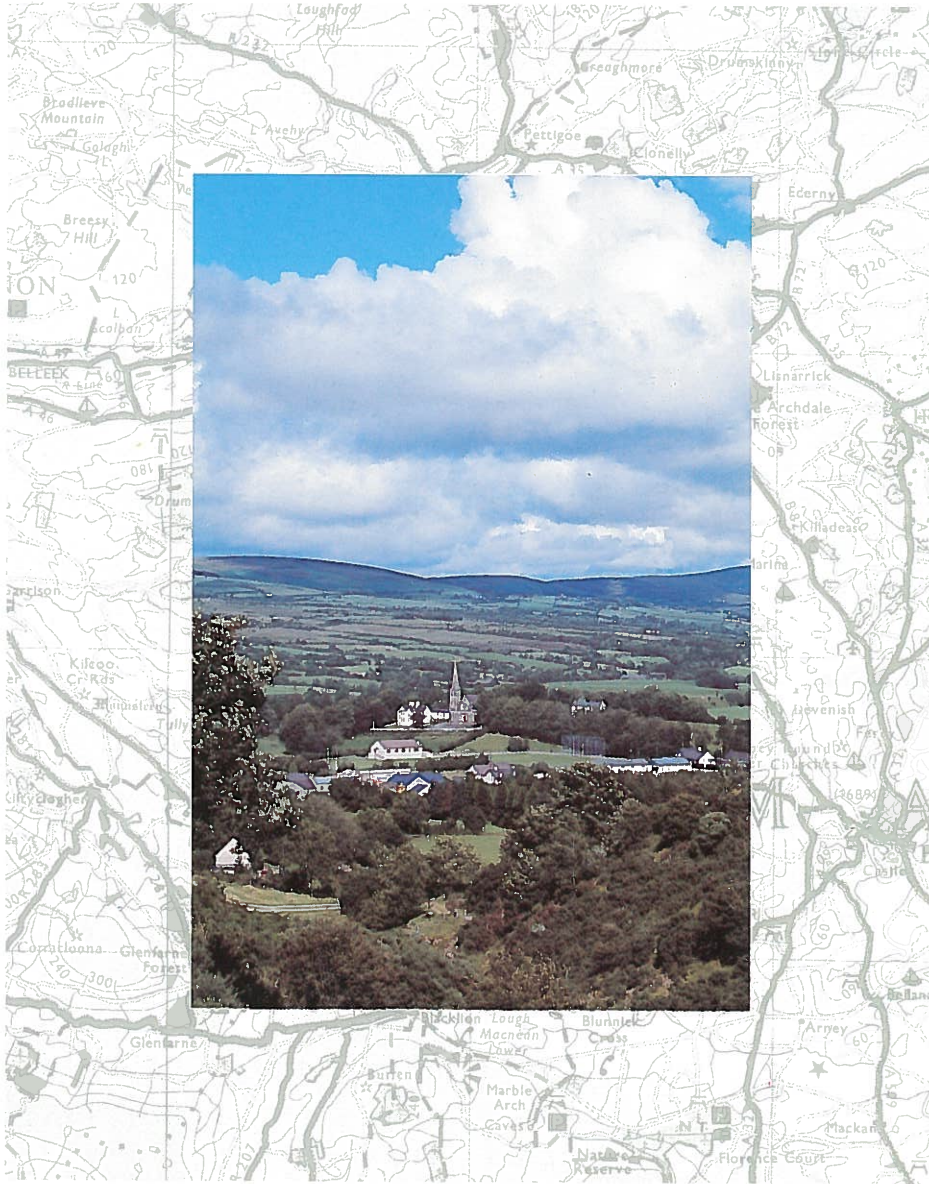




A PLANNING STRATEGY
for Rural Northern Ireland



A PLANNING STRATEGY *for Rural Northern Ireland*



Town and Country Planning Service
Department of the Environment (NI)

BELFAST : HMSO

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Foreword



Northern Ireland has a wealth of wonderful landscapes, a rich traditional pattern of settlement and a dispersed rural community. This is a heritage which I value and one that we must preserve and enhance for future generations.

However, communities face particular challenges in planning for their future growth and development, and Government, at local and national level, has to provide a means of assessing competing demands in the public interest. The planning process is that means.

Following a consultation exercise which produced a wide range of opinions, we have published this comprehensive integrated report which lays out the Department's Planning Strategy for rural areas. This will be the guiding document both for the public and specialists at all levels.

Planning decisions affect ordinary people and it is essential that the rules are easily understood and fairly implemented. That is why the relationship between applicant and planner must be helpful, straightforward and productive. This Strategy aims to encourage that.

If Northern Ireland is to develop in a sustainable way, accommodating economic diversity and the conservation of its natural assets, there must be understanding and mutual respect for the differing interests of society. There must be co-operation in reconciling differences and in charting a way forward in the interests of all.

I believe that the publication of this Strategy is an important step in that direction. I know that successful co-operation will conserve and develop a countryside which we will all continue to value.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R". Below the signature is a horizontal line.

ROBERT ATKINS
Minister for the Economy and the Environment

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

This Planning Strategy for rural Northern Ireland has been prepared by the Town and Country Planning Service of the Department of the Environment (NI). In the course of preparing the Strategy the Department consulted widely.



A leaflet entitled “What kind of countryside do we want?” was published in August 1991. An advertisement was placed in the three regional newspapers making the public aware of the availability of the leaflet. A number of planning issues were identified and responses were invited from District Councils, farming and amenity groups, and members of the general public.

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Preamble

In the last quarter of 1991 the Rural Development Council, the Rural Community Network and Community Technical Aid organised a series of public meetings, or ‘clinics’, at which the issues raised in the leaflet were discussed. A comprehensive report of the views expressed at the meetings was forwarded to the Department in January 1992.





















The Department is now publishing its planning strategy for rural Northern Ireland. This document incorporates regional policies and associated practice for the planning and control of development in rural areas.

Department of the Environment (NI)

September 1993

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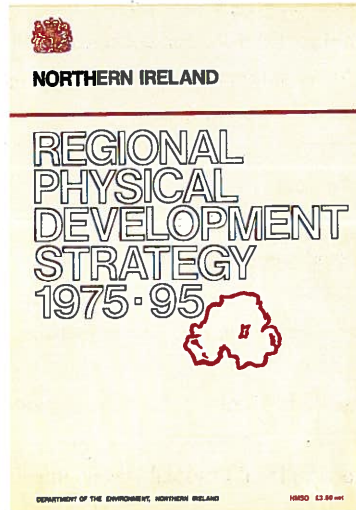
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Introduction

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The requirement to prepare Development Plans and operate a Development Control system is established by law under the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which corresponds to similar legislation in Great Britain and the European Community.

The Regional Physical Development Strategy 1975-95 established the Department's approach to development throughout Northern Ireland, including the rural area. It is appropriate to review that approach in the light of changing circumstances and the new challenges facing town and country - in particular the continuing change in the rural economy, with its implications for rural communities and the increasing pressures upon our environment and countryside.

The Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland covers all of the towns, villages and countryside of Northern Ireland outside Belfast (and adjoining built up areas) and Londonderry. It provides a comprehensive framework for the preparation of development plans for 19 individual District Council areas across the region. The Strategy establishes the objectives and the policies for land use and development appropriate to the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland and which need to be considered on a scale wider than the individual District Council Area. It provides a basis for co-ordinating decisions in both the public and the private sectors and sets out regional policies for the control of development, to ensure a consistent approach to rural planning matters.

The Strategy takes account of the Government's approach to the environment set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance". This is based on a set of principles, including sound stewardship of the nation's heritage and the creation of conditions for a healthy and growing economy. The recent publication by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Economic Development, entitled "Growing a Green Economy", amplifies some of these principles in the context of the environment and economy of Northern Ireland.

In producing the Strategy the Department has sought to bring the main planning issues before the public. The Department is grateful for the contribution of District Councils, other public bodies, rural communities, interest groups, Members of Parliament and individuals to the wideranging debate. It acknowledges the specific help provided by the Rural Development Council, the Rural Community Network and Community Technical Aid in the consultation process. This debate and the many comments received have greatly assisted and significantly influenced the Department in the preparation of the Strategy.

The document is in four main parts:

Part One - Context

This describes the social, economic and planning background to the Strategy and summarises the submissions made to the Department in response to the consultation process. From this the main planning issues are identified.

Part Two - The Strategy

This sets out the Department's principal planning objectives and strategic policies for the rural area.

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Part Three - Regional Planning Policies

This sets out regional development control policies under a series of topic headings. Where appropriate, detailed planning practice is provided explaining how the policies will be applied.

Part Four - Implementation

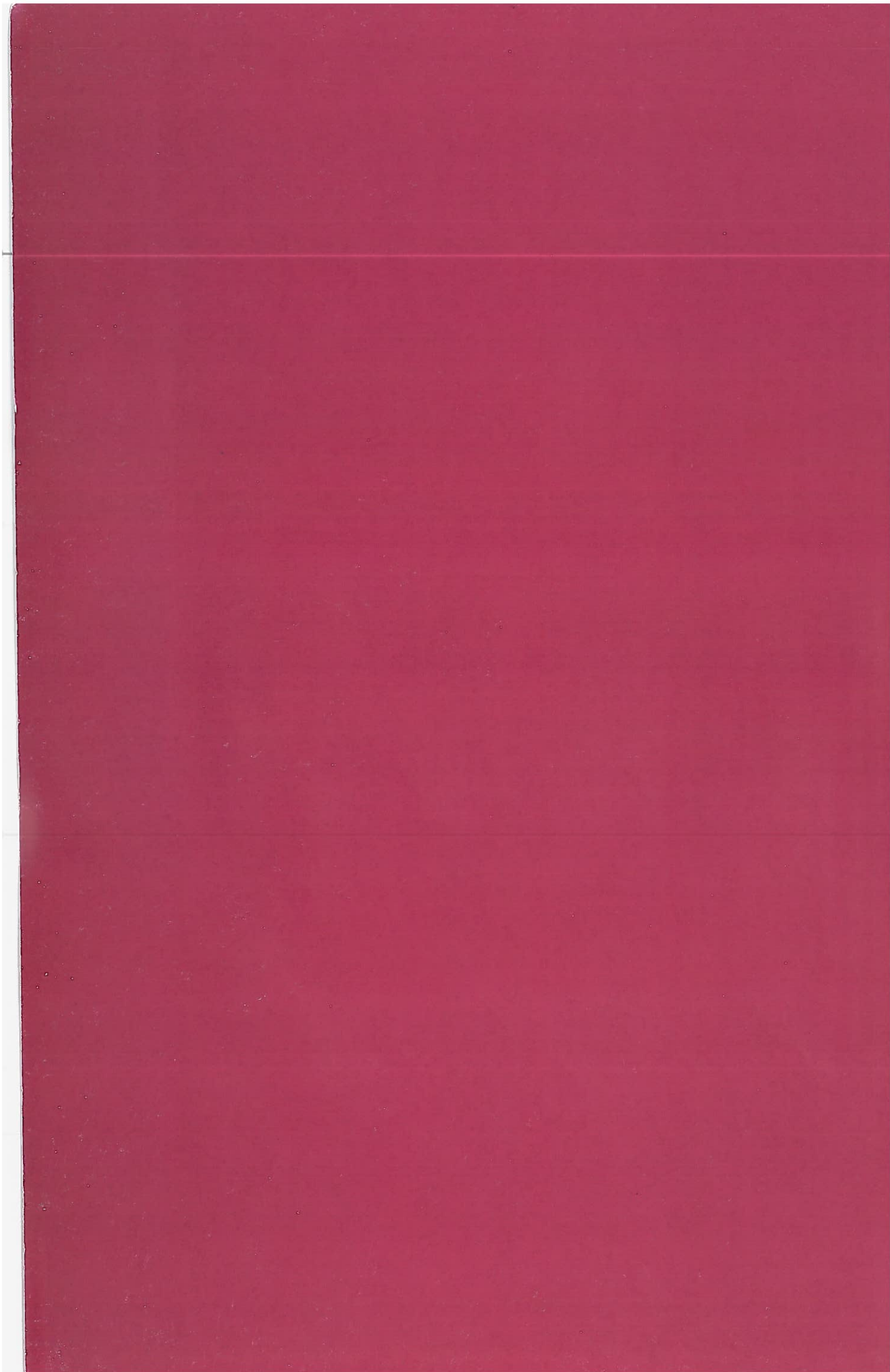
This sets out how the Strategy will be implemented and the procedures for monitoring, evaluation and review.

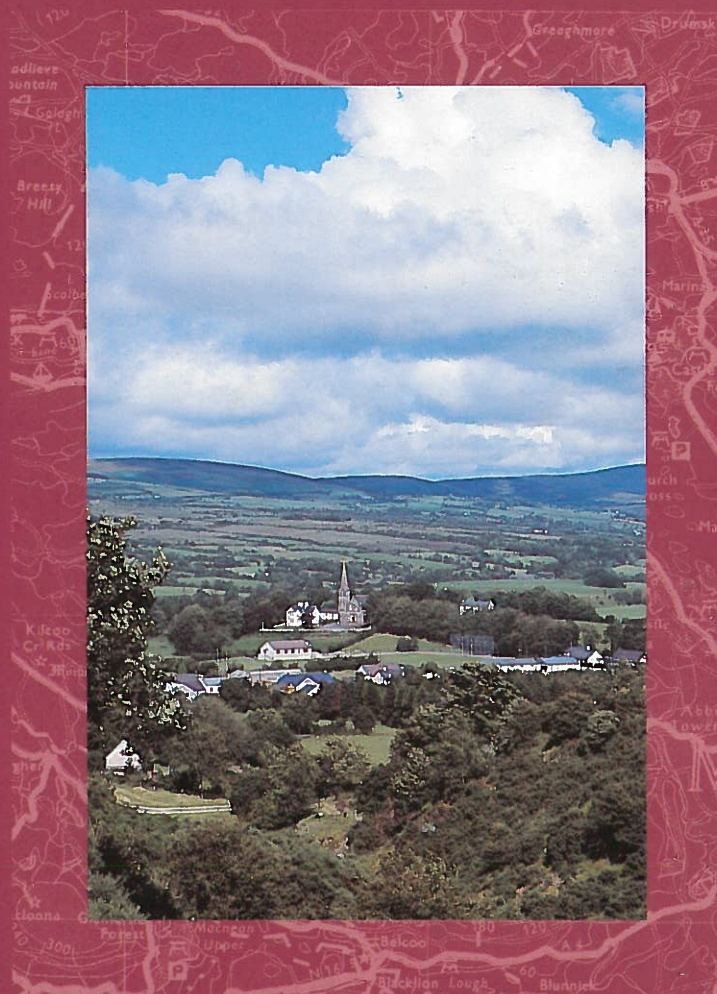
The Strategy is supported by a section on key statistics and other appendices.

With the publication of the Planning Strategy the following policy documents are withdrawn:

- The Regional Physical Development Strategy 1975-1995
- The Policy for the Control of Development in Rural Areas 1978.
- The Policy for the Control of Development in Rural Areas - Practice Notes 1979.
- Planning - Development Control: Statement by David Mitchell MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1981.
- Location, Siting and Design in Rural Areas 1987.

The Department may in due course produce, after public consultation, further policy statements on regional planning issues.





Context

Background

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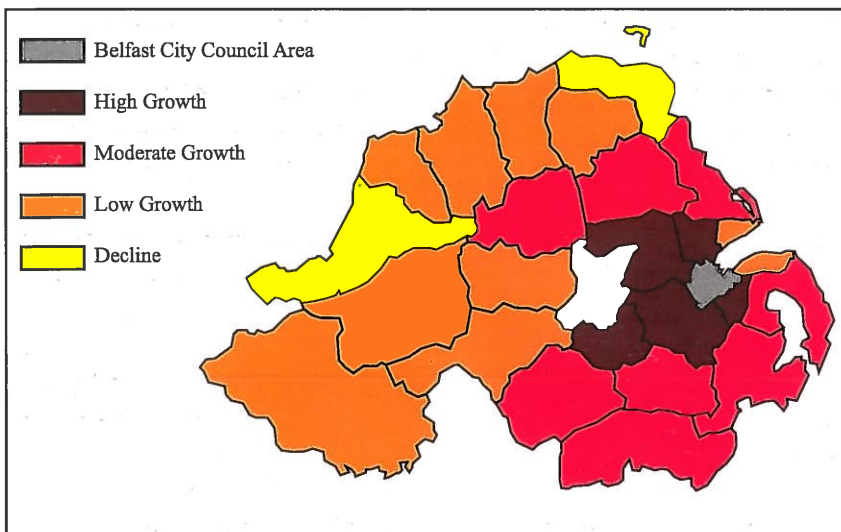
The area to which the Strategy relates excludes the Belfast Urban Area, the adjoining towns of Carrickfergus and Bangor, and Londonderry, but includes and has a relevance to all the remaining towns, villages and countryside of Northern Ireland. Approximately 950,000 people or 60% of the region's population live in the area defined as rural Northern Ireland for the purpose of the Strategy. It is estimated over 350,000 or 22% live in the open countryside.

Community

Demographic change is a fundamental element for public policy and decision making. Changes in population and households, in terms of numbers and structure, will affect the demand for employment, the need for housing and the provision of services and utilities.

Northern Ireland has the youngest population of any region in the United Kingdom, with the largest proportion of children and the lowest proportion of pensioners. The birth rate is significantly higher than other regions and equivalent to the average UK rate in the 1960's. Natural increase, i.e. the number of births in excess of deaths, remains substantially higher in the west of the Province than in the east and the migration pattern shows that the population has continued to gravitate, albeit at a reduced rate, in a generally easterly direction.

The Districts west of the River Bann recorded a net outflow of people between 1971 and 1991, those Districts fringing the Bann were approximately in balance during the same period and those Districts ringing Belfast recorded a gain in population.



Rural Population change by District, 1981-1991.

Population and household change do not necessarily correspond because of variations in family size throughout Northern Ireland. Viewed over the long term, average family size has declined in Northern Ireland as throughout the rest of Europe, although it has been larger than in Great Britain for many decades.

In every District, with the one exception of Belfast, the number of households has not only increased since 1971 but has done so at a rate greater than the growth in population. The increase in the number of households has tended to be greatest in those Districts within about 20 miles of Belfast, sometimes termed the Greater Belfast Area.

The community's housing needs are essentially a function of population change, changes in household size, and fitness of the housing stock. It is expected that average household size will continue to fall, requiring a larger number of dwelling units to accommodate a similar population. The fall will be most significant in western Districts where existing household size is generally higher.

With the general reduction in migration and the continued high birth rate, it is assumed that the proportion of Northern Ireland's population living in the more rural Districts will continue to grow. This decentralisation of urban population is a trend which Northern Ireland shares with the rest of the United Kingdom and Europe. At the same time if the urban regeneration strategy for Belfast is successful, it is expected that the population of the Belfast Urban Area might stabilise at around the 500,000 mark.

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It has been estimated that some 21,500 rural dwellings are unfit, representing 17% of the rural housing stock or twice as many in total as those in cities or large towns. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has been examining ways to improve housing conditions, assess housing need and increase the element of choice to rural dwellers. The need for low-cost home ownership options is regarded as an important housing requirement of the rural community.

The Housing Executive has responded, in its policy document "The Way Ahead", with a variety of housing initiatives. A series of pilot schemes in small rural settlements - the "Crossroads" initiative - are of particular planning relevance. These schemes are based on an assessment of demand which is carried out in liaison with community groups, local public and other representatives. The assessment includes a special needs dimension and the prospects for small-scale sheltered housing provision is being investigated at a number of villages.

In order to provide for rural consolidation and regeneration, a particular need has been identified to retain a balanced housing stock in villages. An adequate proportion of family accommodation must be maintained to provide for community stability and potential growth.

The response to dispersed and isolated rural dwelling stock is generally to upgrade this accommodation.

Economy

The rural economy is an integral part of the Northern Ireland economy and has links with those of Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and the European Community as a whole. The economy continues to undergo structural change, with employment declining in many of the older traditional industries such as agriculture and engineering and some growth occurring in the service and commercial sectors. Overall there is a persistent high level of unemployment.

Much of the region's manufacturing base is concentrated in the Belfast Urban Area and the other major urban centres. Small towns often depend upon the fortunes of a limited number of firms and the closure of a particular company can have a serious impact on the local economy.

Fortunately those sectors of the economy which have tended to show an increase in employment are not tied to the major centres of population and opportunity exists for job creation to be more dispersed throughout the region.

Agricultural output has increased dramatically accompanied by a reduction in the number of farm jobs.



