



<b>Subject:</b>	<i>Local Development Plan – Commissioned Research</i>
<b>Date:</b>	<i>14 March 2017</i>
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	<i>Keith Sutherland</i>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<i>Dermot O’Kane</i>

<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>  The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the procurement of a number of pieces of research required to inform the development of the Local Development Plan (LDP). This includes a Strategic Housing Needs Assessment (SHNA), Urban Capacity Study for residential and employment land and a Retail and Leisure Capacity Study.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>  It is recommended that Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note that the work on existing Population and Housing Growth Study will continue to produce a Strategic Housing Needs Assessment (SHNA);</li><li>• Agree to the commissioning of consultancy support, up to a value of £30,000, to undertake an Urban Capacity Study for residential and employment land in accordance with the terms of reference at Appendix A; and</li><li>• Agree to the commissioning of consultancy support, up to a value of £30,000, to complete a Retail and Leisure Capacity Study in accordance with the terms of reference at Appendix B.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>  <u>Background and Context</u>
<b>3.1</b>	As Members are aware, the Council is currently preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the City. The Plan will set out development proposals for Belfast for the 15-year period to 2035. Work on the LDP has commenced and a high-level Preferred Options Paper (POP) was published for consultation in January 2017.
<b>3.2</b>	The POP is intended to promote debate on issues of strategic significance, which are likely to influence the preparation of the new LDP, and represents a key opportunity for the

public to shape the plan. The feedback from the POP consultation will help to inform the preparation of the Plan Strategy, in the first instance, which will in itself be subject to public consultation and independent examination before adoption.

3.3

It is crucial that the LDP is based on a comprehensive and reliable evidence base. A significant volume of research has therefore been completed by the Council to date to help inform the POP and to eventually help justify the 'soundness' of the LDP documents at public inquiry. This body of evidence completed to date has been published as background information to inform the public consultation. This includes a series of thematic Topic Papers, as well as a number of specialist preparatory studies, including:

- **Belfast Housing Growth Options Report** – The Belfast housing growth options report considers the future population and housing growth of Belfast, with a reasonable range of potential population and household growth scenarios presented.
- **Assessing Employment Space Requirements Report** – The Assessing Employment Space Requirements document considers how the demand for employment space is likely to be affected by forecast employment growth in Belfast.

#### Further research requirements

3.4

It is necessary to continue to build upon this extensive evidence base as we work towards the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy – the first of the two development plan documents that will form the final LDP. In accordance with regional policy and best practice in plan preparation, a need has been identified for a further three inter-related pieces of research. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)** – Whilst the Housing Growth Options report considered the overall number of housing units required in Belfast to 2035, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) requires the completion of a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) and Housing Market Analysis (HMA) to consider the right mix and balance of housing required in terms of tenures, types and sizes. Whilst much of the HMA work was undertaken to inform the Housing Growth Options Study, this will now be built upon to provide a detailed assessment of need. This will provide robust evidence in relation to the mix of houses of different sizes required and the balance of tenures, such as open market housing, social housing, and other affordable housing types. It will also consider needs associated specialist housing types, such as homes for older people, private rented accommodation, student housing and needs associated with the Traveller community.
- **Urban Capacity Study (UCS)** – The SPPS for Northern Ireland requires that an UCS be completed to “assess the potential for future housing growth within the urban footprint and the capacity for different types and densities of housing.” In addition, the SPPS requires that “LDPs should identify previously developed land within settlements for potential economic development” with the need to “offer a range and choice of sites in terms of size and location.” An UCS will therefore be undertaken to assess in detail the development potential, suitability, availability and achievability of different forms of residential and economic development across the City.
- **Retail and Leisure Capacity Study** – The SPPS requires councils to “undertake an assessment of the need or capacity for retail and other main town centre uses across the plan area” when preparing LDPs. The Retail and Leisure Capacity Study will therefore provide an assessment of retail and leisure needs and capacity in the period up to 2035, reviewing the current performance of Belfast City Centre and other neighbourhood/local centres across the Council area and will provide the evidence to guide the detailed planning policies for Town Centre retail and leisure developments.

3.5

The HNA would be an extension of the workstream commenced through the Housing Growth Study, and a Draft Terms of Reference have been developed for the UCS and

<p><b>3.6</b></p> <p><b>3.7</b></p> <p><b>3.8</b></p>	<p>Retail and Leisure Capacity Study that are set out in Appendix A and B respectively.</p> <p>Committee is requested to approve the commissioning of these pieces of work in accordance with the draft terms of reference and previous outline for the Housing Growth Study. It is anticipated that the commissions will be completed by September 2016 to inform the preparation of the LDP Plan Strategy and the final outputs of both will be published as technical supplements to the draft Plan.</p> <p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u> The cost of the consultancy support for the Housing Needs Assessment has no additional resource implications and can be met from the approved budget of the existing Housing Growth Options Study workstream. It is anticipated that the cost of the Urban Capacity Study and Retail and Leisure Capacity Study will be in the region of £25,000 each and will be met from provisions within the existing Local Development Plan budget.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> There are no direct equality and good relations implications associated with this report. However, it should be noted that the Housing Needs Assessment work will consider the need for specialist housing types, such as homes for older people and traveller accommodation, helping to provide the evidence required to ensure the LDP fulfils its obligation to such groups. The Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan, which will make up the final LDP and which will be informed by this research, will also be subject to Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) processes.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>Appendix A - Terms of Reference for the Urban Capacity Study Appendix B – Terms of Reference for the Retail and Leisure Capacity Study</p>