



# Belfast

## Local Development Plan

### Draft Engagement and Communications Plan

August 2024

[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/LDP](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/LDP)



**Belfast**





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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Local Development Plan (LDP) is being prepared for Belfast to guide development of the city up to 2035. Following the adoption of the Belfast LDP - Plan Strategy (PS) on 02 May 2023 the Council has commenced work on the Local Policies Plan (LPP) which is the second part of the two-stage LDP process.
- 1.1.2 The LPP will contain the local policies, including site specific proposals, designations and land use zonings required to deliver the council's vision, objectives and strategic policies, as set out in the PS. The Draft LPP will go out to public consultation in early 2025.

## 1.2 Draft Local Policies Plan

- 1.1.3 The Draft LPP is a public consultation document; it is not the final plan. It indicates our intention regarding the future development of the area and is a key part of the public participation process.
- 1.1.4 The Draft LPP consultation stage is focused on soundness, we aim to help audiences understand soundness and give them the opportunity to assess where the plan is sound and if there are some areas of the plan which they believe are not sound.

## 1.3 Draft Local Policies Plan Engagement and Communications Plan

- 1.1.5 From the overall corporate priority for "Cross Cutting" falls the departmental objectives for the publication of the Belfast Spatial Planning Framework which focuses on the following actions:
- 1. Work through the remaining steps to adoption in accordance with the LDP timetable and feedback from the PAC report;**
  - 2. Finalise the SPG to support the adoption of the LDP Plan Strategy, including feedback form public consultation; and**
  - 3. Progress the Local Policies Plan (LPP), including initial review of zonings/designations and local area planning issues.**

- 1.1.1 This Draft LDP Engagement and Communications Plan falls from the Engagement and Communications Strategy, Revised August 2024 which identifies our duty to cooperate, approaches to consultation, stakeholder analysis, LDP stages and communication channels.
- 1.1.2 The Draft LDP Engagement and Communications Plan will cover the period from October 2023 – March 2025 and through the Action Plan it will detail the engagement and supporting communications from the informal consultation period for the LPP to the publication of the Draft LPP.
- 1.1.3 Internal and external engagement for the Draft LPP stage will adhere to the requirements identified in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 1.1.4 The internal engagement comprises of steering group meetings, management team meetings and cross council working; one-to-one and within working groups. The external engagement programme consists of public events, exhibitions and partner and stakeholder events. All engagement activity is supported by the communications plan.
- 1.1.5 The 12 -week consultation period will encourage stakeholders, consultees and members of the public to get involved in the preparation of the LDP.

## 2 Engagement

### 2.1 Purpose of engagement

- 2.1.1 The purpose of engagement for this stage is to provide audiences with the appropriate tools and opportunities to provide their representations on the draft LPP stage of plan making. Through the consultation process it is important to manage the audience's expectations of how their engagement will impact the draft LPP; what can they influence or change and how they can do this.

### 2.2 What are we consulting on

- 2.2.1 The draft LPP and associated documents will go out for a 12 -week consultation process in 2025. During this stage we will ask stakeholders, consultees and members of the public to provide representations on the consultation documents assessing how sound they are. This will include:
  - The draft Local Policies Plan;
  - Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report;
  - Countryside Assessment; and
  - Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Screening.

## 2.3 What is soundness

2.3.1 In order for stakeholders, consultees and members of the public to be able to engage they need to understand soundness so they can assess it within the context of the draft Local Policies Plan.

2.3.2 There are nine tests of soundness, these need to be presented appropriately to audiences to aid understanding through public events, exhibitions, workshops and guidance documents to assist with representations and counter-representations.

1. Prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme (LDS).
2. Prepared in compliance with SCI (where adopted) or 2004 Regulations (where not adopted).
3. Plans and policies subject to SA.
4. Spatial plan consistent with the national policy in general, conformity (with the RSS for the region (or SDS in London), and has proper regard to any relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area and adjoining area.
5. Regard to authority's community strategy. Coherence, Consistency and Effectiveness Tests
6. Strategies/policies/allocations in the DPD prepared by the authority and by neighbouring authorities, where cross boundary issues are relevant.
7. Strategies/policies/allocations represent most appropriate in all circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust and credible evidence base.
8. Clear mechanisms for monitoring and review.
9. Reasonably flexible to enable the DPD to deal with changing circumstances.