Twenty years ago there were 77,000 people working on farms in Northern Ireland. Today the figure is around 57,000 and includes only 22,000 full-time farmers. The trend towards fewer farm jobs is evident throughout the developed world. In the first twenty-five years of the European Community, agricultural employment in the original six countries declined from over 15 million to under 6 million people. During the same period agricultural output within the community increased dramatically and now overproduction is a problem.

There is an increasing interest in farm diversification in Northern Ireland. A number of support systems are in operation to broaden the farm economy. There is also support for traditional farming practices within the Environmentally Sensitive Areas designated by the Department of Agriculture as a means of protecting and improving the environment.

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In 1988 the European Community adapted its structural funds, giving high priority to disadvantaged regions such as Northern Ireland. An initiative was launched to help local community groups to put together plans for integrated rural development in their areas. Many rural community groups have been established in Northern Ireland; some in socially and economically disadvantaged areas. In 1989 the Government set up an inter-Departmental committee in Northern Ireland to advise on ways to tackle the problems of deprived rural areas. An independent advisory body, the Rural Development Council, was established to help local groups to develop self-sustaining activities in such areas. New structures were introduced by the Department of Agriculture to deliver a co-ordinated response to the regeneration plans of local communities.

Portglenone - A characteristic small settlement.



Settlements

Northern Ireland has a characteristic pattern of many small settlements scattered throughout its countryside. The towns and villages act as service centres for those people living in the rural hinterland and as focal points for community activity. These settlements differ in historical development, social and economic function and physical form. Some of these have increasingly become commuter settlements for Belfast and other larger towns. In a number of cases the scale and form of new development is threatening the character of the settlement. Other settlements have suffered decline with little investment, leading to physical decay and dereliction.

In response, there have been a number of approaches to regeneration in recent years including action by community groups and District Councils; support from the International Fund for Ireland; and

projects by the Department of the Environment in certain towns. There have been schemes for comprehensive development, pedestrianisation, environmental improvement and enhancement of conservation areas.

Environment



A most important area of scenic quality - Ring of Gullion AONB.

Northern Ireland has a wide variety of landscapes; upland and mountain; drumlin and valley; lakes, rivers and coast. These landscapes are an important economic and environmental resource. The most important areas of scenic quality have been designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Most of the countryside has been farmed over many generations and its present appearance owes much to human management. Some activities however, and some forms of development, are detrimental to the maintenance of landscape

amenity. For example, Northern Ireland is now one of the least wooded parts of Europe. Its tree cover has been reduced and hedgerows removed. However more broad-leaved trees are now being planted as a result of various environmental initiatives.

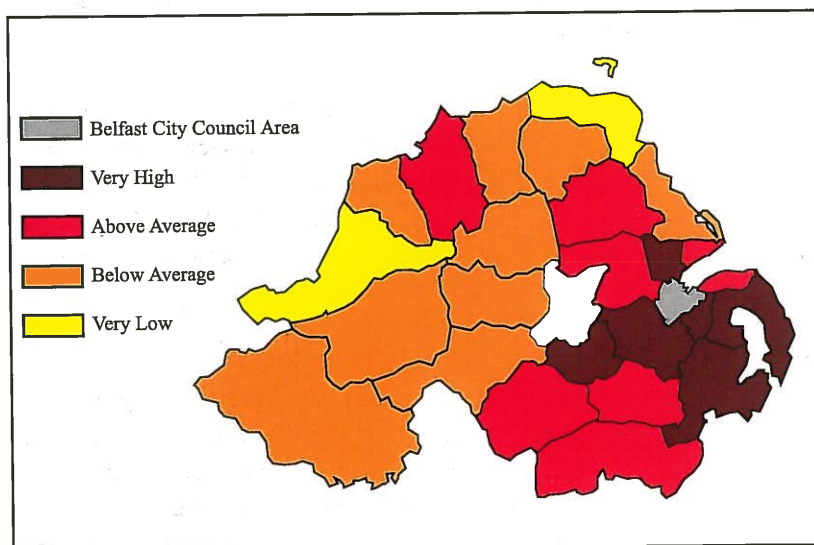
Northern Ireland has a rich natural heritage with a wealth of wildlife habitats, including some of international importance. An important part of our nature conservation heritage is being safeguarded by a network of site designations, such as Areas of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves. There are a number of threats to nature conservation including the

adverse effects arising from development and other activities. For example, there is concern about the continued loss of peatland, an important natural habitat in Northern Ireland.

The modern landscape contains many significant man-made features which are evidence of the development of our society. Archaeological sites and monuments, traditional buildings, areas and buildings of architectural and historic interest are part of our heritage and culture. The stock of traditional buildings is being depleted by abandonment, replacement or dereliction. Other features are at risk from insensitive alteration or unsympathetic change.

Most forms of development have the potential to give rise to pollution and to threaten the quality of the environment or human health. There are local problems of air and water quality. Some of these problems are aggravated by the build up of development in particular areas, contributing for example to the potential for pollution of rivers and lakes.

Following the introduction of the Department's rural planning policy in 1978, there was a significant increase in the numbers of applications for single dwellings in the countryside and a consequential increase in the number of planning permissions (up by over 100%). It is estimated that over 25,000 dwellings have been built in the countryside in the last ten years. This is a quarter of all houses built in Northern Ireland in that period. In many parts of the countryside, particularly those close to settlements, there is a buoyant market in building sites and existing dwellings.



The pressures for development have been most intense in the country areas surrounding cities and towns. There is a noticeable build-up of housing along certain country roads convenient to towns and villages, gradually eroding the rural character of the area. In some parts of the region, local pockets of suburban development have emerged to dominate the rural scene. The pressures are strongest in numerical terms close to the Belfast Urban Area. There has been less development in other parts of the countryside situated away from towns and containing poor farmland.

Development Pressures in the Countryside - 1979-1992.

Design

In the past, most buildings in the countryside were modest in scale, respected physical site constraints and used local building materials in simple characteristic ways. Nowadays, buildings tend to be larger and their impact on the landscape is greater. Replacement dwellings are frequently larger than the original structure and have a greater visual impact. Other types of development, such as certain agricultural buildings, do not require express planning permission, though their effect on the landscape can be considerable.

Modern dwellings have generally been built on the road frontage in typical suburban forms, alien to their rural setting. When dwellings are placed side by side they form ribbon development which is detrimental to the amenity of the countryside. In some instances, new developments have been accompanied by road widening and the provision of footpaths and street lighting, further affecting the rural character of the countryside.

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Prominent dwellings have been imposed on the landscape through the power of modern machinery to reshape the landform. The architectural style, the materials and finishes and the associated site works are often inappropriate and overly dominant. Landscaping may be absent or unsuitable.

To try to maintain the distinct character of the open countryside, the Department has been actively encouraging high quality design by the application of its location, siting and design standards introduced in 1987. These standards are revised and replaced by this Strategy. Design guides have been published for the Mourne and the Antrim Coast and Glens Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and will continue to be applied.

The Planning System

The complex social, economic and environmental trends described earlier provide the context within which planning in Northern Ireland operates. It is necessary to distinguish those matters which planning can influence from those which are outside its control. Planning policies cannot by themselves guarantee prosperity, reverse population movements or ensure that the environment is unharmed. They can, however, influence the nature of future development in a creative and beneficial way.

Planning is designed to regulate the development and use of land in the interest of the whole community. Its central concerns are to determine what kinds of development are appropriate, how much is desirable, where it should best be located and what it looks like.

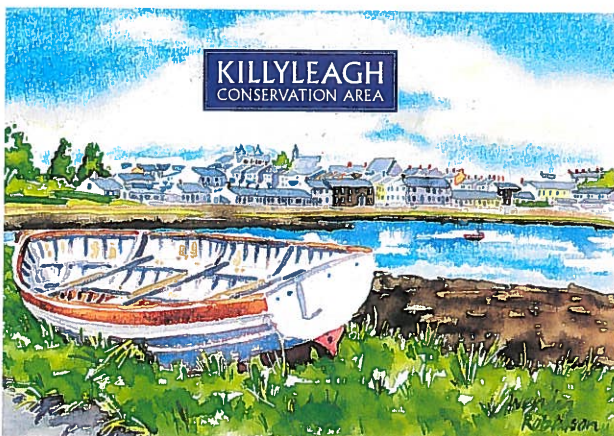
The Department's planning responsibilities include the preparation of Development Plans, consisting of maps and written statements setting out proposals for the development and use of land in the area to which the Plan relates. The Department also publishes Development Control Advice Notes setting out general principles and criteria relating to specific categories of development.

Most development requires planning permission. When dealing with planning applications, the Department takes into account Government policy, the provisions of the development plan, published policy and practice and any other relevant planning considerations. Some applications require to be accompanied by additional information to ensure that their possible effects on the environment are properly taken into account.

The Department has at its disposal a range of powers to improve the built environment. It may list buildings of special architectural or historic interest and designate Conservation Areas. It may

prepare development schemes for areas in need of improvement and acquire land in order to give effect to such schemes. It may acquire derelict land for the purpose of bringing it back into use. It may also make orders for the pedestrianisation of streets and carry out works to provide amenities for pedestrians on such streets.

The Department has the power to give grants for the preservation or enhancement of buildings within Conservation Areas. It may also make grants to District Councils for environmental improvements and the acquisition of land for open spaces.



Consultation Responses

The Department received a total of 109 responses during its consultation process, including the report on the rural clinics. The respondents were not constrained by the main issues identified in the leaflet and they submitted wide ranging, constructive and detailed comments. Over 900 separate suggestions were made for future planning policy, practice or procedure. There was no consensus expressed. There was, however, a strongly held view that planning policy placed too much emphasis on centralisation and channelling people into larger settlements. There was also concern that the present rural planning policy was inappropriate to Northern Ireland and that insufficient distinction was made between the circumstances in different parts of the country. Some groups and individuals were in favour of relaxing planning restrictions on rural development. Others emphasised the importance of facilitating economic activity. Yet others saw conservation of the natural and man-made environment as the top priority.

Economy

It was widely considered that the Department should pursue flexible policies to keep people on the land and stimulate rural regeneration and diversification of the rural economy. However it was stated that rural enterprises must develop in harmony with the environment. The need for the improvement and maintenance of rural infrastructure and a commitment from Government to provide essential services was stressed.

Settlements

It was suggested that careful expansion of towns and villages should be promoted so as to reduce pressure on the countryside. Integrated, up-to-date plans should be prepared for all towns and villages. There should be mechanisms to enable land, identified as suitable for town and village expansion, to be made available for development. Environmental improvement of settlements is required and the character of settlements should be protected.

The Environment

More comments were expressed about the environment than any other topic. It was considered that more financial and human resources are required for the promotion of environmental awareness. More protection should be afforded to mature trees and new planting should be encouraged. It was suggested that a comprehensive coastal planning and protection policy should be developed and that nature conservation should be recognised as a central issue. It was generally considered that agricultural developments should be brought within planning control and that the rural environment should be protected from pollution.

Housing

Strong, but far from unanimous opinions, were put forward on the topic of housing in the countryside. Some wanted the numbers of new dwellings in the countryside to be reduced. Others considered that people who have been born into the rural community should be able to build and live in that community. There was support for the development of clusters of housing to facilitate local people to live in the countryside. It was generally considered that planning policy should facilitate the improvement and expansion of the housing stock.

RURAL PLANNING STRATEGY REVIEW

A COMMUNITY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

January 1992

*An important part of the
consultation response.*

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Design

Opinions varied widely on the subject of design. Some thought higher priority should be given to educating people on the benefits of better development standards. Others considered that the standards should be made less rigid and arbitrary. Some said that designs which enable traditional buildings to be adapted to modern conditions should be encouraged. Others suggested that people are entitled to decide for themselves on design. There was wide support for the use and enforcement of planning conditions requiring landscaping of new development.

General

Many respondents commented on the way planning is organised in Northern Ireland. Some suggested that the statutory responsibility for planning should be changed to provide for more local accountability. There was support for greater local participation and better co-ordination between Government Departments. It was considered that planning policies should be clearly stated and consistently applied, and positive guidance given to prospective developers. Some respondents proposed that Environmental Assessment should be more extensively used.

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Issues

A number of key planning issues have been identified from the background material and the consultation responses.

Northern Ireland's increasing population will generate a variety of development requirements e.g. houses, factories, shops, schools and recreational facilities. The precise nature of these requirements will reflect the changes in population and household structure; the need to make good present deficiencies; social and economic change within society generally and people's changing expectations. In particular it will be necessary to meet society's need for housing by providing a choice of suitable accommodation in appropriate locations.

It is necessary to provide a flexible and relevant approach to the planning of different areas, to take account of their particular characteristics. Allied to this is the need to assist and encourage communities and their elected representatives to be actively involved in the planning of their locality.

A major issue is the need to protect Northern Ireland's environmental assets; its natural resources; landscapes, habitats and species; its man-made heritage and its relative freedom from pollution.

There is also the need to provide for the development of the regional economy and in particular the diversification of the rural economy.

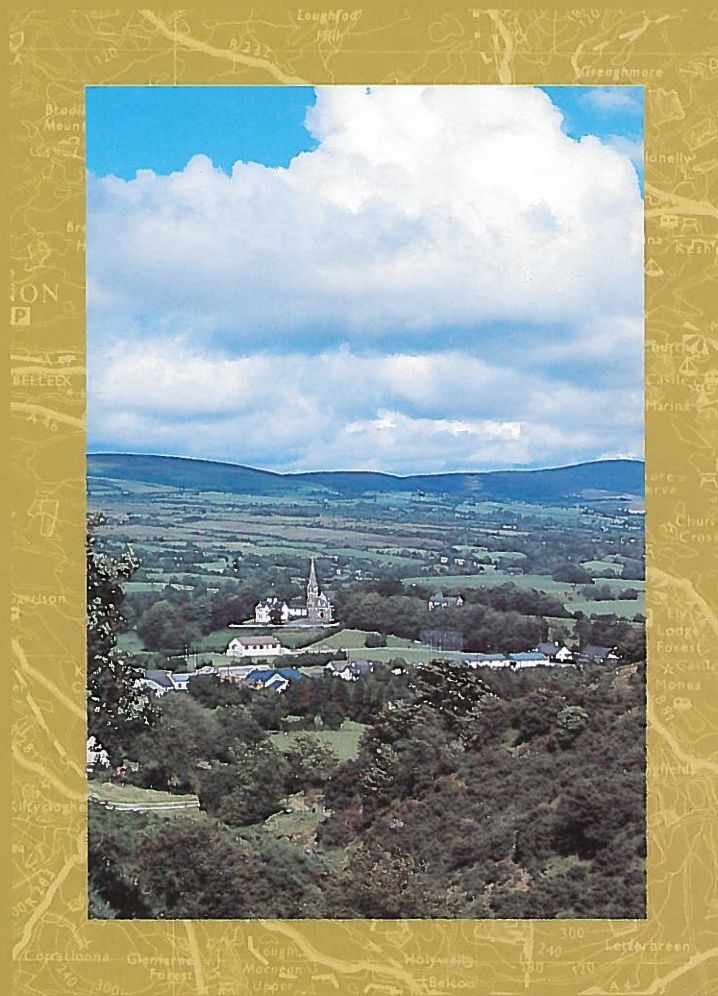
The extent of future development in individual towns and villages needs to be determined and ways found to restore confidence in those settlements suffering from decay and dereliction.

Given the amount of housing development which has already taken place and continuing pressures for development, a key issue is to establish the extent to which future development can be accommodated in the countryside without detriment to the environment.

There is a concern about the quality and impact of much recent development in the open countryside and about the standards which should be applied to ensure that new development is satisfactorily integrated into its rural setting.

The fundamental challenge is to find the right balance between the development necessary to meet society's changing requirements and conserving the environment for future generations.





The Strategy

Planning Strategy

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Planning Strategy is based upon an analysis of the key issues and opportunities relevant to rural Northern Ireland. It considers the complex inter-relationships between town and country and seeks to present a clear vision of the future development of the rural area.

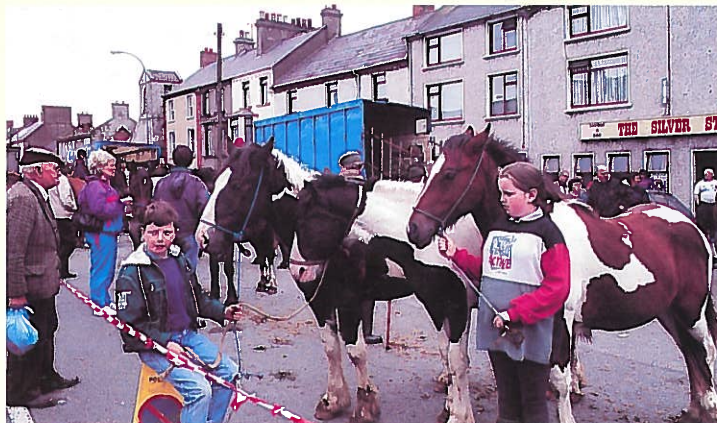
There is a variety of interests and expectations regarding future development in Northern Ireland among those who live or work on or own land; those who visit for recreation or leisure; and those who value and seek to conserve natural and cultural attributes. All have opinions, interests and concerns. The Strategy seeks to reconcile the diverse and often conflicting aspirations of these groups and identify solutions which are in the wider public interest.

Strategic Objectives:

- to protect and enhance the natural and man-made environment;
- to meet the future development needs of the rural community;
- to facilitate regeneration of the rural economy;
- to accommodate change, while maintaining the character of the countryside;
- to revitalise rural towns and villages in order to make them more attractive places in which to live and work; and
- to promote a high quality of design in new development.

THE STRATEGY

The purpose of the Strategy is to contribute to the quality of life in Northern Ireland. The Strategy is an attempt to meet rural society's development needs and aspirations, to protect the environment and to encourage environmentally sustainable development. A primary principle of the planning system is stewardship of the environment. A long term perspective of the community's needs must be taken.



Aghnacloy - one of the many rural communities of Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland is a region of great variety and contrast in its communities, landscapes and patterns of development. The Strategy must provide for the specific circumstances of particular areas; for the range of community requirements and the variety of development issues.

Key elements of the former Regional Physical Development Strategy 1975-95 included the regeneration of Belfast combined with the protection of its setting and the planned development of a network of selected towns described as the District Towns (the main towns in Council Districts). The City of Belfast is, and will continue to be, the principal regional centre in Northern Ireland. The Department's approach to its future development is set out in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001. In practice, the District Towns Strategy was applied flexibly over the years in response to the popular demand for more choice.

Settlements

The Department will no longer seek to direct population or development to selected settlements nor will it be bound by a rigid interpretation of a hierarchy of settlements - towns, villages and smaller settlements - ranging from small to large. It will however seek to meet the development needs of society and protect the environment. In preparing development plans, the Department will take account of differing circumstances throughout Northern Ireland.

Within commuting range of the Belfast Urban Area there are acute pressures for development. There are some settlements where, for reasons of topography, landscape, infrastructure or amenity, there is little scope for further development. Some smaller settlements consist mainly of recent housing development with few or no community facilities. It would be inappropriate for large-scale development to take place in these places.

However, many settlements in the Greater Belfast Area have the capacity for further significant development, to accommodate their own growth and also to provide for the needs of a wider area. In these settlements, the objective will be orderly and progressive development, respecting the environment and well related to the existing settlement.

Housing

In the open countryside of the Greater Belfast Area there are strong development pressures, especially for single houses. These pressures extend beyond those areas presently subject to stricter planning control under Green Belt policy or other policy definitions. Progressively, areas of the countryside have been developed with pockets of essentially suburban development which threaten their rural character. The Strategy is to identify areas under threat and, through the development plan process, to designate them as either Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas. Green Belts prevent the unrestricted sprawl of towns, safeguard the countryside and assist in urban regeneration. Countryside Policy Areas protect areas under development pressure and maintain their rural character. Within these areas there will be a presumption against unnecessary or inappropriate development. About 25% of the countryside is currently designated as Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas.

Exceptionally, there may be an area presently designated as a Green Belt or Policy Area where there is little evidence of development pressure. In such an area the present designation will be reassessed.

In other parts of Northern Ireland such as Tyrone and Fermanagh, there is less pressure for development than in the Greater Belfast Area and in some settlements little development may have taken place in recent years. In those areas, it will be appropriate to consider generous limits of development, within environmental constraints, in order to encourage desirable development and accommodate the maximum flexibility and choice.

Even in those parts of Northern Ireland where there is less overall pressure for development, there will be a need for a Green Belt around the larger towns, and Countryside Policy Areas for places under threat from excessive development.

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Elsewhere in the open countryside, planning applications will be assessed on design standards, normal planning criteria and environmental considerations.

Rural housing unfitness is a significant problem particularly in the west of the Province. The Strategy supports current housing initiatives designed to deal with this problem.

