, River Valley etc.)	
Natural Features – What the natural features, i.e. Rivers, Dunes, Broads, streams etc.	
Land Use – Describe the prevalent land use types of the LCA (i.e. Agriculture, Light Industrial, Recreation etc.)	
Field Size Boundaries – Ortho View	
Settlement Pattern – Is the majority of the LCA an urban conurbation, isolated single dwellings or unsettled.	
Transport Pattern – Describe the key transport networks within the LCA from roads, railways airports, rural lanes and footpaths.	
Natural Heritage- Including Natural Environment Statutory Designations, Priority Species and Habitats. The Designations can run from RAMAR, European, National and Local designations.	
Historic Environment – Describe and list the key heritage data for the LCA including listed buildings, schooled and unscheduled monuments, industrial/defence heritage, notable heritage points and quality historic vernacular designs.	
Cultural Quality and Heritage – Describe and list the cultural heritage, folklore and historical associations of the LCA. (i.e Finn McCool Lough Neagh).	

Current Development Plan Designations- Current planning designations for the countryside and urban areas for landscape, open space, countryside and others. These include SLNCIs and LLPAs, existing Areas of High Scenic Value.	
Areas at Risk from Flooding – Identify the key Areas of the Landscape that are shown as Flood Risk Areas from the DFI Rivers Flood Map and from River Basin Management Plans. This is a regional Borough perspective, so a broad overview, detailed streets are not required.	
Minerals – Identify areas of mineral extraction ROMP	

Appendix 3: Field Study Site Survey Template

As part of the ongoing work for the LDP, the Development Plan Team are reviewing the current Landscape Character Areas (LCA) that are located within the Borough's Boundary. Officers are required to complete this questionnaire for each of the field study sites within LCAs.

Background Information

Date:

Time:

What LCA area are you in?

Field Study Site Ref:

In each LCA we will be visiting approx. 4 sites (more for larger LCA areas), the ref no will be between FSS-01 etc....

Photographs of the field study site

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Site Location:

What are the current weather conditions?

Physical Features

What is the landform of the fieldwork study site?

Landforms together make up a given terrain, and their arrangement in the landscape is known as topography. Typical landforms include hills, mountains, plateaus, valleys and drumlins etc.

Please shade the relevant boxes

Flat	Rolling	Undulating
Steep Slopes	Gentle Slopes	Drumlins

Escarpment	Plateau	Cliffs
Hills	Broad Valley	Narrow Valley
Deep Valley	Shallow Valley	
Other:		

What is the elevation of the fieldwork study site?

Please shade the relevant box

Less than 50m	50-100m
100-200m	200m or above

Are there any water/hydrology features within the fieldwork study site?

Please shade the relevant box

Yes	No
------------	-----------

If yes, please shade the most appropriate

River	Stream	Tributary
Lough	Lake	Reservoir
Pond	Wetland	Bogland
Engineered or Artificial	Drainage Ditch	Spring
Other:		

If River/Stream/Tributary has been selected, please describe the speed, clarity and anything else that may be appropriate:

--

What is the current land use of the field study site?

Please shade the relevant box

Farmland/ Agriculture	Forestry or Woodland	Historic Parkland
Residential	Industrial	Leisure and Recreation
Commercial	Transportation	Mineral Working
Semi Natural	Military	Open Space
Paddock		
Other:		

What is the land/vegetation cover of the fieldwork study site?

Please shade the relevant boxes

Arable	Pasture	Rough Grazing
Grassland	Gorse land	Conif Plantation
Decid Woodland	Mixed Woodland	Parkland
Wetland or Bog	Hedgerows	Scattered Trees
Scrub	Paddock	Gardens
Other:		

Are there Natural Ecosystems features within the fieldwork study site?

Ecosystems or ecological character is the combination of the ecosystem habitats and biodiversity that characterise the land at a given point in time.

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Landscape Elements

What are the landscape element features of the fieldwork study site?