## 2.4 Consultees

2.4.1 The consultees as identified in the Engagement and Communications Strategy, revised August 2024 will be targeted via our internal and external engagement efforts.

## 2.5 Information sharing

2.5.1 Information sharing and updates will continue through established council management reporting structures and specific working groups set up which comprises of internal officers and external organisations to inform and deliver the LDP process.

## **2.6 Members**

- 2.6.1 Members will continue to be updated and informed via monthly Planning Committee, workshops and party briefings.

## **2.7 Management teams**

- 2.7.1 Corporate Management Team and Department Management Team will continue to receive updates throughout the Draft LPP process. The LDP Project Management Team includes the Development Plan and Policy Manager, Principal Planning Officer and Senior Planning Officers, the team meet on a weekly basis.

## **2.8 Steering group**

- 2.8.1 A steering group comprising of council members, Chief Executive, Director of Planning and Place, Development Plan and Policy Manager, Principal Planning Officer and statutory bodies have met on several occasions and will continue to meet throughout the plan process.

## **2.9 Thematic working groups**

- 2.9.1 Thematic working groups have been set up inviting key stakeholder, partners and council officers to meet on a regular basis. Engagement across internal departments will occur through these working groups and via one-to-one meetings.

## **2.10 Metropolitan area spatial working groups**

- 2.10.1 The Metropolitan Area Spatial Working Group has been established, it consists of statutory consultees, councillors and representatives from neighbouring authorities which meets on a 6-weekly basis.

# **3 Engagement Events**

## **3.1 Events**

- 3.1.1 There will be a 'launch' media release issued on the Draft LPP consultation to announce the start of the consultation with information also on the council website. There will be promotion on this on council's social media channels LinkedIn and X/Twitter. There will also be public engagement events held to raise awareness of the consultation. The citywide and community evening events mid-way through the consultation will allow for clarity to be obtained and the exhibition stands, and partner events will occur throughout the time period.

### 3.1.2 Event content:

- Overview of LDP process and Draft LPP stage
- An explanation of soundness, how soundness can be assessed and the process for submitting representations and counter-representations.
- Thematic content, exercises, discussions delivered by a facilitator with a representative from the LDP within each group.
- Details of the consultation opening and closing dates as well as events planned during this period.

3.1.3 Events organised in public spaces with high footfall to raise awareness of the LDP and Draft LPP stage.

3.1.4 Organised throughout the city where planning officers will be available to answer questions.

3.1.5 These events will be open to the public and interested parties providing opportunities to discuss the plan and Draft LPP stage with planning officers. Specific events targeting Section 75 groups will also be considered.

3.1.6 Stands to be placed in key locations across council facilities, explaining Draft LPP stage, how you can make a representation or counter representation and contact details.

3.1.7 Partner and stakeholder events will be organised and planned into the 8-week consultation period, activity will consist of briefings, presentations and discussions.

## 4 Communications

### 4.1 Communication Objectives

4.1.1 The LDP process will be supported by communications throughout. The communication objectives for the process are:

1. To communicate effectively to Belfast residents what the LDP is and how they can express their views.
2. To maintain continued communication throughout all stages bridging PS to draft Local Policies Plan to Local Policies Plan.
3. To ensure all communication activity is in line with SCI throughout.
4. To develop and sustain communications between initial respondents to the PS process to ensure they continue to engage and share their views.
5. To create an integrated communications plan to raise awareness of LDP at each stage, which includes; press, social, advertising and website promotion.



## 4.2 Draft Local Policies Plan key milestones

4.2.1 The key communication milestones below indicate when activity should take place. Opportunities will be explored to maximise cross council working and opportunities for any joint engagement and communications.