Economic Development

It is important to the well-being of the community to facilitate economic development. The planning system can ensure that there are no unnecessary land use obstacles to job creation. In particular, the Strategy is concerned with the promotion of a healthy rural economy, with a suitable range of job opportunities to support local communities as well as to protect and improve the countryside.

The Strategy is generally to retain existing industrial sites and to ensure that there is capacity for industrial development in most settlements, including dispersed rural communities. The Strategy supports the development of community-based projects at acceptable locations in disadvantaged areas. Appropriate agriculture diversification proposals will be facilitated.

The Department will assist local communities with regeneration and enhancement proposals to strengthen the life and character of settlements.

Environment

The Strategy contains specific policies to protect the beauty of Northern Ireland's landscapes and to safeguard our natural and man-made heritage. The Department will ensure that environmental effects are assessed as an integral part of decision making within the planning process. Conservation Policies will help to promote Northern Ireland's international reputation in environmental matters and thus assist in the attraction of inward investment.

The Strategy sets out principles for the siting, design and landscaping of new development in rural Northern Ireland. This will be supplemented by further advice in the form of a design guide for development in the countryside.

Strategic Policies

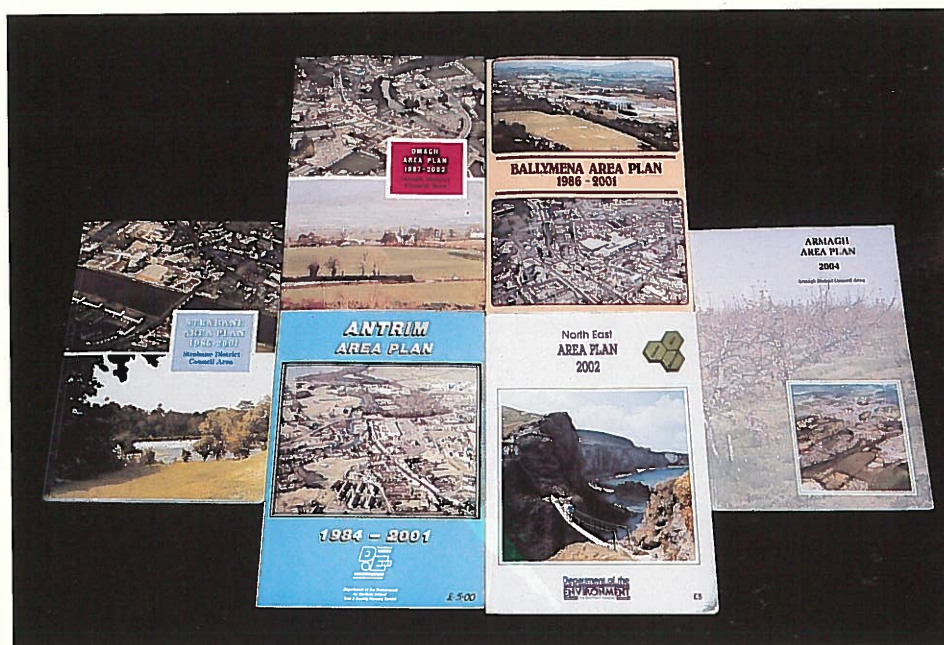
The details of the Strategy are set out in strategic policies which are designed to provide a coherent framework for future development in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless it is recognised that there are opposing pressures to be reconciled within the Strategy. For example, the continued development of a dispersed settlement pattern is at odds with the need to reduce costs of providing services to the community and reliance on the car. These opposing pressures have to be balanced. It is apparent that at present there is a very strong desire within rural communities to support a dispersed settlement pattern and the Department's Strategy acknowledges this desire within normal planning and environmental constraints.

The strategic policies are supported by a range of detailed development control policies under individual topic headings and, where appropriate, information on planning practice. The Strategy will be monitored and evaluated over the first five years and the Department will consider the need for a formal review in the year 2000.

Resources

The implementation of certain policies and proposals contained in the Strategy is subject to the availability of resources and, in particular, public expenditure resources.

Strategic Policies



POLICY SP 1 DEVELOPMENT PLANS

To provide development plans in consultation with District Councils and local communities, tailored to the specific needs of particular localities in Northern Ireland.

The Department has a programme of development plans for all Districts. Development plans will interpret at a local level the regional planning policies contained within this Strategy and set out district policies and proposals.

Development plans provide the primary means of reconciling conflicts between the need for development and the need to protect the natural and man-made environment. They are intended to plan for the specific circumstances and needs of each District Council Area. They provide a firm basis for rational and consistent decisions on planning applications.

The Department consults with the District Council during the preparation of a development plan and will encourage community groups, other organisations and individuals to contribute to the plan-making process. It will take account of all representations received and other information about the needs and opportunities of local communities.

Through this process the Department hopes to obtain a wide measure of agreement with local communities on the policies and proposals for their areas.

The preparation of development plans will take account of the Government's drive to foster rural development, particularly in disadvantaged areas. The plans will therefore reflect the co-ordinated approach being taken by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture to stimulate rural regeneration.

POLICY SP 2 TOWNS

To assess the potential for the growth of towns and plan for their future development.

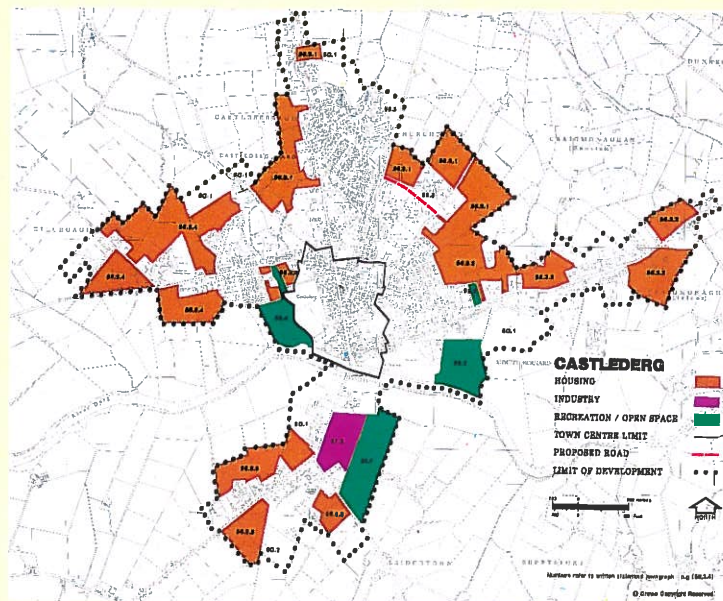
The potential of each town to grow will be assessed. Most towns are local service centres for their rural catchment population. Most are centres of employment and have the capacity to expand that role and to accommodate housing development. The planning assessment will include an analysis of development trends and an estimate of the capacity of the town to meet its own needs and to contribute to meeting the needs of a wider rural area. The potential for growth may be limited by strategic, environmental or infrastructure considerations.

Land will be zoned for principal land uses.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

The development plan will set out how each town will accommodate future development taking account of its physical layout and historic character. Limits of development will be defined. For reasons of topography, amenity or environment, the limit of development may define a permanent boundary to the built-up area. In other places, the limit may represent a realistic boundary for planning purposes for the period of the plan. Land will be zoned for the principal land uses in order to guide development to the most appropriate locations. Sufficient land will be zoned to provide choice and flexibility in the development process, taking account of local circumstances. Some land may be left unzoned as white land within the development limit. White land provides a development land reserve which can be zoned later as required and as infrastructure becomes available.

Proposals for maintaining and enhancing the environment will be included in keeping with the integrity of the town's historic settlement form and character.



POLICY SP 3 VILLAGES

To carry out planning appraisals of villages and smaller settlements.

A planning appraisal will be made of each village and smaller settlement. This appraisal will enable the identification of the limits of development considered appropriate for the period of the plan. It is important to facilitate development by providing a choice of sites to overcome land availability or infrastructure problems. The limit of development may therefore enclose more land than is likely to be required to meet demand. The appraisal will also highlight any opportunities for regeneration and enhancement - see policy SP 4. In certain circumstances sites or areas will be reserved for purposes such as industry and open space.

Generally, land will not be zoned throughout these settlements, since experience has shown that zoning can be an inflexible approach to planning small settlements where development pressure may be low. While the amount of land required to meet the estimated needs of the community may be small, there may be several locations where development would be acceptable and no certainty that any particular site would be made available for building.

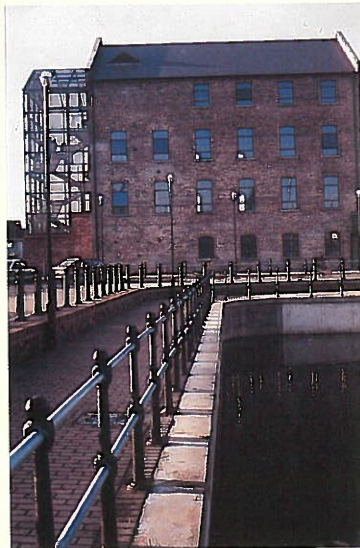
District Councils and community groups have often prepared their own village studies and these have been helpful in focusing attention on the opportunities for community development. Such studies are valuable and the information gathered will be taken into account by the Department.

POLICY SP 4 REGENERATION OF RURAL SETTLEMENTS

To identify enhancement opportunities and promote regeneration in towns and villages, in association with District Councils, local communities and the private sector.

Some towns and villages show signs of economic stagnation and a lack of private investment. Run-down, dilapidated buildings and derelict sites may be evident. Opportunities for development will be identified in the preparation of development plans, to assist with guiding and promoting desirable development. District Councils and local communities will be involved, in association with the Department, in the identification of proposals for the enhancement and regeneration of their areas.

Enhancement strategies for the improvement of the environment in Conservation Areas will be produced, to encourage the economic regeneration of settlements through conservation of their special architectural or historic character. The Department is already co-operating with District Councils in conservation and regeneration projects.



The Department is co-operating with local communities in conservation and regeneration - Coalisland.

In other settlements, the Department will contribute to environmental improvements and may assist community groups or private interests in regeneration projects. Proposals which improve sites can help to restore confidence and provide a stimulus for private investment in the vicinity and elsewhere. Regeneration activities in settlements in the most disadvantaged rural areas will be co-ordinated, where possible, with the actions of the Department of Agriculture, to achieve maximum benefit for the settlement and its rural hinterland.

POLICY SP 5 DISPERSED RURAL COMMUNITIES

To identify and designate dispersed communities in certain rural areas and establish criteria for their future development.

Some rural areas display symptoms of economic and social disadvantage. These areas may contain dispersed communities with a strong sense of identity. In the interests of promoting rural regeneration, the Planning Service will, in consultation with the District Council and the Department of Agriculture, identify and designate such communities in development plans.

The criteria for the identification of rural communities include a traditional focal point, with some physical sense of place and convincing evidence of local community activity serving a wide rural area - see policy HOU7.

Planning criteria will be established for the future development of these settlements. Dispersed rural communities will not necessarily be defined by a limit of development. Instead preferred locations for new development may be identified in the plan or criteria may be established to guide and evaluate development proposals. While principally a location for single houses, some of these rural communities may accommodate a small group of houses including those necessary to renew unfit housing stock or to meet other local need. Appropriate industrial and commercial enterprises and new community buildings may also be accommodated.



Some dispersed rural communities may accommodate a small group of new houses - Aghadrumsee.

The identification of dispersed rural communities will not necessarily ensure the provision of infrastructure in such locations.

POLICY SP 6 HOUSES IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

To regulate the development of single houses in the open countryside in terms of normal planning criteria, including visual and environmental impact.

Northern Ireland has a distinctive and traditional pattern of rural settlement which, unlike many parts of Great Britain, includes a substantial number of individual houses and other buildings dispersed throughout the countryside. Over the last fifteen years there has been a significant increase in the rural population, though rates of growth have varied from place to place. It is estimated that around twenty two per cent of the total population now lives in the open countryside.

A major theme of the public consultation response was that those brought up in rural areas should not be prevented from building their homes there. The Strategy respects the wishes of the rural community and, as before, throughout much of the countryside it will not be necessary to establish a need for a new dwelling when seeking planning permission.

Development will, however, continue to be controlled on the basis of planning and environmental considerations. The building of single houses will be regulated in terms of the capacity of the landscape setting to absorb further development, their visual impact, siting and design, pollution and other environmental consequences. Those areas of countryside which are subject to excessive development pressures will be protected - see policy SP12.

POLICY SP 7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To facilitate economic development and the diversification of the rural economy.

While agriculture will continue to be the principal land use and the economic base of rural areas, there are limits on its potential. However, modern technology has reduced some of the barriers to economic development in rural areas, which are now in a better position to compete with larger urban centres.

Towns and villages are important centres of population and employment providing a range of existing services and infrastructure. Their location on the main road system and at the centre of a network of local roads serving the rural community makes them an appropriate location for new enterprise. New employment opportunities in settlements will foster economic regeneration and will assist people to continue to live in the rural area.

In order to retain employment opportunities in appropriate and convenient locations, land will be zoned for industrial development in the towns and industrial sites will normally be reserved for that use. Many smaller settlements, including designated dispersed rural communities, as described in policy SP5, will contain sites where industrial development may be acceptable. Proposals for enterprise centres, initiated by rural communities to encourage economic regeneration in disadvantaged areas, will be facilitated in appropriate locations. The Department will take account of the activities of the Industrial Development Board (IDB), Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU) and the Department of Agriculture to foster economic development.

In the open countryside, there is scope for the re-use of existing buildings as well as appropriate agricultural diversification proposals - see policy SP8, and for certain special activities, such as the exploitation of rural resources or tourist related projects. There is, however, a general presumption against new industrial development in the open countryside.

Proposals for specific industrial or commercial development will be evaluated against the need for the protection of the natural and man-made environment, by taking into account its nature, scale and location.

POLICY SP 8 AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION

To facilitate agricultural diversification subject to normal planning considerations.

Continued long-term rationalisation and restructuring of the agricultural industry is inevitable, particularly in response to the changing basis of the agricultural policy of the European Community. Nevertheless most of the countryside will continue to be farmed, even if many holdings will provide only part-time employment.

Agricultural diversification offers the possibility of maintaining or increasing farm income and employment. Diversification could take a number of forms, not all of which would require planning permission. Where permission is required, the Planning Service will approve

Agricultural diversification may maintain or increase farm income and employment.



appropriate proposals which do not have unacceptable impacts on the countryside. On-farm diversification involves the redeployment of farm resources. The type of activities which could be developed include value-added agricultural products, unconventional produce, forestry, tourism and recreation - see policy AG3.

POLICY SP 9 RESOURCES

To protect resources which are important to the regional economy.

Northern Ireland has the benefit of a number of natural resources, including productive agricultural land and valuable mineral reserves. Resources, which are of importance to the regional economy, will be protected from inappropriate developments. The best agricultural land will, so far as possible, be kept free from development. Mineral resources, like lignite, will be reserved for possible future development - see policies AG1 and MIN3.

Northern Ireland generally has a clean environment and also a diversity of attractive landscapes, natural habitats and evidence of rich cultural traditions. These resources can contribute to the quality of local life and to a sense of local identity. They are valuable for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism. A quality environment has an economic value in attracting inward investment and as a marketing asset of particular importance to the tourist industry. Planning policy will be applied to prevent over-exploitation; to avoid pollution and to ensure that the quality and variety of these assets are not degraded, as a consequence of other developments.

The efficient use of energy will be taken into consideration in the preparation of development plans and in the control of development. Increasingly this factor could influence decisions involving the location of new development, particularly in settlements. Land use zoning will take account of the need to relate different developments to one another in a way which will improve accessibility and reduce dependence upon the private car. Energy efficiency is also likely to affect the detailed layout of new developments.

POLICY SP 10 TOURISM

To facilitate appropriate tourist and recreational developments.

Planning policy will be exercised positively in favour of tourism, subject to environmental impact. Tourist developments can make a significant contribution to the regional economy, particularly in places where alternatives to agricultural employment are needed. There is scope for tourist development in towns and villages, especially those which contain areas of architectural or historic interest, or are located in scenic landscapes or have a coastal setting. In order to support the tourist industry, suitable tourist developments near to existing attractions or in close proximity to existing tourist facilities will normally be approved - see policy TOU1.

It is likely that Northern Ireland's recreational needs will continue to be met mainly on land reserved for that purpose in settlements. Favourable consideration may also be given to proposals for the use of land, surplus to agricultural requirements, for outdoor sporting or recreational purposes or amenity open space - see policies REC1 and 2.

POLICY SP 11 TRANSPORTATION

To facilitate the maintenance and development of an effective and efficient transport network.



The main elements of the transportation system will be protected.

Northern Ireland is served by a transport system based principally upon a road network. The regional road network joins the cities and larger towns, the ports and airports and thus provides main linkages with the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain. The main road network is clearly an asset contributing to the efficiency of the local economy and reducing, to some extent, the effects of peripherality both within Northern Ireland and Europe. The local road network serves the countryside and links the small towns and villages with larger settlements. This network provides a high degree of accessibility.

Given the importance of the transportation system to the economy and life of Northern Ireland, the Department will protect the main elements of the system and facilitate its upgrading, subject to appropriate planning and environmental considerations, including visual amenity and the natural and man-made environment. Where necessary, improvements and extensions to the transportation network will be added as resources permit. The relationship between the use of land and the transport system will be taken into account in the preparation of development plans and in the control of development. It is desirable to protect the system from deterioration and loss of efficiency and to improve accessibility and public safety - see policy PSU 5.

It is Government policy to encourage forms of development which make people less reliant on the private car and this will be reflected in the preparation of development plans. New homes, shops and workplaces should be planned and sited in ways which assist people to reach them by public transport, bicycle or foot. In particular there may be opportunities for innovative approaches to public transport in rural areas. Where appropriate, priority measures may be introduced to improve public transport.

POLICY SP 12 RURAL LANDSCAPES

To protect rural landscapes from excessive or inappropriate development by the designation of Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas.

Northern Ireland has a wide variety of landscapes of considerable quality and amenity. Man actively farms most of the countryside and he has shaped much of the landscape that we cherish. The landscapes of Northern Ireland are a rich resource of productive agricultural land, sites for nature conservation and indications of our cultural heritage. They provide for our recreational needs and are a considerable tourist asset. They contribute to the quality of life and create a quality of environment that can attract investment. The Department has designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to give national recognition to some of the most beautiful landscapes in Northern Ireland.

There are some areas of countryside with exceptional landscapes, such as the High Mourne, certain stretches of sea or lough shore, and certain views or vistas, where any development would be likely to adversely affect their scenic qualities. There are certain landscapes which suffer from excessive development pressure related to their location close to cities and towns. There are other landscapes which are also subject to strong development pressure or which are vulnerable because of their limited capacity to absorb further development.

Planning policy must take account of the wide variety of landscapes and development pressures in the preparation of development plans. Countryside Assessments will be carried out to identify the particular characteristics of the landscapes within each District - see policy DES 1. These assessments will identify development pressure and consider its impact on the landscape and local rural character. Where it is considered necessary to protect landscapes from excessive or inappropriate development, Green Belts will be designated around cities and towns and Countryside Policy Areas (CPAs) elsewhere - see policy GB/CPA 1.

Green Belts are intended to prevent the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring settlements from merging; to safeguard the surrounding countryside; to protect the setting of settlements; and particularly in the case of Belfast, to assist in urban regeneration. In some instances, the boundaries of existing Green Belts may need to be adjusted to include particular areas at risk from excessive development.

Other areas of countryside, under pressure or likely to come under pressure for development which would adversely affect the rural character of their landscapes, will be designated as Countryside Policy Areas including important river corridors. These may also include pockets of the countryside beyond the Green Belt, affected by commuter pressures associated with the Belfast Urban Area, where their rural character is threatened by suburban development. Within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, there may be areas where the quality of landscape is identified as under threat from development pressure. Such parts of AONBs will be designated as Countryside Policy Areas or included within a Green Belt as appropriate.

The policy in Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas is to minimise new development. Planning permission will be granted only where the need for the development is clearly established and it meets the planning and environmental criteria. In some Countryside Policy Areas a special policy will apply to protect unique landscapes and no development will be acceptable unless, exceptionally, it is required in the wider public interest.

The extent of all Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas will be determined through the development plan process, involving the participation of the District Council and the rural community. The extent of each area will relate to the particular local circumstances.

POLICY SP 13 THE COAST

**To protect the coast
from inappropriate
development.**

Northern Ireland's coastline is of great importance not only for its striking natural beauty, but also in terms of its scientific interest, its wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities. The coast is of great economic value and is the location of ports and many of our major urban areas and industries. Society continues to place considerable demands on coastal areas. In addition to man's influence the coastline is also subject to continual change resulting from dynamic natural processes.