Please shade the relevant box

Motorway	Dual Carriage Way	A Road
B Road	Rural Road	Rural Lane/Track
Sunken Lane	Footpath	Railway
Farm Buildings	Parkland	Landmark Building
Mill	Place of Worship	Fortification or Castle
Hill Fort (Rath)	Ruins	Earthworks

Motte	Ancient Burial Site	Enclosure
Small Settlement	Village	Town Edge
Suburb	Nucleated Settlement or Cluster	Linear Settlement
Single Rural Dwelling	Industrial Workings	Commercial Activity
Masts or Poles	Pylons	Telecom Infra
Solar Farm	Wind Turbine	Anaerobic Digester
Quarry		
Other:		

What is the character of the built/human constructed features of the fieldwork study site?

Are there any physical elements on the land, if so, are they?

Subtle	Evident	Conspicuous
Other:		

In your own words, describe the built character of the fieldwork study site:

What is the fixed boundary pattern of the fieldwork study site?

Please shade the relevant box

Banks	Ditches	Rural Walls
Urban Walls	Rural Fence	Urban Fence
Hedge	Hedgerows Trees	Geometric
Sinuous	Regular	Irregular
Small	Medium	Large
Other:		

What are the aesthetic views and vistas of the fieldwork study site?

Please shade relevant box

Distant	Framed	Intermittent
Panoramic	Corridor	
Other:		

What is the scale of the fieldwork study site?

How do you feel standing in the fieldwork study site?

Please shade relevant

Intimate	Small	Medium
Large		
Other:		

What is the enclosure of the fieldwork study site?

Boundary/surround of the site

Please shade relevant

Confined	Enclosed	Semi-Enclosed
Open	Exposed	
Other:		

What is the variety of the fieldwork study site?

Composition of the site

Please shade relevant

Uniform	Simple	Diverse
Complex		
Other:		

What is the texture of the fieldwork study site?

Please shade relevant

Smooth	Textured	Rough
Very Rough		
Other:		

What is the colour of the fieldwork study site?

Please shade relevant

Monochrome	Muted	Colourful
Garish	Bland	
Other:		

What is the movement of the fieldwork study site?

Please shade relevant

Still	Calm	Gently Active
Active	Very Active/ Busy	
Other:		

What is the unity of the fieldwork study site? How do all features, elements and objects combine?

Please shade relevant

Unified	Interrupted	Fragmented
Chaotic		
Other:		

What is the naturalness of the fieldwork study site?

Has the site been influenced or evolved through human activities?

Please shade relevant

Undisturbed	Restrained	Tamed
Disturbed		
Other:		

What is the sound like within the fieldwork study site?

Please shade relevant

Tranquil	Distant	Discordant/ Harsh
Medium	Peaceful	
Other:		

Please list the sources of sounds that can be heard:

--

Describe the level of sound and its consistency:

--

What is your perception of the fieldwork study site? Do you find the overall landscape as:

Please shade relevant

Uninteresting	Featureless	Interesting
Challenging	Inspiring	Alright/ Reasonable
Other:		

Describe the pleasure that the landscape provides:

Please shade the relevant

Unpleasant	Pleasant	Attractive
Beautiful	OK/Acceptable	
Other:		

Access and Condition

Is the fieldwork study site being used for recreational purposes?

Please shade relevant

Yes	No
------------	-----------

If yes, please outline and describe

--

Is there a footpath within the fieldwork study site?

Please shade relevant

Yes	No
------------	-----------

If yes please shade its condition:

Excellent	Good	Average
Poor	N/A	

Is there access to and from a water source within the fieldwork study site?

Yes	No
------------	-----------

If yes please shade the access condition:

Excellent	Good	Average
Poor	N/A	

Management Issues and Opportunities

Please highlight the condition/survival, threats/opportunities, pressures/vulnerabilities, fragility, management issues and opportunities for the following:

1. Agriculture

2. Field Pattern Boundaries:

3. Trees and Woodland

4. Built Heritage Assets and Archaeological Heritage

5. Settlements/Setting and Fringes/Single Dwellings

6. Community Assets

7. Cultural Qualities

8. Impact of modern uses on the sensitivity of the landscape within the FFS:

Conclusion:

Please provide a brief Summary of the landscape characteristics of the field work study site:

Appendix 4: Field Study Site Scoring Template

LCA ##:

Field Study Site

Location:

Landscape Characteristic	Description	Evaluation of Landscape Value	Evaluation of Vulnerability
Scenic Quality	•		
Distinctiveness	•		
Built Heritage, Development Pattern & Boundaries	•		
Cultural Heritage	•		
Natural Heritage	•		
Recreational Value	•		
Summary of above characteristics of Landscape Value	•	(Indication of overall landscape value, or specific highest landscape value, at this place)	Indication of overall landscape vulnerability, or specific highest landscape vulnerability, at this place
Landscape Sensitivity landscape sensitivity at this place (= measure of landscape vulnerability to specific change combined with measure of landscape value)			

Appendix 5: Statements of Significance

Blackwater Valley

A flat marshy valley enclosed by drumlins with rounded tops, the Blackwater valley has its own very special character. This secluded, intricate landscape is rich in small scale landscape features and idyllic views. This relatively small area has everything from drumlins and ridges to quiet valley floors, historic landscapes, tall, thick hedgerows and wooded backdrops which provide a very enjoyable experience, enhanced by the sense of enclosure and seclusion.

The River Blackwater winds its way through this area towards Lough Neagh. Evidence of how the area has shaped both the land and its human interactions can be gathered from the range of bridges, historic monuments, stone walls, quaint gate lodges, grand gated entrances and industrial heritage features. The river Blackwater itself provides a very special place for visitors and local inhabitants, the added value and sense of peace from the secretive, enclosed landscape that surrounds it is very distinctive.

Opportunities for enjoyment such as the Ulster Way and the river itself, the mix of woodland flora and fauna within estate and ecclesiastical sites creates an enriching, rural, peaceful, unspoilt landscape experience. The flat marshy valley and floodplain, nestled at the bottom of drumlins has created an inaccessible, unspoilt and attractive landscape, with outstanding scenic quality.

A landscape designation will highlight the area's sensitivity and promote its valuable features so that there is opportunity for enhancement, awareness and enjoyment.





Statement of Significance

Lough Neagh and Environs

The Lough Neagh landscape is dominated by the largest freshwater lake in the British Isles, Lough Neagh. This vast sheet of water is surrounded by relatively flat, low-lying, often boggy land, which forms the Lough Neagh basin, within which lies Portmore Lough to the east.

The Lough Neagh landscape is an important site of biodiversity interest and is designated a Ramsar site, Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA).

The Lough Neagh shore and the area surrounding Portmore Lough is a distinctive landscape of high sensitivity due to the contrasting open character of the loughs and the often small scale, intricate landscape along their shores. There are considerable natural and cultural landscape features. It has both valuable and vulnerable scenic quality and includes important recreational areas such as Oxford Island and Maghera Country Park.

Despite the large urban areas of Lurgan, Craigavon and Portadown and the proliferation of single rural dwellings within the wider Lough Neagh basin, along the lough shore there is a remote and wild character. Major roads do not pass close to the lough due to hydrology and as such the lough fringes are relatively tranquil.

The landscape along the lough shore is predominantly rural, featuring areas of semi-natural wetland habitat such as fens, wet grassland, and carr woodland. From these shores, expansive views stretch across the vast openness of the Lough, where its ever-changing colours and textures create a striking visual experience

There is an exposed quality on the waters of the lough with rough waters in stormy or windy conditions which change to a peaceful contentment in the still waters in a bright, cloudless day.

Dark skies are a feature of the lough as are the beautiful sunsets, even at night the lough shore landscape provides further enjoyment for star gazing.

Its scale and central location makes Lough Neagh a unique feature, which is reflected in the natural environment, archaeology, historical structures and communities. For millennia people have lived by the lough and earned a livelihood along its shoreline and on its waters.