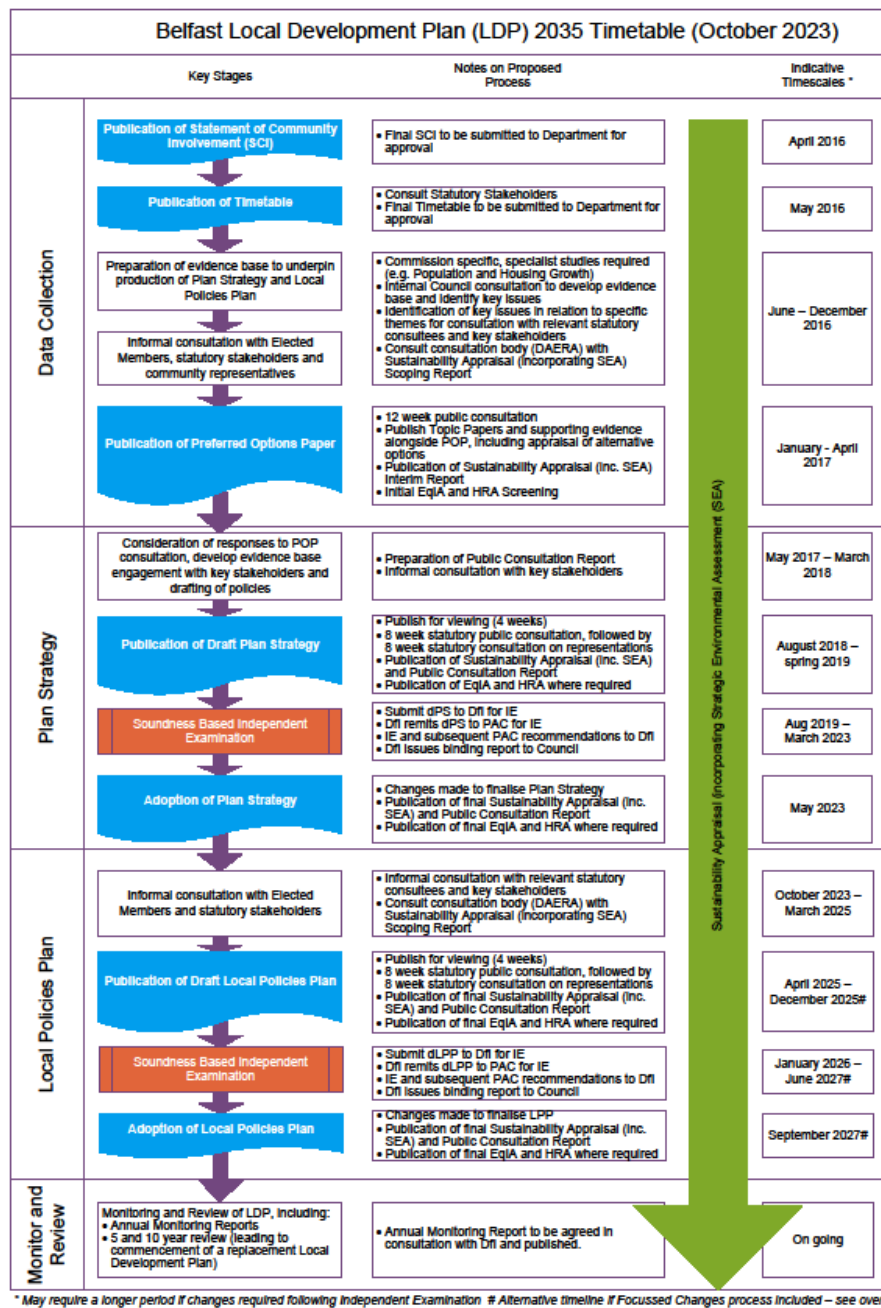
Preparation for Draft Local Policies Plan Consultation and Engagement	Draft Local Policies Plan
October 2023 – March 2025	April – December 2025
Purpose of Communications	
Review of Plan Strategy consultation activity which will form the next stage consultation and engagement - communications will be planned around the outcomes from this activity. Review opportunities for events, talks, engagement and publicity. Any key milestones in the preparation of the draft Local Policies Plan that communications can be based on.	To make audiences aware we are going live with next stage consultation on the draft Local Policies Plan. Communicating messages at key milestones throughout the consultation and including details of how long we are consulting, what to expect and how you can respond.