The natural character and landscape of the undeveloped coast will be conserved.

The natural character and landscape of the undeveloped coast will be conserved throughout its length by inclusion within Green Belts or a series of Countryside Policy Areas. This is essential to safeguard this unique element in our natural heritage and to protect it from inappropriate development - policy CO1.

Within settlement limits strict control will be exercised over coastal development. Proposals will be assessed against the objective to safeguard the natural and man-made environment and amenity. There is scope for many positive proposals to take advantage of the sea or water frontage, in particular, opportunities for public access or public uses sensitively placed in a natural setting. There are also opportunities for port and related activities, if not in conflict with planning and environmental considerations. The details of policies and proposals will be determined in development plans in the light of local circumstances.

POLICY SP 14 NATURE CONSERVATION

To safeguard sites and features of nature conservation interest.

There is a wide variety of nature conservation interests throughout the countryside and in many urban areas. The survival of wildlife populations and the maintenance of the full diversity of geological and physiographical features will require the wise management of the total land resource.

Sites of nature conservation interest will be identified in the Countryside Assessments undertaken in the preparation of development plans. Nature conservation interests will be taken into account in the formulation of proposals, and conservation requirements will be integrated into the plan. Where appropriate, an environmental appraisal of development proposals will be carried out. Conservation and enhancement of the natural environment will be encouraged and promoted.

The Department attaches great importance to its commitments, under international obligations, to the protection of species and habitats. Nature conservation will, therefore, be considered in assessing planning applications generally. Defined areas, which are intrinsically valuable or vulnerable to damage, will be protected and development, which would be likely to affect them adversely, will not normally be permitted - see policies CON1 and 2.

Conservation requirements will be integrated into development plans.



POLICY SP 15 HERITAGE

To safeguard features of the historic landscape and the best of the built environment.

Development plans can help to reconcile the need for development with the interests of conservation including archaeology. Features of our man-made heritage will be identified in the Countryside Assessments carried out in the preparation of development plans - see policy DES1.

There is growing concern about the continuing loss of traditional buildings with their historical associations and local character. These buildings developed as a response to local economic and social circumstances, using simple styles and largely local materials. They have a natural place in the landscape and give the countryside its personality. Traditional local buildings should be retained as part of our culture and as part of the regional identity. It is sensible to rehabilitate and improve existing buildings, rather than replace them or allow them to fall derelict, and the Department would encourage this approach. For those buildings listed for their special architectural or historic interest the strategy is to preserve both the buildings and their settings.

The modern landscape is an historic landscape, the product of human activity over thousands of years, and contains features which are evidence of the development of our society. Archaeological remains are a limited and diminishing resource which once destroyed cannot be renewed. They are part of our sense of identity and valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism. The Department will seek to protect archaeological remains and their settings - see policies CON 4 and 6.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

There are many areas of architectural or historic interest, some of which are worthy of designation as Conservation Areas. These will be identified in development plans. The objective in controlling development in Conservation Areas is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the areas. The booklets published when such areas are designated will include guidance on the standards of development. Other areas of historic value may be identified, as Areas of Townscape or Village Character in order to be protected and enhanced - policy CON5.

*Mount Stewart, Co Down -
a fine landscaped garden.*



Concern about our cultural heritage also encompasses historic landscaped parks, gardens, estates and demesnes including, where appropriate, their boundary walls and other features.

POLICY SP 16 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

To protect the rural environment.

Policies and proposals to be included in a development plan will be evaluated against the strategic objective to protect the natural and man-made environment and account will be taken of the environmental effects which might arise.

In determining applications for planning permission, account will be taken of environmental information which is relevant to the proposed development. In some circumstances, a formal assessment of a proposal's environmental effects is required under the relevant statutory regulations. Certain types of project will require an environmental assessment in every case. Other projects will require an assessment where the Department considers that their effects on the environment are likely to be significant. In both cases, the developer will be required to submit an Environmental Statement which is available for public inspection and comment. The Department will take account of the statement, any consultation replies and any representations received in deciding whether or not to grant permission. It is expected that these procedures will affect only a small number of applications, either large or unusually complex projects or proposals in particularly sensitive locations - see policy PSU2.

The Department will be guided by the precautionary principle that, where there are significant risks of damage to the environment, its protection will generally be paramount, unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In some cases, it may be possible to grant planning permission subject to conditions and/or a planning agreement to deal with any adverse environmental effects.

**POLICY SP 17
TREES AND
HEDGEROWS**

To maintain and enhance the rural landscape by encouraging the retention of trees and hedgerows, and new planting initiatives.

32

Features of landscape value should be retained - Roughfort, Limavady.



Despite the variety of its landscapes, Northern Ireland is one of the least wooded countries in Europe and much of its tree cover is mature or ageing. The impact of new development has resulted in a loss of trees and hedgerows. In the settlements and the open countryside there are derelict sites which would benefit from landscaping. Some new planting is taking place and the quiltwork pattern of fields with extensive hedgerows helps to compensate in part for the lack of trees.

The Countryside Assessments - see policy SP12, will identify important features worthy of retention or protection. The assessment may also highlight areas where action to improve the landscape would be beneficial.

The Strategy is to maintain or enhance the landscape setting of settlements, keep the distinction between town and country and improve the urban fringe. More tree planting can reinforce and mould these distinctions. In towns and villages the provision of improved landscaping and the creation of landscaped areas will be encouraged in order to raise the quality of the physical environment. Selective tree planting can also enhance scenic routes.

Significant trees which may be at risk will be protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Particular emphasis will be given to areas where a threat to trees from building development can be anticipated. In considering development proposals, the Strategy is to ensure that features of landscape value are retained or, where they have to be removed, replaced. Landscaping will be required as a means of integrating the built development or restoring the site, after particular types of development have been carried out. This is of particular importance to the integration of new buildings into the countryside which would be greatly assisted by landscaping of a suitable design using appropriate species.

**POLICY SP 18
DESIGN IN
TOWNS AND
VILLAGES**

To promote high standards of siting and design within towns and villages.

Towns and villages have their own character, the result of their historic origins and growth, each in a unique location. Proposals for development should respect their character and sense of place.

Areas of special character, including existing or proposed Conservation Areas, will be defined and protected - see policy SP15. Locally important vistas, which should be kept, will also be identified. In appropriate circumstances, local guidance will be produced, whether for particular areas such as Conservation Areas, sites or types of development, in order to encourage good design. Ways in which the design of public areas could be improved may be identified.

New development should be well designed and relate satisfactorily to the townscape setting. In particular new housing development in a smaller settlement should reinforce its character rather than mask it with typical suburban forms. It is important to protect the settings of listed buildings as well as to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas - see policies SP15 and DES2.

In all settlements it will be planning policy to seek attractive frontages which maintain the scale and integrity of the street as a whole. The development of inappropriately high buildings will be resisted.

**POLICY SP 19
RURAL DESIGN**

To promote high standards for the siting and design of new development in the open countryside.

There is widespread concern about the quality of development in the countryside, particularly houses of inappropriate design in visually prominent locations, with an absence of suitable landscaping.

The Department is committed to improving rural design and accepts that it should assist developers with clear guidance and advice. Design policies are set out in this Strategy and it is proposed to publish design guidance for the Northern Ireland countryside. Other guidance on design may be produced for local areas and for individual Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

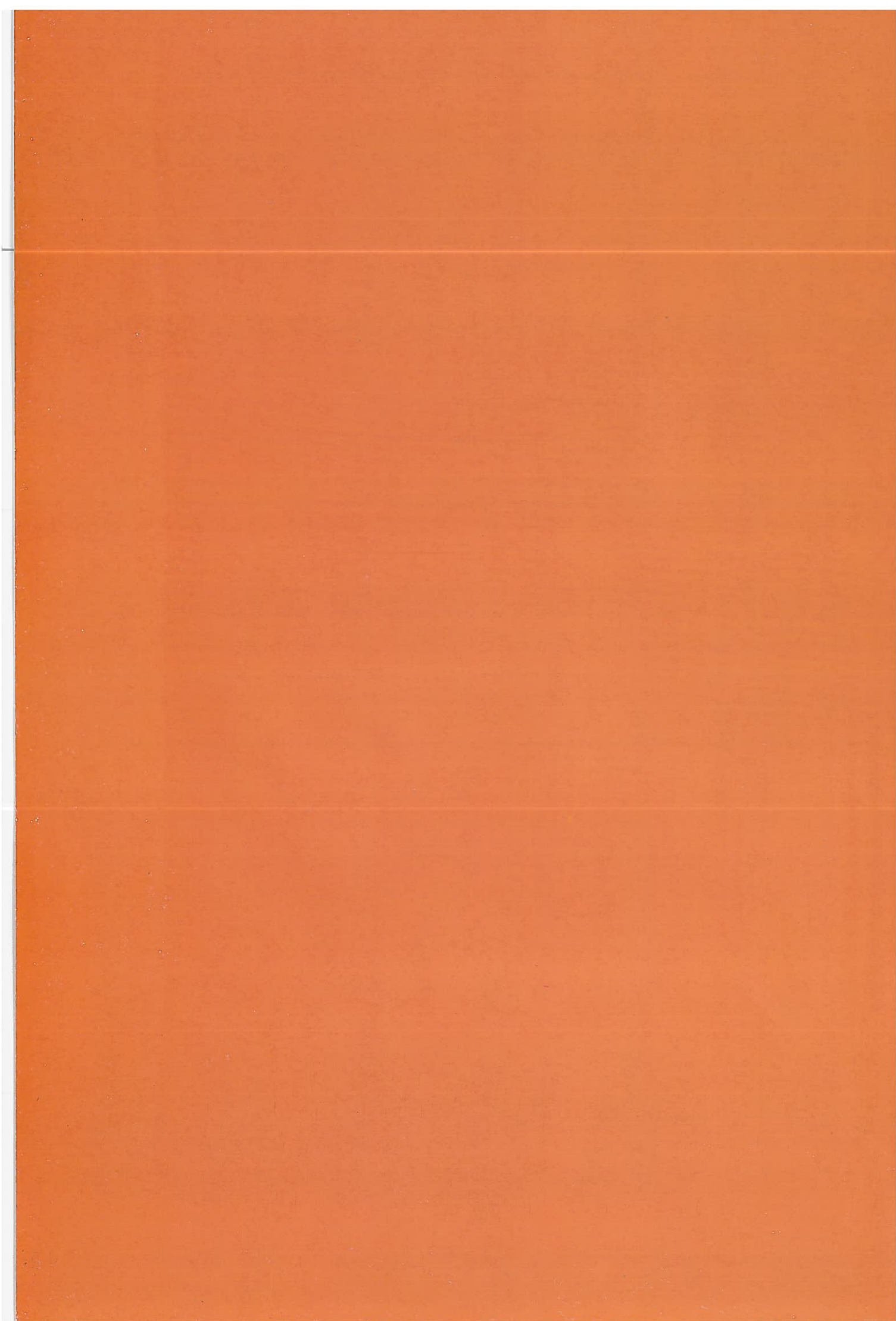
Design is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for development in the countryside and all proposals will be expected to meet appropriate standards. The task of designing a building and integrating it into the landscape requires considerable skill. Good design is a sound investment for clients and the community.

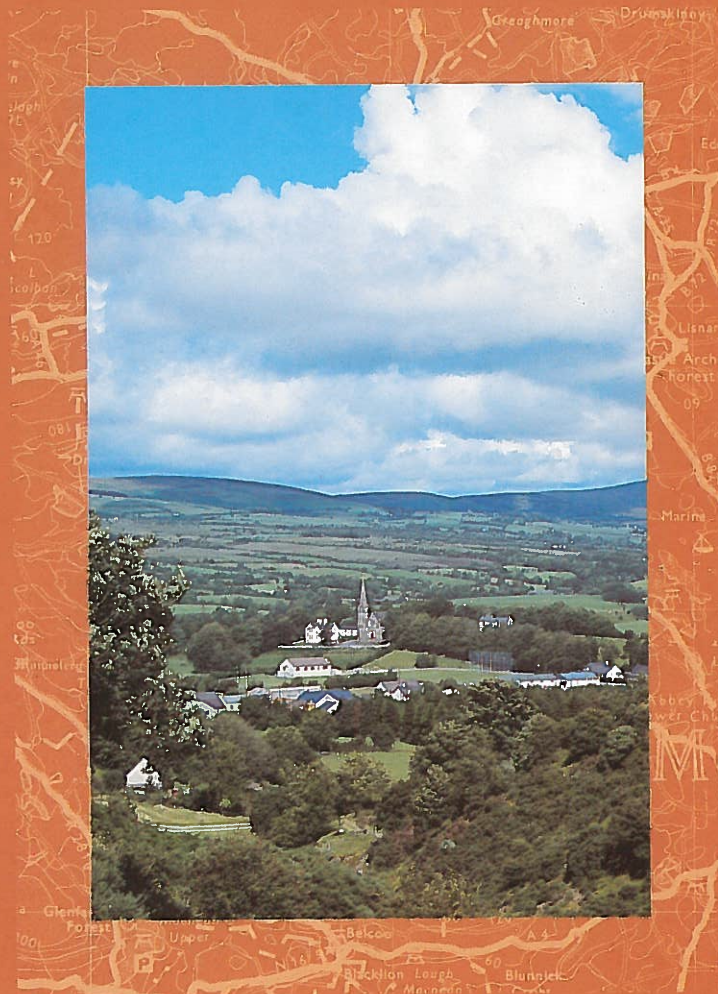
Developers and their agents should discuss the design details of proposals with staff in the Divisional Planning Office, before submitting a planning application. Where an application for outline planning permission is submitted the Planning Service may require additional information to be satisfied that the proposed development can be integrated into the countryside.

The impact of new buildings on the character of an area varies with the prominence of the site, the sensitivity of the setting and its capacity to absorb development. The main elements are the selection of the site, the definition of the site boundaries, the positioning of the building on site, the treatment of ancillary features, landscaping, the detailed design and appearance of the building and the choice and use of materials - see policy DES5.

For new buildings, including houses, good design, whether traditional or modern is a requirement. The sensitive use of appropriate materials is fundamental to good design. A much greater emphasis will be placed on appropriate landscaping to complement the building and to integrate it into its rural setting. In Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where it is considered that a strong local tradition is important to the identity of the area, new buildings will be required to respect and reflect the traditional architectural styles and settlement pattern of the locality.

It is proposed to publish further design guidance.





Regional Planning Policies

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

There is a continuing demand for new housing in Northern Ireland flowing from changes in life style and life expectancy as well as population growth. Some of the demand is from small households rather than from families with children. While adaptation and sub-division of existing houses can make a contribution to meeting this need, significant new housebuilding will still be necessary.

All new residential development will be expected to make a positive contribution to the quality and safety of the environment.



POLICY HOU 1 HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

To identify sufficient land for house building in settlements throughout rural Northern Ireland.

A major function of the development plan system is to ensure an adequate and continuous supply of housing land. Zoning of housing land will be carried out in close consultation with elected representatives, local communities and the various public, voluntary and private agencies responsible for housing provision.

The majority of Northern Ireland's population lives in settlements and it is there that much of the demand for new housing and associated facilities and services will be met. The potential of each settlement to accommodate housing needs will be assessed and each settlement's future development planned.

Environmental impact will be balanced with the need to make land available in locations attractive to developers and to provide an acceptable choice of sites in settlements. It is desirable that housing developments are closely related to centres of employment to avoid problems of labour or housing shortage or inefficient transport costs due to unnecessary commuting.

The extent of zoning, appropriate to a particular settlement, will normally reflect expected future needs and will be judged against regional policies, environmental criteria, the existing infrastructure capacity of the settlement, and the need to conserve land and natural resources and protect the natural and man-made heritage. Account will be taken of demographic and economic developments in each area, changing patterns of employment and travel to work, and trends in market demand for housing. Of increasing concern, because of the changes in society, are the special housing requirements of people in need of help or supervision, who may have particular locational requirements and for whom conventional housing may not be suitable.

Development plans will normally identify infrastructure or other constraints to the development of zoned sites. Development control advice in the form of a development brief may also be produced for specific development sites.

POLICY HOU 2 HOUSING IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES

To facilitate the use of available land within towns and villages for housing development.

There is a presumption in favour of housing development, on sites within the development limits of rural settlements, provided they meet normal planning criteria, there are no infrastructural constraints and the sites have not been designated for some other use. Where sites are not individually zoned in a settlement, the development plan will set out clear policy criteria against which applications for housing development will be considered.

The identification of development sites within all settlements requires the assessment of a variety of physical and environmental constraints to development. These will include:

- open space, within and surrounding the existing built-up area, which must be protected because of its contribution to the visual character of the settlement;
- nature conservation areas;
- quality agricultural land;
- land liable to flooding;
- conservation of the built environment and its setting, and of archaeological sites and monuments; and
- infrastructure.

*Bushford development,
Bushmills.*



The planning criteria will normally require that the proposed development is:

- of a scale and design appropriate to the existing form and character of the settlement;
- consistent with the existing or proposed level of services in the settlement; and
- not on a site required for another use.

POLICY HOU 3 HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT

To facilitate the re-use of previously developed sites, within towns and villages, in preference to greenfield sites.

Built-up areas contain land which was once in full use, but is now underused or vacant. Getting this land back into beneficial use is important for urban regeneration. It can relieve the pressures for development in the open countryside, particularly around the settlements. The re-use of such sites, in preference to greenfield sites, helps to prevent the sprawl of towns and villages and so helps to protect their setting. It limits the take up of agricultural land and often prevents costly extensions to infrastructure provision.

Planning permission for housing development on redundant or derelict sites, and the development of infill or opportunity sites in general, will be dependent on a satisfactory residential environment being provided and subject to no overriding need for other uses on that land. The cumulative effect of infill development must not damage the character and amenity of existing areas.

New housing will not normally be permitted near activities which would have a significant

NIHE re-development scheme, Union St/Shore St, Donaghadee - winner RIBA design award 1983.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

detrimental effect on the local residential environment, or on the health of residents because of noise, dust, fumes or smell. There is a strong presumption against permitting residential development on a site which is, or is expected to become, subject to excessive noise.



There will be cases where it is acceptable to redevelop existing industrial sites for housing due to the disadvantages of the sites for modern businesses. Whether industrial land is suitable for housing development will depend on a number of factors and each case will be treated on its merits. The various ecological and environmental factors inhibiting development and the potential loss of industrial land will be weighed against the positive gain of replacing unsightly industrial buildings and uses.

POLICY HOU 4 HOUSING NEED

To facilitate the adequate provision of a range of house types to meet the housing needs of the community.

Housing need varies by dwelling size, type and tenure, according to family needs, housing unfitness, household size, age, health, personal preference and financial circumstances. Of particular importance are the specialist needs of certain groups in society. The most significant of these groups is households on low incomes, the elderly, those suffering from mental and physical disabilities, the homeless and travelling people.

It is possible to have sufficient houses to accommodate the total population in an area but a mismatch between the accommodation and the specific requirements of households. There are particular difficulties in securing an adequate supply of affordable housing for local needs, even though such housing may help to secure the viability of the local community.



A range of house types - housing scheme in Crumlin.

On larger housing sites in settlements, planning policy will encourage the provision of a range of house types, to meet the needs of the community and provide variety and choice. It will normally be inappropriate to identify and allocate particular sites for low-cost housing in the development plan.

The mix of house types in a housing development proposal may be regulated, where a specific need has been identified, land supply is constrained, or where required by site conditions and environmental considerations.

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Plans may include policies on the densities of new housing in particular areas to ensure a mix of provision within a settlement or sector of a town, or to protect environmental quality. Such policies, if used, will be aimed at providing reasonable flexibility and meeting a specific problem.

Unfitness

Housing unfitness is a key element of housing need and it is met by renewal of the housing stock, by renovation, replacement and new build. While rural housing unfitness has fallen it still represents approximately 17% of the total rural housing stock.

Many of the houses in the rural area are old, lack basic amenities and are vacant or have been abandoned. They represent the bulk of Northern Ireland's traditional architecture. However, research shows that, in the main, their owners have little intention of bringing them back into productive use as dwellings and are more likely to consider abandonment or replacement.

The Housing Executive has designated certain areas of very high localised unfitness as Rural Priority Areas within which an intensive grants marketing drive has commenced. The Department welcomes this approach and in general would encourage the sensitive restoration and renovation of existing traditional buildings, rather than their abandonment or replacement. While there is a presumption in favour of house improvements and flexibility to enable the provision of modern facilities, the basic character of the property should be maintained.