The enigmatic beauty and effervescence of the lough has long inspired poets and authors, singers and songwriters. The lough continues to bring together archaeologists, geographers, historians, scientists and other experts in their field, many with a strong connection to Lough Neagh





Glossary

- Adaptive capacity – a landscape's capacity to accommodate change, cope or adapt beneficially under specific pressure.
 - Landscape characteristic – a distinguishing feature that describes the distinct landscape.
 - Landscape condition – the fulfilment of landscape to the best it can be (relating to all characteristics which comprise landscape). [Landscape condition can change (positively or negatively) through pressure, or management processes. Across a landscape character area of inherently similar landscape characteristics, landscape condition is unlikely to be consistent. Some areas may be well-managed, functioning in a coherent and connected manner, and largely 'fulfilling landscape potential'. Landscape in other areas may be subject to pressures for change, causing deteriorating landscape condition. This does not mean the landscape in these latter areas is necessarily less valued or sensitive.]
 - Landscape consistency – how consistent, sporadic, or dramatically diverse the pattern of the landscape is across a landscape area.
 - Landscape functional capacity – provision and performance for healthy functioning landscape (e.g., hydrology, carbon capture, pollinator, climate regulation, green infrastructure).
 - Landscape quality – 1) a landscape characteristic, 2) indicating the level of fulfilment of landscape to the best it can be (= landscape condition).
 - Landscape sensitivity – combined measure of a landscape's value and its susceptibility / vulnerability to change / adapt due to specific pressure. [A sensitive landscape is of high value, has high propensity to change and low capacity to adapt as a result of pressure. If a highly valued characteristic is highly likely to change under pressure, that landscape characteristic is highly sensitive. A landscape of high value might accommodate specific pressure without significant change, and be of lower sensitivity than a landscape of lower value likely to detrimentally change irrevocably as a result of the same pressure.]
 - Landscape susceptibility – a landscape's predisposition to change as a result of identified pressure. [A susceptible landscape has high propensity to change as a result of pressure.]
 - Landscape value – measure of importance to all other landscape aspects (including: landscape function, health and integrity; interconnected, spatial and time-based systems and structure; human health and wellbeing; and contribution of a landscape's elements to its integral healthy functioning condition.)
 - Landscape vulnerability – combined measure of landscape susceptibility and adaptive capacity. [A vulnerable landscape has high susceptibility to change and weak capacity to adapt or cope under pressure for change.]
 - Scenic quality – one aspect of landscape quality (condition). All aspects of landscape are components of its visual manifestation.
-
- **Landscape characteristic** – a distinguishing feature that describes the distinct landscape
 - **Landscape consistency** - how consistent, sporadic, or dramatically diverse the pattern of the landscape is across a landscape area.
 - **Landscape quality** – 1) a landscape characteristic, 2) indicating the level of fulfilment of landscape to the best it can be (= landscape condition)
 - **Landscape condition** – the fulfilment of landscape to the best it can be (relating to all characteristics which comprise landscape). [Landscape condition can change (positively or

negatively) through pressure, or management processes. Across a landscape character area of inherently similar landscape characteristics, landscape condition is unlikely to be consistent. Some areas may be well-managed, functioning in a coherent and connected manner, and largely 'fulfilling landscape potential'. Landscape in other areas may be subject to pressures for change, causing deteriorating landscape condition. This does not mean the landscape in these latter areas is necessarily less valued or sensitive.]

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- **Landscape susceptibility** – a landscape's predisposition to change as a result of identified pressure. [A susceptible landscape has high propensity to change as a result of pressure.]

- **Adaptive capacity** – a landscape's capacity to accommodate change, cope or adapt beneficially under specific pressure.

- **Landscape vulnerability** – combined measure of landscape susceptibility and adaptive capacity. [A vulnerable landscape has high susceptibility to change and weak capacity to adapt or cope under pressure for change.]

- **Landscape sensitivity** - combined measure of a landscape's value and its susceptibility / vulnerability to change / adapt due to specific pressure. [A sensitive landscape is of high value, has high propensity to change and low capacity to adapt as a result of pressure. If a highly valued characteristic is highly likely to change under pressure, that landscape characteristic is highly sensitive. A landscape of high value might accommodate specific pressure without significant change, and be of lower sensitivity than a landscape of lower value likely to detrimentally change irrevocably as a result of the same pressure.]

- **Landscape functional capacity** - provision and performance for healthy functioning landscape (eg. hydrology, carbon capture, pollinator, climate regulation, green infrastructure).

INTERESTED IN DEVELOPMENT

in the Armagh City,
Banbridge and
Craigavon Borough

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