## 4.3 Revised Timetable and Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Agreed

4.3.1 Section 7 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 places a statutory duty on Councils to prepare and keep under review a Timetable for the preparation and adoption of the council's Local Development Plan. Belfast City Council adopted its initial Local Development Plan Timetable on 1 June 2016. This Timetable has been subject to continual review as the council progresses through the LDP process. Following the adoption of the Belfast LDP Plan Strategy on 2 May 2023, the Timetable has been further revised and was approved by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in October 2023. The Action Plan will use the timings detailed within the revised timetable (below 4.3.2).

4.3.2 The SCI having been initially prepared in 2016, and revised in March 2018, has also been subject to continual review. An updated SCI for the LPP stage has been prepared and will require approval from DfI.

### 4.3.3 Revised Timetable:



## 4.4 Audience, channels and key messages

4.4.1 There are a wide range of internal and external audiences which require varying communication messages. They will be informed within a set timeframe and via the most appropriate channel.

### Audiences

4.4.2 The audiences include:

<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>
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<p>Staff (General) Staff involved in Thematic Working Groups and LDP</p> <p>Councillors -Strategic Policy and Resources Committee -City Growth and Regeneration Committee</p>	<p><b>SCI</b></p> <p>General public Statutory authorities Developers</p>	<p><b>Statutory consultees</b></p> <p>Northern Ireland</p> <p>Government Departments The Executive Office</p> <p>Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Department of Communities</p> <p>Department of Education Department of the Economy Department of Finance Department of Health Department of Justice Department for Infrastructure</p> <p>Local planning authorities whose area adjoins the Belfast City Council boundary (Antrim and Newtownabbey; Lisburn and Castlereagh; Ards and North Down)</p> <p>A water or sewerage undertaker (Northern Ireland Water)</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Housing Executive The Civil Aviation Authority</p> <p>Any person to whom the electronic communication codes applies by virtue of a direction given under section 106(3) of the Communications Act 2003 (1)</p>	<p><b>LDP consultees</b></p> <p>MLAs</p> <p>MPs</p> <p>Belfast City Councillors Section</p> <p>75 groups</p> <p>General Consultation Bodies for Local Development Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts Organisations</li> <li>• Bodies representing the interests of the economy</li> <li>• Bodies representing the interests of the environment</li> <li>• Community Associations</li> <li>• Cultural and Historical Groups</li> <li>• Health and Wellbeing Groups</li> <li>• Older People's Groups</li> <li>• Religious Groups</li> <li>• Schools and other education bodies</li> <li>• Section 75 Groups</li> <li>• Supports Groups</li> <li>• Victims Groups</li> <li>• Voluntary bodies</li> <li>• Women's Groups</li> <li>• Youth Groups</li> </ul>
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### **Communication channels**

4.4.3 There are a number of internal and external communication channels available and integrated approach will be adopted. Consideration will be given to what are the best channels available to reach the specific audience.

- Council website
- Council LinkedIn channel
- Interlink for internal staff engagement
- Public Adverts in newspapers ie, Irish News, News Letter, Belfast Telegraph and Belfast Media Group (North Belfast News, Andersonstown News and South Belfast News)
- Public Information Sessions in the city
- City Matters (potential promotion of the LPP in the Summer edition of the magazine)
- Designed graphics for pop-up/pull-up stands promoting the LPP for public information/engagement events in the city
- Social media graphics promoting the LPP

## **5 Engagement and communications Action Plan**

5.1.1 The Engagement and Communications Action Plan focuses on the identified audiences, key messages to be communicated to them and purpose of that communication. The Action Plan also provides details on activity, channels to communicate via, timescale, cost, and evaluation tools. Once approved the action plan can be implemented allowing flexibility to be regularly reviewed and changed if opportunities arise.