The Department supports the Housing Executive policy of improvement, where the improvements can be carried out at reasonable cost. There will however be cases where replacement is the only practical option. Planning policy will be exercised to give favourable consideration to replacement housing proposals designed to deal with rural housing unfitness. However, in Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas (CPAs), such proposals must meet certain planning criteria as set out in policy HOU13. While the Department will encourage the re-use of existing buildings and the use of mature sites, outside Green Belts and CPA's it is for the applicant or owner to decide whether to renovate, replace or build on a new site. In such situations, an application to build a new house on a new site is subject only to normal planning and environmental considerations.

Care in the Community

The Government has been promoting the provision of care in the community. This has meant the provision of a range of accommodation, enabling people to return to a home environment.

Residential facilities provided by public, private and voluntary bodies include shared homes, sheltered accommodation and independent flats with other forms of support. Planning policy will facilitate the special housing requirements of people in need of help or supervision. Permission will be granted for the range of special residential facilities in urban areas, subject to certain criteria.

A residential or nursing home will normally be permitted in a residential area provided there are no convincing objections on traffic or amenity grounds. Planning permission will only be granted for residential or nursing homes in the countryside in exceptional circumstances where they will not place additional demands on essential services. The relevant considerations are whether there is a need to locate in the countryside and the potential impact of the development on the environment.

*A residential home,
Newcastle.*



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Residential and nursing homes are effectively controlled through the Department of Health and Social Services registration system. The main consideration of the planning system is impact on amenity and the environment. Detailed guidance is given in Development Control Advice Note 9 entitled Residential and Nursing Homes.

When drawing up development plans and determining planning applications, the Department will take account of the accommodation needs of the traditional Travelling community. Development plans may identify locations suitable for Travellers' sites or set out criteria for site selection. The Department will aim to secure an adequate provision of Travellers' sites with appropriate facilities, whilst protecting amenity for the community as a whole. Sites will be selected after consultation with the local Travelling population in association with the Advisory Committee on Travellers (ACT) and the local community.

Sites may be located outside existing settlements but should lie within a reasonable distance of shops, hospitals and schools and must be consistent with Green Belt and CPA policies, if relevant, as well as normal planning and environmental considerations. Sites on the periphery of built-up areas may be appropriate but care must be taken to avoid visual encroachment on the open countryside. Substantial natural screening may be particularly appropriate in these locations.

The detailed design requirements for permanent residential sites for Travelling people are given in a Design Guide prepared by the Department in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Travellers.

POLICY HOU 5 FLATS

Planning permission will be granted in appropriate areas, for the conversion of buildings, or the redevelopment of sites, to flats.

There is a continuing increase in the total number of households in Northern Ireland. Conversion of larger and mainly older houses to flats is a regular occurrence in settlements and can make a useful contribution to meeting the housing needs of small households.

However, in certain areas the development of flats has led to environmental problems. It is, therefore, necessary to control the location of flat conversions, in the interest of orderly land use change, protection of amenity and prevention of traffic or parking congestion. In some towns, Flat Policy Areas, will be designated through the development plan system. In these areas there will be a presumption in favour of flat development, subject to normal planning and environmental considerations.



This policy is aimed at increasing the number of small dwelling units. It may also lead to the improvement of large, older property no longer suitable for single family accommodation and a more efficient use of land. It will also act to conserve family-sized dwellings, control the spread of flat conversions, and maintain the character of existing residential areas.

Proposals will be considered in relation to the location, nature of accommodation being provided,

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accessibility and availability of parking space. Flat conversions may have to be refused if serious traffic risks cannot be avoided.

Planning permission will not be granted for the sub-division of a small house into flats, if this would result in substandard dwellings lacking normal facilities, or where the provision of normal facilities and reasonable standards would require a disproportionate extension. This will prevent the loss of good housing accommodation and protect the character of an area.

The orientation, siting and internal arrangements of the building or buildings in a flat development should be such that each flat has adequate daylight and the privacy and amenity of nearby residential properties are safeguarded.

Car parking should as far as possible be located to the rear or side of properties and not in front gardens. Landscaping schemes and the provision of private amenity space within the site, sufficient to provide bin storage, external storage facilities and sitting out areas, will be required.

More detailed guidance on low rise apartment developments in existing residential areas is given in Development Control Advice Note 8 entitled Small Unit Housing.

The conversion of a large house in the countryside into flats will depend on individual circumstances. While no new building may result, the additional residential use and associated traffic and pressure on services will have an impact which could be harmful to the rural character of an area. Conversion of listed houses to flats will be evaluated in relation to impact on the character of buildings.

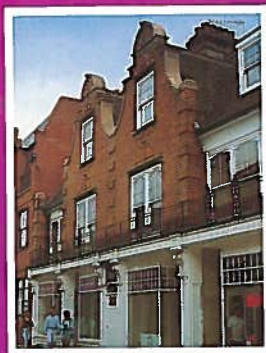
POLICY HOU 6 LIVING OVER THE SHOP

Planning permission may be granted for residential use above shops and other business premises.

The Department will encourage the provision of housing close to, and within, town and village centres, provided that the central area retail and commercial functions are not prejudiced.

Vacant space, over shops and offices, in town and village centres is commonplace. The Living over the Shop (LOTS) project was set up in 1989 in Great Britain to demonstrate the feasibility and economic viability of using vacant space above shops and to demonstrate ways in which wasted space can be brought back into use, usually for affordable rented housing.

Living Over The Shop



The re-use of existing vacant space is a cost-effective means of creating additional housing accommodation with other benefits to the social life and economic vitality of the town. For example the fabric of the property is put into good repair and maintained, there may be increased security for commercial premises, and public may be available for repair and renovation. The combination of these practical improvements, and the subsequent rental income, enhances the capital value of the property. The supply of housing is increased; town centres remain populated outside business hours; a resident population may increase economic activity in the town; pressure on green field sites is reduced; and the preservation of buildings of architectural and historic interest may be assisted.

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LOTS schemes could make a significant contribution to the enhancement of town and village centres and offer opportunities for supporting urban regeneration policies.

Planning permission may be granted for residential use above shops and other business premises in Use Classes 1, 2 and 3 of the Planning Order, provided they comply with normal planning and environmental considerations. For example, they should have satisfactory accesses, facilities for the storage of fuel and refuse and space for clothes drying.

The level of car parking provision which would be appropriate will be considered in the circumstances of each particular case.

POLICY HOU 7 HOUSING IN DISPERSED RURAL COMMUNITIES

To accommodate the need for housing in designated dispersed rural communities.



A strong community identity.

The settlement pattern of the dispersed rural community is one of single houses or clusters of houses, which have developed over time in the countryside, close to a church, school or shop. These facilities are considered by the residents to be the focal point for their dispersed community.

Each dispersed rural community, which fulfils certain criteria, will be identified and may be designated in the development plan for the area. The criteria for designation will include:

- location outside Countryside Policy Areas, Green Belts or other areas of development pressure close to existing towns;
- association with a traditional focal point, where there is convincing evidence of local community activity; with the existence of social and recreational facilities, such as a church, hall, school, community centre or sports club;
- other facilities or services, such as a shop, public house or sewage treatment works;
- a strong community identity. This could manifest itself through a local community association, church organisation or sports club; and
- a locally significant number of dwellings that have been built over time. Although these places are not nucleated settlements, they will have to be more than just open countryside. A build-up or cluster of recently built houses will normally not be considered as fulfilling this criterion.

The method of determining the acceptability of development sites will depend on local circumstances. A limit of development will not necessarily be drawn round the existing dispersed settlement pattern, as this may be an unnecessary obstacle to promoting the regeneration of the community and gives no indication of the availability of housing or other sites.

In an effort to help sustain these particular rural communities, the Planning Service will approve suitable proposals for single houses or small groups of houses, associated with the existing settlement pattern.

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The determining factors, on any application for housing development in dispersed communities, will be the number of dwellings proposed, the visual impact of the development, and its association or integration with the existing settlement pattern. Other service considerations such as access, method of sewage disposal, and drainage may on occasions be critical.

Planning permission will normally be limited to proposals for groups of 5 or 6 houses. Developments should reflect the evolution of these communities over time and maintain local rural character. Each proposal will however depend on local circumstances and planning decisions will be made locally having regard to the policies in the development plan.

POLICY HOU 8 HOUSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Planning permission will be granted for single dwelling houses in the countryside outside Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas subject to detailed planning and environmental criteria.

The majority of land, considered by the Department as suitable for housing developments, will be zoned through the development plan system in towns and identified within the statutory development limits of smaller settlements. Planning permission will not normally be granted for groups of houses in the open countryside outside the development limits of designated settlements or designated dispersed rural communities.

There is, however, a presumption in favour of planning permission for single new houses in the countryside, subject to normal planning and environmental considerations and provided the site is not within a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area, or requires access to a main traffic route. The main planning considerations will include access, method of sewage disposal and drainage. The environmental considerations include siting, design, landscaping, the ability of the house to integrate into the landscape, the effect on the natural and man-made environment and the capacity of the locality to accommodate another dwelling without cumulative and adverse visual impact on its rural character.

Details of the planning and environmental considerations relevant to single new houses in the countryside are found in policies DES 5, 6 & 7 and PSU 4, 5 & 9. If the house site is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Policy DES 4 is also relevant.

A house at Killadeas in harmony with the surrounding landscape.



POLICY HOU 9 FARMWORKERS HOUSES

Planning permission will be granted for a dwelling house on a farm in a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area, where it is essential to the needs of the farm.

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There is a presumption against planning permission for groups of new dwelling houses within Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas (CPA's). There is a similar presumption against single new dwellings in these areas unless there are certain employment circumstances that make the need for a house essential. The reason for this policy is to keep new development to a minimum in order to protect the landscape and rural character, of these areas, from excessive development pressure.

Agriculture is the main economic activity and employer in the Northern Ireland countryside. Therefore, planning permission will normally be granted for a dwelling house on a farm, in a Green Belt or CPA, where the proposed occupant works mainly on that farm and it is essential for him, or her, to live at the site of their work. The proposal must fulfill normal planning and environmental considerations described in policy HOU 8.

Whether a house is essential, in any particular case, will depend on the needs of the farm concerned and not on the personal preferences or circumstances of the individuals involved.

This strict policy only applies to farms within Green Belts and CPAs. Applications for houses on farms, outside these areas, will fall within policy HOU 8.

The material factors determining the number of people who actually need to live on a farm and whether a new dwelling house is required, include:

- the scale, viability and details of the farming operations;
- the labour requirements of the farm, including the need for specialist workers and the level of attention needed outside normal hours;
- the existing residential accommodation on the farm; and
- the existing development opportunities on the farm.

If the existing or potential residential accommodation is insufficient to meet the accepted housing needs of a viable farm, planning permission will normally be granted. Exceptionally, where a son or daughter of a farmer works mainly on the farm holding, permission may also be granted for a new house, even though it may not be strictly necessary on agricultural grounds for a farmworker to live on the holding. In some cases, particularly where the labour requirements of the farm are small, it will be appropriate for the parent to seek permission for a dwelling house based on retirement from farming - see policy HOU 10.

Farmer's sons and daughters, who only work part-time in farming and have their main employment elsewhere are unlikely to fulfil the requirements of this policy.

Farm Details

Farm operations are varied and complex. It is necessary, and in the public interest, to require each applicant to provide detailed information about the farm, to allow an assessment of the application to be made as quickly as possible.

The assessment will include among other things, the extent and nature of the farm enterprise, the planning history of the holding, the occupations of those residing on the holding, the occupation and present address of the proposed occupier of the new dwelling, and the change in circumstances requiring an additional dwelling. Land taken in conacre will only be

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considered, in the assessment of need, when it has been a regular part of a farm unit over a considerable period of years. Land newly taken in conacre will generally be excluded from the assessment, because of the temporary nature of the arrangement.



It will be necessary to establish that it is essential, for the proper functioning of the farm, for a worker to be readily available at most times. The man-hour requirements of a farm will indicate the numbers of workers required to run the

business, but this does not necessarily mean that it is essential for all those workers to live on the farm. Factors such as the type of livestock, the level of attention needed out of normal hours, the need for specialist workers, the distance of units from the main farm dwelling, vulnerability to dangers such as theft and vandalism are all material in deciding need.

Farm Viability

New houses on farms will not normally be justified on agricultural grounds, unless the existing farming business is both established and viable. In order to assess farm viability, it may be necessary for the farmer to provide information on the level of investment and commitment to the business. Investment in farm buildings, or maintenance and improvement of land alone, may not be sufficient evidence of a commitment. Actual agricultural use for a sufficient period of time will be necessary.

The Department of Agriculture will be consulted on all applications for dwellings on farms and will provide advice on the viability of agricultural activities.

The onus will be on the applicant to show that the proposed occupant is sufficiently involved in farming, to be considered mainly working in agriculture on the farm, and that it is essential he or she should live there, for the working of that farm. Proposals for dwellings associated with "hobby" farms, or enterprises where the proposed occupant's main source of income is from another job or where he is semi-retired, will generally fail because of the viability test.

Alternative Development Opportunities

Planning permission will not normally be granted for an additional house on a farm if there are existing houses or development opportunities available on the farm or if any houses or housing development sites have been "sold off" from the farm holding.

Development opportunities would include:

- an existing house capable of renovation or replacement;
- an approval for a house which has not been taken up or developed; and in certain circumstances
- where the holding includes land outside the Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area or within the development limits of a settlement.



Siting of New Dwellings on Farms

Normally the agricultural need and the planning and environmental considerations will ensure that the new house is sited adjacent to, and integrated with the principal group of farm buildings.

If it is not essential for the additional house to be integrated with the farm complex, in the case of a retiring farmer - see policy HOU 10, and the farmholding includes land outside the Green Belt or CPA, or inside the development limits of a settlement, the dwelling should preferably be located within that land.

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Normally the farm house should be integrated with the farm buildings.

Where an additional farm dwelling is justified, and the location of an existing replacement opportunity is inappropriate to meet the agricultural requirements, then permission for a new farm dwelling may be granted on a more appropriate site, subject to an agricultural occupancy condition and, where appropriate, a planning condition and/or planning agreement to remove the existing dwelling and restore the site.

The siting of all new houses on farms should have particular regard to natural and established man-made features e.g. trees, slopes, buildings and field boundaries. Where practicable, access should be obtained from an existing farm road or lane. The planning and environmental considerations detailed in policies DES 4,5,6 and 7 and PSU 4,5 and 9 apply.

Each house, approved on the basis of agricultural need, will be subject to a condition restricting occupation of the dwelling to a person mainly working or last working in agriculture in the locality and to any resident dependants. This is to ensure that the proposed house is kept available to meet the agricultural needs of that farm or locality.

Where an agricultural occupancy condition has been imposed, it will only be appropriate to remove it on a subsequent application, if it is shown that the long term need for dwellings for agricultural workers, both on the particular farm and in the locality, no longer warrants reserving a house for that purpose.

An occupancy condition on a dwelling, which was in a Green Belt or CPA, and is now located outside the area, because the boundaries have been redefined, will be discharged on application.

POLICY HOU 10 RETIREMENT FROM FARMING

Planning permission may be granted for a dwelling house on a farm in a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area, for a farmer retiring from farming, or for the widow or widower of a farmer, to facilitate the orderly transfer or sale of the farm.

Where a farmer is retiring from agriculture or dies, planning permission may be granted for a house on the farm, to enable the farmer or widow/widower to continue to live on that land, provided the application fulfils the following criteria:

- the applicant last worked mainly as a farmer, or is the widow or widower of someone who last worked mainly as a farmer;
- the applicant is of retirement age and has recently retired or is about to retire; or has to retire prematurely from farming because of ill-health; or is a widow or widower, as in the above criterion;
- the siting of the house is on the land which the applicant, or, in the case of a widow or widower, her or his spouse, farmed until retirement;

- the farm is viable and therefore capable of supporting a farmer in full-time employment;
- the farm holding, is being sold or transferred as a going concern;
- the existing farmhouse will continue to be used as the main farmhouse on the farm;
- there are no existing alternative development opportunities available on the farm - see policy HOU 9;
- no houses or housing development sites have been "sold off" from the holding; and
- the site meets the planning and environmental criteria set out in policies HOU 8 & 9.

Information on the farming activities and the applicant's or deceased's part in them will be required. It will not be sufficient to have been involved in farming on a part-time basis, in the evening and at week-ends, or to have received the main income from full-time employment outside agriculture.

Retirement in itself will not justify an additional dwelling on a farm holding. The future of the holding and the existing farmhouse are important considerations. It must be demonstrated that there is need for an additional house.

It will not be necessary for a new dwelling, granted on retirement from farming, to be integrated with the existing farm buildings, although, on some occasions, this can be an acceptable solution, particularly when a farm is being transferred within the family and the farmer wishes to retain a working link with the holding.

All approvals under this policy will be subject to an agricultural occupancy condition - see policy HOU 9.

POLICY HOU 11 HOUSES FOR OTHER BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

Planning permission will be granted for a dwelling house which is required for the essential needs of an established commercial or industrial enterprise.

Established business enterprises, other than agriculture, which are located in the countryside may exceptionally require residential accommodation. The presence of a business in the countryside is not, of itself, sufficient justification for a new house. A site specific need must clearly be demonstrated which makes it essential for one of the firm's employees to live at the site of their work.

Where such a need is accepted, the house must be located beside or within the boundaries of the enterprise and be reasonably integrated with the buildings on the site. The normal planning and environmental considerations are as in policy HOU 8.

Each approved house, associated with a business enterprise in a Green Belt or CPA, will be subject to a condition restricting occupation to an employee of the firm.

POLICY HOU 12 PERSONAL AND DOMESTIC CIRCUMSTANCES

To grant planning permission for a dwelling house when there are compelling, and site specific, personal or domestic circumstances for living in the countryside.

There may be cases where special personal or domestic circumstances require a new house to be built in the countryside within a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area (CPA). Planning approval for a house, in these circumstances, will be considered as an exception to the general presumption against new houses in Green Belts and CPAs and is only likely to be justified in a small number of cases.

The applicant will have to demonstrate that a new dwelling is a necessary response to the particular circumstances of the case and that genuine hardship would be caused if planning permission were refused. The test is whether a dwelling on that particular site is needed for special personal or domestic reasons, as against a general need or desire to live in the countryside.

A permanent house has long term implications for the landscape of the countryside. In most cases there may be alternative solutions to meet a particular need, e.g. a temporary mobile home, house extension or flat attached to the existing dwelling.

Houses and temporary mobile homes granted for special personal or domestic reasons will be subject to a condition restricting occupation to the person concerned, including any dependants living with that person.

POLICY HOU 13 REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS

Planning permission will be granted for the replacement of a dwelling house, subject to certain criteria.

Replacement dwellings are the single largest category of housing development in those areas of the countryside which are subject to policy constraint.

While replacement of existing dwellings allows for the renewal and upgrading of the housing stock, permissions have also been sought to replace vacant buildings, which have not been occupied in recent years or have been used for other than residential purposes.

In general the continued use, with adaption if necessary, of existing houses, especially those of traditional design, will be encouraged in preference to replacement but this is not always the preferred solution of the applicant.

Planning permission will only be granted for a replacement dwelling in a Green Belt or CPA when the building to be replaced is a dwelling house and fulfils certain criteria.

The dwelling house must:

- exhibit all the essential characteristics of a dwelling house;
- be in use, or have last been used, as a dwelling house. This use must not have been abandoned or changed from another use, without previous planning approval;
- be occupied or be capable of occupation with minor renovation; and
- be in the ownership of the applicant, or have a reasonable prospect of being in the control of the applicant.

A dwelling house, that has changed its use, requires express planning permission to go back to the original residential use, even if the change of use did not constitute development.

The essential characteristics of a dwelling house will include the existence of reasonably sound and complete walls and roof, windows and doors that are intact, and internal arrangements to enable its occupation as a dwelling house. In order to be readily capable of occupation, it should

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be reasonably weatherproof or at least capable of being made so with minor repairs. It should have the normal requirements of living available, although these facilities, or the quality of the building, may not necessarily be of a standard considered acceptable in a modern dwelling house. There may be instances where an existing dwelling, which fulfils the replacement criteria, should not be replaced for good planning reasons. Each case will be considered on its merits.

Replacement of Listed Dwelling Houses

Permission will not normally be forthcoming to replace a dwelling house which is listed as having special architectural or historic interest. It is necessary for listed building consent to be obtained for any works for the demolition of a listed building, or for its alteration or extension, in any manner which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

Replacement of Seriously Damaged Dwelling Houses

Applications for replacement dwellings will be decided on the condition of the dwelling to be replaced. Where no dwelling exists or if there is a structure that does not meet the criteria for a replacement dwelling, then planning permission will not normally be forthcoming, even if approval was previously granted for a replacement dwelling on the site.

Exceptionally, when a recently inhabited or habitable dwelling is destroyed by an accident planning permission may be granted for a new dwelling, in situ. Evidence about the status and previous condition of the building and the cause and extent of the damage must be provided.



Replacement of dwelling destroyed by fire.

Replacement of Tenanted Dwelling Houses

It will not normally be possible to approve an application for replacement of an existing house that is tenanted. This is because almost all tenanted dwellings in Northern Ireland are subject to legislation which limits the rights of a landlord to gain possession and occupation.

Siting and Design of Replacement Dwellings

Visual impact is the critical consideration regarding the siting and design of replacement dwellings. The siting of a replacement dwelling should be within the same curtilage as the existing building, to take advantage of any natural features or mature planting and to reduce the visual impact of new larger dwellings with extensive gardens. Off-site replacements will not normally be allowed.

The visual impact is the critical consideration - replacement dwelling, Banbridge.



The siting and design of the total new development should not create a visual impact significantly greater than the existing building, in order that it be satisfactorily absorbed or integrated into the landscape. The promise of substantial landscaping, as a means to reduce the impact of a prominent and overly dominant dwelling in the longer term, is unlikely to be considered an acceptable design solution.

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Restrictions which could result in failure to satisfy basic minimum standards, will not be imposed on the size and design of a replacement. However, it is unlikely that a house of a size significantly in excess of the one it is replacing will be appropriate, if its visual impact is significantly greater. The size of the dwelling may be constrained by the size of the existing site. In such cases, planning permission will be refused, on the grounds that the proposed development does not meet the criteria for replacement dwellings.

POLICY HOU 14 CONVERSION TO HOUSES

Planning permission may be granted for the change of use of a traditional building of architectural or historic merit to residential accommodation.

The conversion should maintain or enhance the existing character of the building - Letterkeen House, Kesh.

Changing patterns of rural life mean that a range of traditional buildings of architectural or historic merit, including some that have been listed, are no longer needed for their original use. These include mills, schools, churches, and the like.

Residential use may be the key to the preservation of these buildings. As an exception to the normal policy of constraint in Green Belts and CPAs, need will not have to be proven to justify the new residential use, subject to certain design constraints.



Each proposal will be determined on its merits. The policy only refers to sympathetic changes of use and such new dwellings are not and do not become replacement opportunities. The development proposal must be conversion of a building of merit, requiring a minimum of work to convert. The conversion should maintain or enhance the existing character of the building - see policy CON 4. Design is particularly important, as it is the character of existing buildings that is the basis for making an exception to strict planning control. Approval will not be given to a redevelopment scheme involving substantial demolition of a building of merit or large extensions.

The residential curtilage to be created, as part of the proposal to convert the building, should not have a harmful effect on the rural character of the countryside, particularly in areas of high quality landscape.

Planning permission will be dependent on the conversion and change of use making a significant contribution to the landscape, by retaining and enhancing a building of special architectural or historic interest, or traditional character. This is particularly important where the building is not closely associated with other buildings.

POLICY HOU 15 RESIDENTIAL CARAVANS AND MOBILE HOMES

Planning permission may be granted for a residential caravan or mobile home, for a temporary period only, in exceptional circumstances.

Generally, the design and finishes of a residential caravan or mobile home limits its potential for integration into the rural landscape. For this reason, planning permission will not be granted for a permanently sited residential caravan or mobile home, in any part of the open countryside.

However, it is accepted that, in exceptional circumstances, a caravan or mobile home can be a sensible temporary solution, to meeting the need for accommodation in a Green Belt or CPA.

These exceptional circumstances include where:

a farmer, who is developing an established farm business and meets the need criteria for a permanent dwelling, cannot at present afford to build a house - see policy HOU 9;

- a farmer is retiring - see policy HOU 10; and
- a person requires to live close to a relative because of special personal circumstances - see policy HOU 12.

All permissions will be subject to a time limit. The limit may initially be generous and can be extended, to allow the named occupant to use the accommodation for as long as the particular circumstances require.

A residential caravan or mobile home, in the garden of an abandoned dwelling, will require planning permission as no permitted development rights exist. In practice, if permission has already been granted for development of the site for a permanent dwelling, applications to locate a residential caravan or mobile home on a site for this use will normally be approved for a limited period.

The siting of a residential caravan or mobile home will be subject to the same planning and environmental considerations as a permanent dwelling. Permission will depend on the ability to integrate the unit within an existing building group and screen the unit from public view. Residential caravans or mobile homes on farms must be integrated with the main farm complex.

Planning permission will not be given for a residential caravan or mobile home on an isolated site, cut out of an open field.

POLICY HOU 16 HOUSE EXTENSIONS

Planning permission will be granted for house extensions, subject to the proposed development meeting certain criteria of design and residential amenity.

The Department's publication "Your Home and Planning Permission" gives guidance for householders on what types of development, associated with a house, require or do not require planning permission.

A substantial proportion of planning applications relate to proposed extensions to houses and are considered by the Department under the simplified householder application system. These developments, whilst small in scale, can have a major impact on the street scene and affect the amenities of neighbouring householders. Extensions which are badly designed, or are incompatible with their surroundings, can lead to an undesirable change in the character of an area.

The Department will seek to promote an improved standard of design, for these developments, and protect the amenities of adjacent properties.

Applications for house extensions raise detailed, site specific, issues and each case will be assessed on its individual merits. However, those developments which fulfil the criteria, set out below, will normally be granted. Exceptionally, the criteria may be relaxed, where the extension is required in order to provide basic amenities or to meet the special needs of a disabled person.

The scale and form of the extension are the paramount design considerations.



Design

The scale and form of the extension are the paramount design considerations. All house extensions should be subordinate in size to the existing house and should generally match the proportions, roof pitch, shape, and materials of the house. Proposals will also be assessed in terms of their impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

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Single-storey extensions, to the rear of a semi-detached or terraced dwelling, will generally be acceptable, where the depth does not exceed 3 metres from the back wall of the original dwelling house, at the boundary with an adjoining dwelling. Where overshadowing may be caused, the height of the extension should be kept to a maximum of 3 metres with a flat roof and 4 metres with a pitched roof. If two adjoining houses are to be extended a shared pitched roof may be acceptable. Similarly, where the adjoining property has been extended along a party boundary, an extension of the same depth will normally be acceptable, provided this does not adversely affect other properties.

Dormer extensions should always appear as subordinate elements of the roof and their height and length should be kept to a minimum. Those which would have an overdominant, “top heavy” appearance or would create an obtrusive feature in the street scene will not normally be permitted.

Windows serving main rooms, such as kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms, should be sited so that they do not directly look into similar windows of adjacent dwellings or their private gardens.

Overshadowing

House extensions should not overshadow neighbouring properties to an unreasonable degree. In determining planning applications, account will be taken of the orientation and position of neighbour’s windows in relation to the extension. Where an extension would be likely to significantly reduce the amount of light entering the sole or main window of a main room, such as a living room, bedroom or kitchen, planning permission will normally be refused. Exceptions may be made for extensions to older properties, with small plot areas, where some loss of light and privacy may be a necessary outcome of making essential improvements to sub-standard accommodation.

Amenity and Parking Space

A reasonably sized private garden area should be retained for usual domestic needs, such as sitting out, hanging out washing, bin storage etc. Proposals may be refused, on grounds of over-development, if the remaining garden area is reduced to less than 10 metres in depth. The exceptions would be similar to those described in the “overshadowing” section above.

Space to park cars, within the curtilage of a dwelling, usually improves the environmental and highway conditions of the surrounding area. House extensions which prevent the parking of two private cars within the curtilage of the dwelling, or result in the loss of an only space, or which necessitate the use of an entire front garden for this purpose, will not normally be acceptable. Exceptions may apply to apartments or town houses.

Miscellaneous Householder Developments

In cases where developments, such as garages, outbuildings and other garden developments (including garden sheds, animal accommodation and conservatories), require planning permission, proposals will be considered on their merits, having regard to their impact on the amenities of adjoining residents and the visual qualities and character of the area.

Rural House Extensions

Houses in Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas normally have the same permitted development rights as elsewhere and there are no objections in principle to house extensions in these areas, or in any other part of the open countryside, subject to the criteria above. However, the impact of extensions on the visual amenities of the Green Belt or CPA will be taken into account.

Large-scale extensions will not normally be acceptable in Green Belts and CPAs. However, where it is proposed to bring an un-improved small dwelling up to modern amenity standards, or

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

to provide additional accommodation for elderly or dependent relatives, a more substantial extension may be justified on grounds of the particular need.

Account will be taken of the degree to which an existing property may have previously been extended and the cumulative impact of permitting a further extension.

Permission will not normally be granted where the extension requires the use of land outside the established curtilage of the building. Exceptionally, permission may be granted on the grounds of need or road safety, where for example the existing access is substandard.

Accommodation for Dependent Relatives

House extensions, to provide partially self-contained accommodation for elderly or dependent relatives, may be an acceptable alternative to a separate house in the countryside, and particularly in Green Belts and CPAs.

All additional accommodation should normally be attached to the existing property and be internally linked, although another separate access is acceptable, to enable the accommodation to be partially self-contained.

The construction of a separate building, as self contained accommodation, within the curtilage of an existing dwelling house, will not be acceptable, unless a separate dwelling would be granted permission in its own right. Where an extension to the existing house is not practicable and it is proposed to convert and extend an outbuilding, planning permission will normally depend on whether the development provides a modest scale of accommodation, to ensure the long term use of the building as part of the main dwelling.

In all cases, careful consideration will be given to the impact of proposals on neighbouring dwellings and any permissions granted will be subject to a condition that the extension should only be used for ancillary residential purposes in connection with the main dwelling, and not as a separate unit of accommodation.

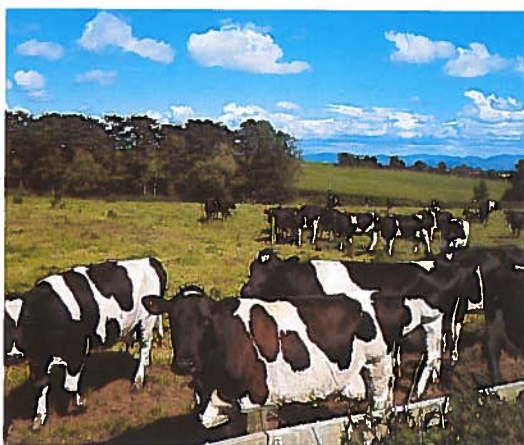
Agriculture

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

The rural landscape of Northern Ireland owes much to a settlement pattern based on small holdings and family farms. Generations of farmers have not only made an important contribution to the regional economy, but have also shaped and cared for the countryside. The land which is for many a picturesque place to visit, is also the basic resource for the agricultural industry which still supports a significant proportion of the local population both directly and indirectly.

The farming industry is undergoing great change. Alterations in agricultural support policies together with advances in farming practice and technology and a decline in employment opportunities, will continue to have a major impact on rural society.

The Government remains committed to the competitive development of the farming industry, which makes an important contribution to the regional economy. It also aims to promote the conservation and enhancement of the countryside in Northern Ireland. A number of policy initiatives have been developed in order to assist the farming community respond to the challenge of the future. Support is available for farmers who wish to diversify into non-traditional activities on the farm, for producers who wish to improve marketing and co-operation and for farmers who are improving the countryside. Grant aid schemes for the latter include measures to encourage afforestation, to improve the environment such as hedges, stonewalls, tree planting and painting farm buildings and to protect areas of high landscape and wildlife value through the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme.



Agriculture will always remain an integral part of the rural area and the farmer will remain a producer and a steward of the countryside. The continuing development of the agricultural industry will inevitably lead to further change in rural areas. The Department recognises that the maintenance of a healthy rural economy is one of the best ways of conserving and enhancing the rural environment.

POLICY AG 1 AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY

To protect the best and most versatile agricultural land within Northern Ireland.

High quality agricultural land is an important resource. Once developed, even for other open space uses, the return to viable agricultural use is rarely feasible. It is important to protect, as far as practicable, the best and most versatile agricultural land from development.

The quality of agricultural land will be an important consideration in the formulation of development plans. Where possible in zoning land for development, planning policy will be to avoid the loss of high grade land. Particular consideration will be given to:

- maintaining compact settlements;
- directing development where possible to areas of poorer agricultural quality land; and
- encouraging the re-use of redundant or derelict land.

High quality agricultural land is an important resource.



The potential loss of good or versatile agricultural land will be a material factor which will be given considerable weight when considering applications for development.

POLICY AG 2 AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT

To give favourable consideration to necessary agricultural, or forestry development which is appropriate in scale and nature.

In recent decades there have been important changes in the rural landscape. New agricultural practices have led to a change from small traditional agricultural buildings, which tended to blend readily into the rural landscape, to larger buildings which are now often industrial in appearance. There are important issues to be considered regarding the siting, design and materials of modern agricultural buildings and their impact on the rural landscape.

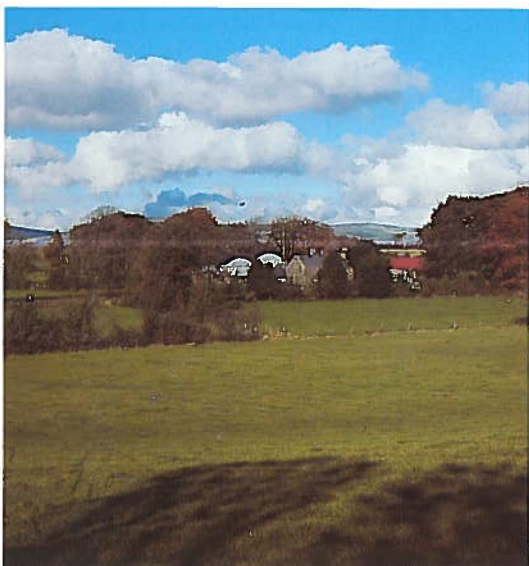
Some agricultural buildings do not require express planning permission. Under the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993, known as the GDO, certain developments for the purposes of agriculture are permitted development. However, there is concern regarding the apparent abuse of permitted development rights, whereby buildings erected allegedly for agricultural purposes have been used for inappropriate non-agricultural activities.

The Department therefore proposes to carry out a review of the planning controls over agricultural and forestry development. Proposals for alterations to the General Development Order will be subject to consultation with interested bodies. It is anticipated that in the light of environmental concerns and the development of policy in Britain and Europe some additional controls may be required. The review will take into account the special operational requirements involved and the Department will seek to avoid the imposition of unnecessary burdens on the farming and forestry industries. Much development in the agricultural and forestry industries is likely to remain within the ambit of "permitted development", after the Department's review.



Traditional buildings tend to blend with the rural landscape.

New buildings or works for agriculture, horticultural or forestry purposes which will require the express grant of planning permission will normally be acceptable in rural areas provided the following criteria are fulfilled:



- the proposal is appropriate in terms of scale, location and nature;
- it has been demonstrated that the development is requisite for the efficient use of the agricultural holding or enterprise;
- where the proposal includes the erection of new buildings that there are no suitable existing redundant buildings on the holding which can be used. In all cases the applicant will be required to show that renovation, alteration or redevelopment opportunities do not exist;
- the development is not visually intrusive in the local landscape and does not have an adverse impact on the natural or man-made heritage;
- where possible the proposal is sited adjacent to existing farm buildings and use is made of topography and existing landscaping to screen the buildings. New buildings located away from existing farm groupings are unlikely to be acceptable;
- the design of the building and the materials used are sympathetic to the locality and blend with adjacent buildings;
- additional landscaping is provided as necessary;
- the proposal will not result in an unacceptable loss in the amenity of residential units outside the holding including potential problems arising from noise, smell and pollution; and
- the development will not be detrimental in terms of traffic generation or road safety.

Conditions may be applied to the grant of permission requiring:

- use only for agricultural purposes; and
- adequate siting and landscaping and where necessary the use of specified materials and finishes.

POLICY AG 3 AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION

To facilitate the process of diversification of the rural economy by giving favourable consideration to suitable new farm based enterprises.

The agricultural industry continues to undergo substantial changes. Changes in farm income levels and price support, as well as the development of new techniques and continued rationalisation, have led many farmers to look for alternative sources of income to supplement that derived from farming. Some farmers have responded by diversification into non-agricultural activities located on the farm holding. Government is supporting this process of diversification by the development of a comprehensive package of assistance.

Economic diversity and agricultural diversification will be encouraged - see also policy IC5. On the other hand, it is important that the countryside of Northern Ireland is not spoilt by the unfettered development of urban uses. Diversification proposals should be of a scale and nature appropriate for the location and be capable of satisfactory integration into the rural landscape.

Planning permission will normally be granted for acceptable farm diversification enterprises in situations where the project is clearly tied to an existing farm holding or occupant. A new enterprise will need to be modest in scale and have no significant adverse impact on the locality.

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Within Countryside Policy Areas such proposals will normally only be acceptable where they involve the re-use of existing redundant rural buildings or are entirely contained within existing enclosed areas. Elsewhere new buildings may be acceptable if they are small in scale, are satisfactorily integrated into an existing group of buildings and where the new use remains clearly subsidiary to the existing use of the building group. In very exceptional circumstances it may be acceptable to allow a new building separate from the existing group of buildings. For example, in situations where the proposed use would result in nuisance problems for an existing dwelling, or where there are access or servicing difficulties, or where a location separate from the existing building group would permit the proposal to be more satisfactorily integrated into the landscape.

Successful businesses, however, often grow and expand. The countryside is rarely a satisfactory location for larger businesses today. Where agricultural diversification schemes become more than small-scale, relocation will normally be encouraged on appropriate sites within nearby settlements. The Department will not normally grant permission for existing urban based enterprises seeking relocation in the countryside.

Acceptable diversification enterprises could include:



- processing of agricultural produce ancillary to the main farm;
- manufacture of craft items;
- farm shops;
- “pick your own”;
- catering;
- tourist accommodation;
- sport, recreation and educational facilities; or
- livery for horses and ponies;

Many farmers are looking for alternative sources of income.

subject to the nature, scale and location of the project being appropriate in the countryside generally and the local area in particular. Proposals must also meet the normal planning and environmental criteria.

Applications for the development of specific types of diversification will be considered in accordance with the criteria set out below.

Farm Sales

There has been a long tradition of small-scale and often seasonal sale of farm produce at the “farm gate”. In many cases the level of activity is such that planning permission would not be required.

Where planning permission is required, favourable consideration will normally be given to proposals for the creation of farm shops provided that:

- the produce sold is mainly grown or reared on that holding;
- adequate access and parking arrangements are provided;
- the proposal is of a scale appropriate in a rural location; and
- the development can be satisfactorily integrated into the local landscape.

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Where permission is granted for the development of a farm shop conditions may be applied to:

- limit goods to those mainly produced on the holding;
- limit the overall scale of development;
- require that the shop is not run independently of the farm; and
- ensure adequate car parking and landscaping.

Garden Centres

For many years horticultural produce has been sold directly from individual nurseries and agricultural holdings. Some outlets have now developed into garden centres located in rural areas, often in the countryside adjacent to the larger centres of population. There has however been considerable pressure to develop large retail stores selling a range of gardening, horticultural, leisure and even Do-It-Yourself (DIY) goods in the countryside. Such stores are often unrelated to any existing agricultural or horticultural activity.

Proposals for the development of facilities for the retailing of horticultural produce from existing agricultural or horticultural holdings may be approved provided the majority of the produce sold is grown at the site. Conditions may be imposed to restrict the sale of plants or goods not grown at the site to an incidental level only. Proposals to establish independent retail garden centres unrelated to the sale of produce grown at the site will be strongly resisted. In addition, the establishment of independent retail units within existing garden centres will not be permitted.

All proposals will need to be acceptable in terms of scale of operation, visual impact, and other normal planning and environmental considerations.

The Keeping and Breeding of Domestic Animals

The use of agricultural land or buildings for the care, boarding or breeding of domestic animals constitutes a material change in the use of the land or buildings and requires the grant of planning permission. Such uses are often suited to rural locations and sympathetic consideration will normally be given to proposals for this type of use, provided other aspects of the development are acceptable.

Permission will not normally be granted for proposals which would be visually intrusive in the landscape, result in a loss of amenity for nearby residents - for example from noise, or lead to an unacceptable level of traffic generation.

Fish Farms

The excavation of ponds, the placing of cages or other structures in inland waters, or the erection of buildings or structures for the purposes of fish farming constitutes development which requires the grant of planning permission. There is potential for the further development of fish farms, however it is recognised that this type of enterprise can have visual and environmental impacts. While accepting the development of fish farming as a form of farm diversification, the visual character and the environment of rural areas will be protected.

Proposals which would be visually intrusive, would lead to a detrimental impact on the appearance of the countryside or would have an adverse affect on the environment or on sites or areas of nature conservation interest or man-made heritage, will not be acceptable. Visual considerations will be of even greater importance in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or other special landscape areas.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

Conditions may be imposed on any grant of permission to control the scale of development and protect the amenity of the area.

The Keeping and Breeding of Horses

The grazing of horses on land does not constitute a material change of use, however where land is used for the keeping of horses for commercial purposes, including recreational and leisure uses, planning permission will be required.

Favourable consideration will be given to proposals for the keeping and breeding of horses provided that the development would not result in an unacceptable loss of rural amenity. The following factors will be considered:



- scale of built development. Some equestrian uses require the provision of large buildings. Such proposals will not normally be acceptable where it is judged that the scale of development would be visually dominant or intrusive or would lead to a loss of character of the particular rural area;
- adequate provision for access and car parking. Some equestrian uses can lead to large visitor levels especially associated with sports competitions. The proposal should not create traffic hazards;
- impact on adjacent residential properties. Proposals which adversely affect residential properties by reason of noise, smell or disturbance are unlikely to be acceptable.

POLICY AG 4 COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

To support the establishment of community woodlands and forests around centres of population throughout Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland is sparsely wooded in comparison with other parts of the British Isles and Europe. Most of the existing forests have been established on hill ground, with the greatest concentration in Fermanagh and Tyrone. In recent years, however, there has been a tendency for new planting to move down to better quality agricultural land.

There are particular opportunities to enhance the environmental quality of many of our urban centres by the development of new areas of woodlands in or close to the settlements. Such woodlands can fulfil many functions - environmental enhancement, provision of recreational facilities, creation of new wildlife habitats, production of timber, employment creation and the creation of "green lungs" for the urban area. Woodlands are also considered to be an important element in farm diversification schemes.

The Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture are promoting the creation of "Community Woodlands" near our towns and cities for the benefit of the whole community. Grant aid is currently available to eligible schemes through the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture. The involvement and support of local communities is a vital element in the success of such initiatives. General locations may be identified in development plans where the provision of such woodlands would be acceptable, taking into account factors such as:

- opportunities to restore degraded or derelict landscapes;
- opportunities for significant environmental improvement including the improvement of the setting of settlements;
- the need for additional urban recreational space;

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- opportunity to screen unsightly development; and
- opportunities to enhance existing natural features, scenic routes or recreational and tourist facilities.

Planning permission is not required for the change of use of land to woodland. Buildings and other operations requisite for forestry purposes are permitted under the Planning (General Development) Order. Buildings for recreation, tourism, interpretive purposes or similar uses within an urban forest will require the grant of planning permission. Permission will normally be granted for such buildings unless the development would result in a loss of visual or residential amenity, give rise to traffic generation or road safety problems or adversely affect areas of nature conservation interest or the man-made heritage.

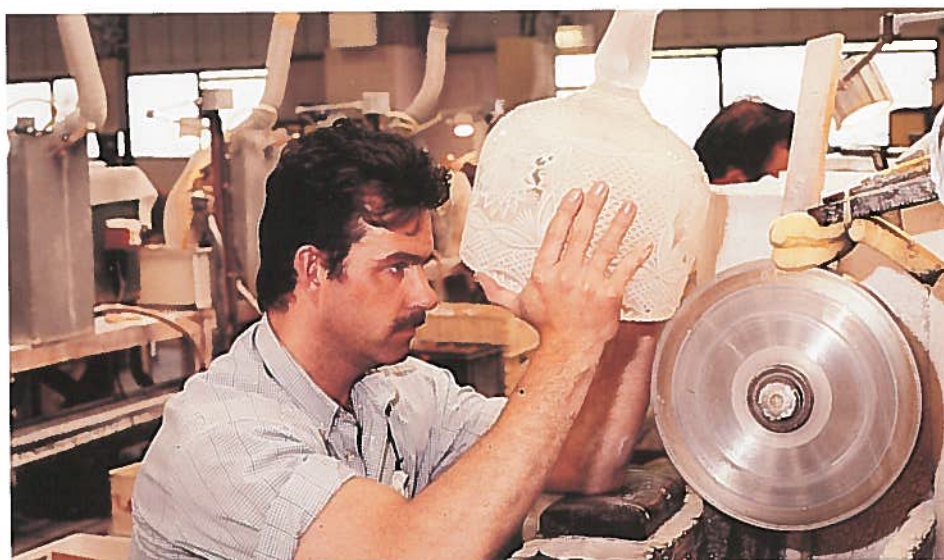
Woodlands close to settlements can enhance the quality of the environment - Killynether, Scrabo.



INDUSTRY

The Department is committed to the encouragement of economic development in a manner which is compatible with sound environmental objectives. There is always the necessity to weigh carefully the importance of job creation with that of maintaining and improving the quality of the environment. While job creation is not a function of the planning system, planning can have a role to play in creating conditions which are conducive to economic development - for example, the supply of adequate land in accessible locations. In addition the Department is keen to ensure that there are no unnecessary obstacles of a land use nature which would hinder the maintenance or creation of employment. Development plans will provide the land use framework for both public and private sector investment.

Particular importance is attached to the creation and development of small businesses. Their development may lead to significant employment creation in the future. Small businesses will generally be encouraged except in certain locations or where they are likely to generate specific environmental or amenity problems.



POLICY IC 1 LAND FOR INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS

To ensure a range of suitable sites is allocated within towns to meet the future demands of industrial and business enterprises.

The Department is concerned to ensure that the economic development of Northern Ireland is not hampered by the lack of suitable sites for industrial and business development. The development plan system will be used to ensure that there is an adequate range of sites to meet the anticipated needs of the Industrial Development Board, the Local Enterprise Development Unit and the private sector.

In recognising the general benefit of central locations, for example in terms of communications and access to labour markets, land will be zoned for industrial purposes within the main settlements. Proposals for inappropriate uses within areas zoned for industrial purposes will be resisted.

The Department will, as far as possible, seek to allocate land which:

- is accessible in terms of the transportation network;
- is free from physical or servicing constraints. On some sites however developers may have to contribute to the costs of services provision - see policy PSU 15;



Land will be zoned for industrial purposes - industrial units, Draperstown.

- is suitable for a wide range, in terms of both size and nature, of potential enterprises;
- is more than adequate not only to provide for anticipated needs but also to allow an adequate range of choice of development opportunities; and
- will not result in a serious loss of environmental quality for residential areas.

All proposals for the development of land for industrial purposes will be expected to:

- be compatible with adjacent land uses particularly residential uses;
- be of a scale, design and finishes appropriate to the locality. This will be particularly important where the proposed development is visible from main roads or other heavily used public areas;
- provide significant areas of soft landscaping. Where possible existing vegetation should be retained;
- adequately screen areas of outside storage from public view and neighbouring residential properties; and
- provide adequate car parking and manoeuvring areas.

The adequacy of industrial provision will be regularly reviewed through the monitoring of demand and land availability and both the development plan and development control processes will be used to make any adjustments considered necessary.

POLICY IC 2 INDUSTRIAL USES IN SMALL SETTLEMENTS

Within small rural settlements there will be a presumption in favour of the grant of planning permission for new industrial activities, provided the project is in scale with the settlement and there are no significant environmental objections.

The Department will not normally zone land for specific purposes within smaller rural settlements. Land may, however, be zoned for industrial use where there is a clear indication of potential demand or an especially suitable site. Favourable consideration will be given to applications for small industrial and business uses on unzoned land included within the limit of development for such a settlement, provided:

- the proposal is of a scale and nature appropriate to the settlement involved;
- there would be no unacceptable detrimental impact on the amenity of adjacent residential properties or to the residential character of the settlement;
- the proposal is of a design which is appropriate to the character of the settlement; and
- the proposal is satisfactory in terms of car parking, landscaping, road safety, traffic generation and other normal planning and environmental considerations.

Favourable consideration will be given to small industrial uses - Creggan Business Units, Co Tyrone.



The contribution of the proposal to the local economy and improvements to existing buildings on the site will be important considerations.

POLICY IC 3 FLEXIBILITY FOR SMALL RURAL PROJECTS

In exceptional circumstances, where there is no suitable land within a small rural settlement for a specific industrial project, permission may be granted for a site which lies outside the limit of development but which is clearly associated with the settlement.

It is planning policy to facilitate the development of new industrial enterprises and the resultant diversification of the rural economy. It is important that such enterprises are not prevented from setting up due to a lack of suitable land within existing settlements. The nature of a small industry may also occasionally require some physical separation from the built up area because of potential nuisance, for example, noise or smell. The Planning Service will therefore adopt a flexible approach to ensure adequate provision is made for small rural industries.

Planning permission may be granted for a site outside the limits of development for a settlement, provided it is clearly associated with the settlement. Sites remote from any settlement will not normally be approved. It is not envisaged that this policy would apply within Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas.

The policy will only be applied in exceptional circumstances where there is a definite proposal to develop a local enterprise park/centre or a small rural enterprise which would make a significant contribution to the local economy. Proposals of a speculative nature will not be acceptable. Permission will only be granted where the proposal is of a scale appropriate to the settlement involved.

In addition, the policy will only be applicable in those circumstances where there is no reasonable possibility of securing a suitable site within the limits of development for the particular settlement. An exhaustive search of all land within the development limits will be a necessity. Where availability of land is the only difficulty, the Department may consider use of its compulsory purchase powers in preference to the operation of this policy. In some situations land may be available but constraints to development render it inappropriate for the proposed development.

Milestone Centre - Carrickmore.



Where the policy is to be applied, options will be considered in the following order:

- a minor extension to the existing development limit - subject to normal amenity and environmental considerations;
- where an extension to the development limit is not feasible, preference will be given to any site, outside the limit but close to the settlement, which currently contains buildings or where the site is already in a degraded or derelict state. The opportunity should be taken to improve the existing environment; or

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- where the above options are inappropriate, permission may be granted on a green field site. Such a site will need to be in close proximity to the settlement and clearly associated with it.

Sites to be considered acceptable must not contradict policies designed to protect the setting of the settlement or contribute to urban sprawl or ribbon development.

Conditions will normally be imposed requiring the highest standards of design and landscaping.

POLICY IC 4 RETENTION OF INDUSTRIAL LAND

To retain land currently or last used for industrial and business purposes for the continuance of employment uses.

The loss of industrial and commercial land within existing towns and villages to other uses can result in the erosion of a balanced provision of available industrial land and a decline in employment located near to large sectors of the workforce. The Department is keen to support the diversity of the local economy and the retention of existing sites for industry and business which are well located and suited for such purposes.

The retention of industrial land in central locations can, not only make a substantial contribution to the renewal and revitalisation of towns, but also provide employment opportunities accessible to large sections of the urban population and the rural hinterland. The existence of redundant factory premises and derelict industrial land can be an important resource for the creation of new job opportunities in areas of high unemployment.

Planning permission will not normally be granted for the change of use, or the redevelopment for other uses, of sites or premises which were last used for industrial purposes. In particular, changes of use to offices or retailing, are unlikely to be acceptable. Redevelopment of existing industrial sites might include other uses, in addition to industry, as a specific regeneration initiative to meet the needs of a particular locality.

Exceptions to the policy will be where:



Adaption of existing buildings for small industrial and business units - Gilford Mill.

- continued use of the existing site would be detrimental to the amenities of the surrounding area or would give rise to serious environmental problems;
- the individual site has serious constraints making it unsuited to modern industry;
- an alternative use would secure the future of a building listed as being of architectural or historic merit;
- the land is required for other purposes as set out in a statutory area plan; or
- there is clearly a gross overprovision in the local supply of industrial land. In such cases redevelopment of these sites is preferable to development of greenfield sites.

Where buildings currently used for industrial purposes are no longer suitable for that use favourable consideration will be given to:

- schemes to provide a range of small industrial and business units by the sub-division and adaptation of existing buildings; or

- redevelopment of the site for industrial purposes.

Where there is no reasonable possibility of redevelopment for industrial purposes, favourable consideration may be given to proposals for other commercial uses or an appropriate mixed use package providing, where possible, new employment opportunities.

POLICY IC 5 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

To facilitate the diversification of the rural economy.

Agricultural Diversification

The Department wishes to see the retention of rural communities and will therefore give favourable consideration to appropriate proposals for small-scale on-farm agricultural diversification schemes. The retention of farmers and their families on their holdings is important, not only to retain the social structure of rural areas, but also to maintain the countryside management role performed by the farming community, which is of such importance to society as a whole. The promotion of economic activity in rural areas must however be seen against the background of the need to conserve the quality of the Northern Ireland countryside for the benefit and enjoyment of the present and future generations.

In considering whether a particular diversification proposal is acceptable, the Department will seek to ensure the scale and nature of the activity is appropriate for the location and that the proposal can be satisfactorily integrated into the rural landscape.

The detailed planning practice relating to agricultural diversification is set out in policy AG 3.

Rural Community Projects

In remote areas, a positive and flexible approach will be taken in relation to rural community projects being developed in response to initiatives for the regeneration of declining rural areas. Normally such projects should be located in or close to existing settlements.

For any proposal to be acceptable it will be necessary to demonstrate that:

- the scale is appropriate for a rural location;
- there is no significant potential either for pollution problems or nuisance to nearby residents; and
- the proposal is acceptable in visual terms and in terms of access, parking and other environmental and planning considerations.



Favourable consideration for rural community initiatives - Teemore, Co Fermanagh.

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In reaching decisions on such applications the Department will seek to balance employment generation and the need to protect the rural environment.

Where possible such projects should be contained within existing buildings or seek to make use of existing damaged landscapes.

Planning permission will normally be subject to conditions:

- requiring landscaping of the site;
- controlling external storage and car parking; and
- controlling the scale of development.

Redundant Farm Buildings

Outside Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas, favourable consideration may be given to the re-use of redundant farm buildings for appropriate small-scale business or industrial purposes. However, in order to prevent potential abuse of this policy, the Department will require to be satisfied on the following issues:

- where the building is part of an agricultural holding, evidence that the building is no longer required for agricultural purposes. In such circumstances permitted development rights for new farm buildings in respect of that agricultural holding or unit may be withdrawn; and
- that the building has had an existing genuine agricultural use for a reasonable period of time.

In addition the following will be of importance in reaching a decision on such a proposal :

- the use can be largely contained within the existing building;
- the nature and scale of the proposed use including car parking, access, etc, are such that can be absorbed into the particular rural environment without undue loss to visual amenity;
- any alterations to the existing building are small in scale and that their design and materials respect the architectural style of the existing building in particular and the rural environment in general;
- adequate landscaping and screening is provided; and
- the proposal is acceptable in terms of normal planning and environmental consideration.

Exceptionally in Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas appropriate, small-scale business or industrial uses may be permitted in some locations where they meet an identified local need.

Other Redundant Rural Buildings

The countryside contains many non-agricultural buildings which have outlived their original purpose - for example, old mills, rural schools, churches or other community buildings. Unless alternative uses are found, they may suffer decay and dereliction leading to the

despoilation of the rural landscape. Some however may be suitable with little external alteration for re-use for business, industrial or tourist purposes. The re-use of such properties can help stimulate new enterprises and provide much needed and acceptable accommodation for small-

scale business and industries. Favourable consideration will normally be given to proposals for the adaptation and re-use of existing rural buildings, where the proposal meets the normal planning criteria and is of a scale and type which can be absorbed into the rural environment without leading to a significant loss of amenity.

The re-use of rural buildings can help stimulate new enterprise - Donaghmore Training Centre.



The re-use of redundant buildings will be permitted where:

- the building will require conversion or minor alterations rather than rebuilding or substantial reconstruction;
- the use can be accommodated without any unacceptable change in the character of the building; and
- the building is genuinely redundant in terms of the use for which it was constructed and/or its last occupation.

POLICY IC 6 EXPANSION OF EXISTING ENTERPRISES

Planning permission may be granted for the expansion of existing industrial or business enterprises in the countryside where the resultant development remains appropriate in scale for the location.

There are already many industrial and business enterprises which are located in rural areas. Some are long established, others normally small in scale have been granted planning permission to operate in disused rural buildings. Many of these enterprises will over time need to expand and/or diversify. While such expansion is desirable for job creation, it can radically change the nature of the enterprise and its impact on the local environment. It is therefore important to weigh carefully the advantages to the rural economy of job creation or an improved industrial facility against the potential for an adverse impact on the rural environment.

The expansion of existing industrial or business enterprises which are currently located in the countryside may be considered acceptable where:

- there is no significant increase in the site area of the enterprise. Minor increases and rounding off of the existing site may be acceptable;
- there is no significant addition of new buildings. Within Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas new building (except for minor extensions to existing buildings) will generally not be permitted. Outside Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas new buildings may be permitted, provided they are small in scale and provided the resultant development is appropriate in scale for the location and can be satisfactorily integrated into the local landscape;
- the open storage of materials, which can be visually unsatisfactory, can be adequately screened from public view. Such screening will need to be of an acceptable form and effective throughout the year;
- the increase in trade would not result in unacceptable traffic levels on nearby roads or a significant increase in use of an existing substandard access;

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- the new development, together with the existing facilities, remains of a scale appropriate to the rural area and will not result in an unacceptable loss in the amenity of the area. In particular the impact on nearby properties and the appearance of the development from public roads will be of importance; and
- there would be no increase in existing or potential pollution or nuisance problems.

Where expansion proposals would result in a significant expansion in the scale of the development, with increasing local environmental impacts, it may be necessary to relocate in an industrial area. Exceptionally, where it is accepted that relocation is not possible for particular operational or employment reasons, expansion may be permitted.

In all cases where permission for expansion is granted, the Department will require reasonable measures to be taken to ameliorate the impact, not only of the extension but also of the existing enterprise, on the local environment. Such measures, where required, will normally be considered essential for the grant of permission. Where necessary, planning agreements may be used to secure environmental improvements. Conditions will also be imposed to ensure there is adequate landscaping, parking and servicing provision.

POLICY IC 7 MAJOR INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS

In assessing proposals for major industrial projects of national or regional importance account will be taken of the impact on the environment or local communities.

Major industrial developments can, even with careful site location, present difficult environmental problems. Locations within urban areas could have a significant impact on neighbouring land uses. Certain developments, due to size or specific site requirements, cannot be located within existing urban areas and may require a site in the countryside.

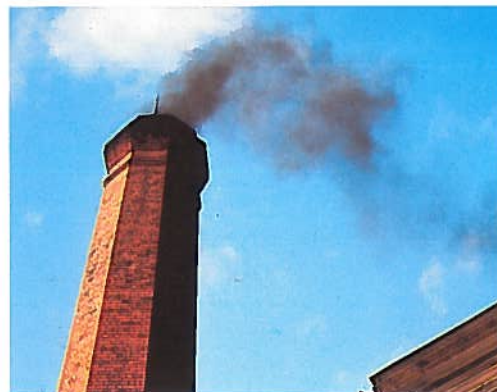
In considering applications for such proposals an assessment will be made of the benefits derived from the development, in terms of meeting community needs or the creation of employment opportunities, as well as the potential environmental effects of the proposal. This type of development requires careful judgement based on a comprehensive assessment of all the relevant information. The majority of these projects are likely to be subject to an environmental assessment under the appropriate statutory regulations. Detailed practice relating to this policy is as set out under policy PSU 2.

For such a development to be approved it will be necessary to demonstrate that there is an overriding national or regional reason for the development and where appropriate, a thorough exploration of less damaging alternatives has been made and that these alternatives are unsuitable.

In the case of proposals within or affecting Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, sites of archaeological interest and areas of nature conservation importance, it will be necessary to demonstrate that all reasonable alternatives have been explored and found to be unacceptable.

POLICY IC 8 INDUSTRIES OF AN OFFENSIVE OR HAZARDOUS NATURE

To balance the need for, and benefits of, proposals for industries of an offensive or hazardous nature against potential harm to the environment.



Certain industries involve processes or materials which can result in adverse effects on adjacent land uses, such as pollution, noise, smell, fumes or dust as well as damage to the local environment. The degree of impact can vary greatly from industry to industry. Proposals will be carefully considered to ensure the public are not subject to high risks.

In determining applications for the location of offensive or hazardous industries the

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Department will weigh the potential benefits of the proposal to society, the possibility of alternative locations and the creation of employment, against the potential environmental disadvantages, possible mitigating measures, and the impact on adjacent land uses. The submission of an Environmental Statement may be required in order to help reach a fully informed decision. Where permission is granted, conditions will be imposed in order to minimise the impact of the development on the environment.

Decisions will be based on the precautionary principle that where there is uncertainty, the protection of the environment will generally be paramount unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

In the case of major projects of a hazardous nature, permission is only likely to be granted in cases where the national or regional importance of the development clearly outweighs any environmental harm. There will be an onus on developers to clearly show that all relevant factors have been taken into consideration and that the proposal represents the least damaging and most effective solution.

While many of these potential difficulties can be controlled through separate legislation, the advice of relevant experts will be sought in the processing of planning applications which involve or have the potential to involve offensive or hazardous processes.

The storage of hazardous substances within a proposed development now requires separate consent under Article 53 of the Planning (N.I.) Order 1991. Further advice is given in the Development Control Advice Note 12.

Where it is considered appropriate new development projects may be directed to sites which already contain development of an offensive or hazardous nature.

RETAILING

In recent years shopping patterns have continued to change as retailers adapt to changing economic conditions and consumer habits. In some retail sectors larger shop units have resulted from efforts to increase efficiency, achieve economies of scale and to widen consumer choice. Constraints in existing town centres along with changes in shopping habits have led to the development of suburban and out-of-town shopping centres, large food superstores and retail warehousing. Many of these developments have made a valuable contribution to the improvement of retail services - in terms of better access and convenience for consumers, choice and value for money. They can, however, lead to increased traffic generation, a loss of trade and investment in neighbouring town centres, and the loss of small local shops which served a valuable economic and social function especially for the less mobile members of society.

Change in retailing is expected to continue both in terms of new forms of shopping and the modernisation of existing retail centres. Within the terms of the overall shopping policy, the Department is committed to allowing freedom of choice and flexibility in terms of retail development throughout Northern Ireland and to assist the provision of a wide range of shopping opportunities to which the whole community has access. It is not the function of land use planning to prevent competition among retailers or between methods of retailing, nor to preserve existing commercial interests as such. However, the Department recognises the value and importance of long established shopping areas in town and village centres.

**POLICY IC 9
TOWN CENTRES**

To protect the vitality and viability of established town centres.

*The vitality of town centres should be protected -
Limavady Town Centre.*

Traditionally the Ulster Town, often with its own market, was the centre of trade and commerce for the population in the surrounding rural area. The commercial town centres still provide important services for town and country. Distinctive town centres also give a sense of identity to the particular urban centre and to Northern Ireland as a whole. An attractive and flourishing town centre can also enhance the quality of life of its citizens, stimulate economic investment and support and encourage a whole range of cultural, social and commercial activity. The location of such uses in central locations, which are normally also the focus of transportation networks, promotes accessibility for a large section of the population.



The Department is therefore committed to protecting the vitality and viability of existing town centres. It will seek to ensure an adequate provision of retailing and related facilities, accessible to the whole community, through the support for and enhancement of established town centres. There will be a presumption in favour of development proposals which would make a positive contribution to ensuring that existing centres continue to provide a focus for shopping activity. Encouragement will be given to new retail development and to the refurbishment, for retail purposes, of existing floorspace. The design of new development should be sympathetic to the character of the centre and to its historic settlement pattern and should make a positive contribution to the environmental quality of the town centre.

A compact and attractive shopping environment is important in that it promotes choice and convenience. The primary retail core of larger towns will, where appropriate, be identified in the relevant development plan. Within core areas, the Department will control non-retail uses at ground floor level. Applications for change of use from retail shop to local services such as building society offices, banks and estate agents or to food uses may be acceptable except where:

- there would be a significant loss of retail floorspace;
- a clustering of non-retail uses is created; or
- the area overall is tending to be dominated by non-retail uses.

Within the secondary shopping areas, proposals for local services offices and food uses will be determined on their merits. In smaller towns, where services and retailing are grouped together within a small core, each case will be determined on the potential impact on the centre.

together within a small core, each case will be determined on the potential impact on the centre.

In order to ensure a compact retail core the increase of retail floorspace through the refurbishment of existing units and sympathetic redevelopment will be encouraged. Outward spread of the retail core will only be permitted where there is clear evidence of need. The area for expansion will normally be defined within the relevant area plan.

The quality of the environment in town centres is of great importance. The Department will where appropriate, and within financial constraints, support proposals for further pedestrianisation, improvement to the physical environment and the provision of a satisfactory level of car parking.

Town centres will also be promoted as the principal locations for office development and appropriate service, cultural and leisure uses. Proposals for such development, or the improvement of existing facilities, will be encouraged where they contribute to the diversity and vitality of activity within each centre without encroaching on prime retail floorspace.

The re-use of vacant floorspace and the location of new uses in vacant and underused upper floors of existing buildings will be encouraged.

POLICY IC 10 MAJOR RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS

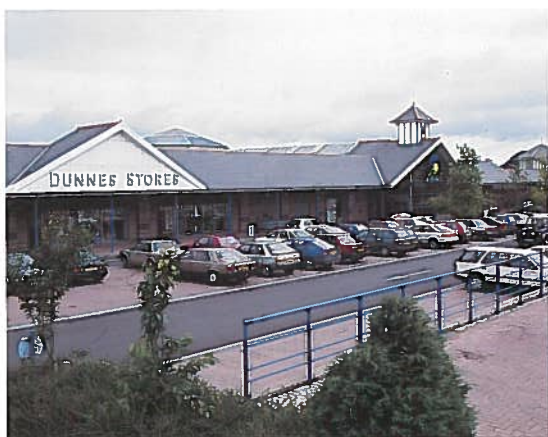
Proposals for retail development, which complement or meet existing deficiencies in the overall shopping provision of any particular settlement, may be granted provided the development would not be prejudicial to established town and other shopping centres.

It is not the function of the Department to preserve existing commercial interests nor to inhibit competition between retailers or even between various forms of retailing. It will allow the private sector to respond to changing consumer requirements. New retail development can improve choice and lead to lower prices through increased competition.

Out-of-town centre shopping development has a role to play in accommodating types of retailing which are unsuited to a town centre location, and in satisfying local deficiencies in retail provision. It can contribute towards urban regeneration. However, such developments may seriously prejudice the vitality or viability of existing town, district or neighbourhood shopping centres.

Additional significant retail developments on sites outside of existing town centres will therefore only be permitted in locations where the development will:

- complement or meet existing deficiencies in the overall shopping provision for the particular settlement;
- not lead to a significant loss of investment in existing town or neighbourhood shopping centres;
- not threaten the vitality or viability of a centre or lead to an unacceptable reduction in the range of facilities and retail services within the centre;
- not lead to an unreasonable or detrimental impact on amenity, traffic movements or road safety;
- not result in a wide-scale closure of existing shops;
- be accessible to both public and private transport; and
- provide adequate car parking and be of a high quality of design.



New retail development can improve choice and assist urban regeneration - Magherafelt.

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Conditions restricting the scale and nature of development may be imposed on permissions in order to protect the shopping role of existing centres. Such conditions may specify, minimum or maximum store sizes and types of goods to be sold.

All proposals for new major retail developments will have to be accompanied by an assessment of the potential impact on other retailing centres and anticipated changes in traffic patterns. Detailed calculations or forecasts of retail growth or of changes in the geographical distribution of retailing will not normally be required.

Proposals for retail development in the countryside outside the planned limits of settlements will not be acceptable. The Department considers that there is no justifiable need for any regional out-of-town shopping centres in Northern Ireland.

Within the food retailing sector the trend towards car-borne, one stop shopping has led to the development of large food based superstores. Such developments rely on the close proximity of adequate car parking and for this reason locations within existing town centres may be inappropriate. Favourable consideration will be given to food stores on edge-of-centre or out of centre locations provided:

- there is a clear deficiency in provision within the particular neighbourhood;
- the development would not undermine the convenience shopping function of established centres;
- they cannot be practically or appropriately accommodated within existing town or shopping centres
- adequate provision is made for car parking;
- the development will not lead to an unreasonable or detrimental impact on local amenity, traffic movements or road safety; and
- there is adequate provision for both public and private transport.

POLICY IC 11 RETAIL WAREHOUSES

To give favourable consideration to the provision of retail warehouses on appropriate sites within urban areas which are in or adjacent to existing shopping centres.

It is acknowledged that developments trading in bulky goods and DIY products are difficult to accommodate within town centres given their parking and servicing requirements. The siting of such developments in out-of-town centre locations can have a beneficial influence on town centres through the provision of an alternative location for the sale of bulky goods thus reducing traffic congestion and through the attraction of additional retail custom to the town.

Retail warehouses are defined as large single - level individual retail stores which specialise in the sale of non-food goods such as DIY, furniture, carpets, electrical and gardening goods, catering mainly for car-borne customers. Retail parks are an agglomeration of at least 3 retail warehouses.

Proposals for retail warehouse development within urban areas will normally be directed to sites in or adjacent to existing town or shopping centres thereby complementing and reinforcing the role of the centre. In exceptional circumstances where such a site is not feasible, an alternative site within the urban area may be acceptable provided the proposal is compatible with existing land uses in the immediate area. The proposal itself, or in conjunction with existing or approved other uses in the vicinity, must be of a scale which is considered appropriate for the location.

Favourable consideration may be given to proposals for retail warehouse development provided:



- they cannot be practically or appropriately accommodated within existing town or shopping centres;
- they complement existing town centres by providing for a range of goods difficult to accommodate in town centres;
- they do not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of or investment in established centres. While individual units may have a limited impact, the Department will also consider the cumulative impact of existing and proposed retail warehouses; and
- they do not have an adverse impact on amenity, traffic movements or road safety and are satisfactory in terms of car parking, design and landscaping.

Retail warehousing can complement town centre retailing - Ballymena.

Permission for retail warehouses may be subject to conditions setting a minimum floorspace and restricting the range and type of goods to be sold.

**POLICY IC 12
NEIGHBOURHOOD
SHOPPING**

To retain and where possible enhance neighbourhood shopping centres.

Neighbourhood shopping includes purpose built local centres, local shopping parades and significant clusters of shops. The primary role of this level of retailing is the provision of locally accessible convenience goods which is of particular importance to the less mobile sectors of society.

Proposals for the development of convenience retailing and shops whose primary function is to meet a local need, which are to be located in or adjacent to existing neighbourhood centres, will be encouraged provided that:

- any defined need cannot be met within the existing centre;
- the proposal would have no significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the centre; and
- the development can be successfully integrated into the centre.

Medium-sized food supermarkets may be considered acceptable at this scale of provision. Expansion of local centres will be considered in terms of potential impact on amenity, traffic and parking and impact on other local centres.



The primary function of neighbourhood shopping is to meet a local need - Moneyreagh.

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Associated service and community uses such as libraries, clinics and local offices are often appropriate and desirable and will normally be acceptable within or adjacent to local centres. Where they predominate however they can erode the level of retail service provided. The change of use of retail units to hot food carry-outs, amusement arcades and bookmakers offices can have the same results. Consideration may be given to the change of use of property within a neighbourhood centre to a non-retail use dependent on:

- the need to retain local retailing;
- the impact of the development on the vitality and viability of the centre;
- the clustering or dominance of non-retail uses;
- the level of vacancy within the centre; and
- the contribution of the proposed use to meeting a legitimate local need.

New neighbourhood or local shopping centres of an appropriate scale within established residential areas may be acceptable where there is a clear deficiency in local provision and where the proposed site is acceptable in terms of environmental and traffic considerations. Where substantial areas of land are zoned for residential purposes in area plans it may be necessary to identify a site for neighbourhood or local centre facilities.

The provision of environmental improvements and car parking facilities within neighbourhood centres will be encouraged where appropriate.

POLICY IC 13 LOCAL AND VILLAGE SHOPS

To facilitate the provision of local shops and village shops in appropriate locations.

Northern Ireland still has a significant number of village shops and local “corner shops” within urban areas. These shops play an important role in supplying the immediate needs of the local population. While retail provision is a matter for the private sector, it is planning policy to support the continuation of local and village shops wherever such provision is viable.

Within towns, proposals for additional retail development will normally be directed to planned or established shopping centres. However, favourable consideration may be given to proposals for new local “corner shops” in neighbourhoods currently deficient in shopping provision and in new housing developments where:

- there is a defined local need that cannot be met by existing shopping facilities in the area;
- there would be no significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres;
- there are no existing vacant and suitable premises in the area; and
- the proposal is of appropriate scale, and is acceptable in terms of design, impact on residential amenity, servicing and parking arrangements.



Village shops, often including a post office facility, have long played a vital role in supplying the day-to-day needs of the rural community. Rationalisation and changes in retailing patterns however have resulted in the decline of such establishments. There is a need for such facilities to serve local residents, particularly those who do not have access to a car. Consequently, the development of local scale retailing in villages will be encouraged provided the scale of provision and the type of goods sold clearly indicate that the shop is primarily designed to cater for the needs of the village and its catchment population. Conditions may be imposed on the scale of provision and the type of goods to be sold.

Local shops have an important role in convenience shopping - Mountjoy.

The design of village shops, and in particular the design of shopfronts should be in keeping with the character and architecture of the settlement. Particular emphasis will be placed on design where the proposal lies within an existing or proposed Conservation Area.

The implications of the proposal for the safety and convenience of road users, the adequacy of car parking provision and any impact on adjacent residential properties will be important factors in the determination of applications for village shops.

POLICY IC 14 RURAL SHOPS

To resist the development of inappropriate retail facilities in the open countryside.

Retailing will generally be directed to existing settlements of appropriate size. Proposals for out-of-centre shopping will be considered unacceptable if the proposed location is in the open countryside, the urban fringe, or in villages. New retail facilities are better located on appropriate sites within the limits of development of existing towns and cities. This policy will apply to new shopping centres, large individual stores or supermarkets, both day to day convenience shopping and comparison goods shopping, and the development of retail warehouses and bulky goods stores.

Facilities which may be considered acceptable in rural locations include:

- farm shops, clearly tied to an existing farm holding or occupant;
- shops designed to serve existing tourist or recreational facilities and clearly secondary to the main use;
- small-scale shops attached to existing or approved craft workshops in order to permit direct retailing of the product to the public;
- appropriate scale facilities attached to existing or approved petrol filling stations; and
- a small-scale shop to serve a designated dispersed rural community.

Such new facilities will normally be required to be located within existing buildings. Outside Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas, new buildings may be acceptable provided they are small in scale and are satisfactorily integrated into an existing group of buildings.

**POLICY IC 15
ROADSIDE
SERVICE
FACILITIES**

The provision of roadside service facilities on the trunk roads network in the open countryside may be considered acceptable where there is a clear indication of need.

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Roadside services for long distance travellers using the trunk roads network - Moira.

It is important to secure the adequate provision of roadside services for long distance travellers using the trunk roads network. As part of the continual upgrading of the network, many settlements have been bypassed. It is not always appropriate for travellers to divert off major routes for services. On the other hand there has been pressure for new development, particularly petrol filling stations in the open countryside. This pressure if left unchecked could result in a proliferation of development resulting in a loss of environmental quality along major routes.

Proposals for roadside service facilities may be considered along the trunk roads network. New facilities will not be permitted unless:

- there is a clear indication of need. In normal circumstances it is considered reasonable to expect a driver to travel at least 12 miles along the main traffic route network before reaching a petrol filling station or service centre (on either side of single carriageway roads). Proposals for new facilities within 12 miles of existing services will therefore not normally be acceptable;
- the access arrangements are satisfactory. Proposals which would lead to traffic hazards will not be permitted. Stations should be designed for one-way working and should be accessible without dangerous right-turning movements across traffic flows. The pairing of stations/ services on either side of the road is always preferable - on both single and dual carriageways. In general, sites adjacent to the main routes but which have access to a minor route may be preferable to sites with direct access, provided the facility is clearly indicated to on-coming traffic. Where direct access is permitted the applicant will normally be required to provide any necessary improvements to the road layout, such as deceleration lanes; and
- the proposal is satisfactory in terms of location, siting and design as set out in policy DES 5. Adequate screening by landscaping will normally be required.

In normal circumstances, proposals for petrol filling stations, and roadside services are unlikely to be acceptable in Green Belts, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Countryside Policy Areas.

Along the trunk road network the Department considers there is a need not only for fuel provision but also for a wider range of services including toilet and catering services and picnic sites together with adequate parking. Favourable consideration will be given to applications for such service centres which meet the criteria outlined above. Where a route is already adequately served by existing petrol filling stations the creation of entirely new service centres will not normally be acceptable but proposals for the extension of facilities at existing filling stations may be considered. Such facilities will not be acceptable adjacent to every filling station - again a spacing of 12 miles between services is considered appropriate. Proposals for a grouping of services, by nature of their scale, can have a significantly greater impact on the rural environment. Proposals will therefore be carefully considered to ensure that they can be satisfactorily integrated into the local landscape. Design should be of a high standard and landscaping used to screen the development, particularly any large areas of car parking.

It is considered that on routes not forming part of the trunk roads network there will normally be no necessity to locate petrol filling stations or roadside services in the open countryside. Such facilities will normally be directed to existing settlements unless local circumstances indicate that such a policy would lead to undue hardship for the residents.

The upgrading of existing filling stations will normally be acceptable unless increased trade would create or exacerbate a road traffic hazard. Where a petrol filling station has been abandoned, the policy as set out above will be applied.

Most petrol filling stations now provide a wide range of retail goods in the associated shop. Many now function as the local shop or small supermarket serving the surrounding population. The important role of such retail provision is recognised. Such shops should however clearly remain secondary to the use as a petrol filling station. Proposals for larger units providing general retailing are not considered appropriate. Secondary uses such as vehicle sales or vehicle repairs will normally be unacceptable in countryside locations.

Where a new petrol filling station or roadside service centre is approved in a rural area conditions will normally be imposed to secure adequate parking and landscaping and to restrict the type of goods to be sold. The accumulation of signs will be resisted.

OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

The office and business sector is of great importance to the Northern Ireland economy. It provides essential services for town and country. Employment in this sector has grown over the past decade - at a time when employment in some other sectors has declined. It is hoped that Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from the expansion of office and business development - including the further development of local services and the relocation of some office functions of national and international companies and government departments.

The Department will seek to encourage the growth of the office and business sector by ensuring that the planning system makes adequate provision for future office development. It is recognised that office technology has undergone considerable transformation which has permitted much greater freedom in the choice of location. Concentrations of offices in urban centres have, however, contributed much to the vitality of our town and city centres. It is planning policy to encourage a range of choice in terms of office location while ensuring the continued vitality and viability of town centres.

POLICY IC 16 OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

**To facilitate office
development in
established town centres.**

New office development should continue to be concentrated within established town centres in order to retain the vitality and viability of urban centres. Further office development can help reinforce the existing administrative and service functions of many settlements, as well as creating new employment in locations accessible to large sections of the population.

Large and medium sized office development will not normally be permitted outside established town centres. Within larger towns, office areas within the town centre may be identified in the relevant area plan.

The use of vacant or underused upper floors in central areas may be appropriate locations for small office development. Proposals for office use at ground floor level are unlikely to be successful within the primary retail areas of an established centre.

The development of office development nodes outside existing town centres will be resisted.

Where there is a clear deficiency in the existing or potential supply of office floorspace within a particular settlement and where there is little prospect of enlarging the central area, consideration may be given through the development plan process to the identification of land suitable for “office park” development. i.e. a cluster of small office buildings, in landscaped surroundings, with an accumulated total floorspace appropriate to the scale of the settlement. Where such provision is considered necessary the Department will encourage the re-use of redundant urban land in preference to the allocation of greenfield sites.

Where there is a definite rather than a speculative proposal for a new office development which would make a substantial contribution to the economy of a particular town and no feasible site exists within the existing town centre, consideration may be given to an alternative site within the urban area. Normally a location on the periphery of the existing commercial core would be preferable. Any site to be acceptable will need to be compatible with existing land uses in the immediate area and meet normal planning and environmental standards.

In all cases the Department will require car parking provision - see policy PSU4.

POLICY IC 17 SMALL OFFICE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

To facilitate the development of small office and business uses in appropriate locations.

There is often a need for small offices within urban areas but outside town centres. Examples include, estate agents, insurance brokers, building societies, solicitors, banks and local offices of essential public services. These offices which provide essential local services will normally only be permitted in or adjacent to existing or proposed commercial areas and neighbourhood centres. Office development will only be permitted in local shopping centres where the scale does not detract from the retailing function of the centre. An appropriate level of office development which provides local services may be permitted in villages and other smaller rural settlements.

Proposals for such uses will normally only be acceptable where:

- the use is clearly designed to serve a local need;
- the floorspace is limited to a maximum of 200 sq metres;
- there is no loss of good housing stock;
- the proposal is not located in a predominantly residential area; and
- the development meets parking standards and environmental considerations.

Many small businesses begin with people working from their own homes. Advances in technology now allow a wider range of business activity to be carried out from individual residences. In many cases the level of activity is of such a limited scale that planning permission would not be required. Favourable consideration may be given to applications for home working, where deemed necessary, in residential areas or rural dwellings provided:

- work is carried out primarily by persons living in the residential unit;
- the business use is clearly secondary to the main use of the property as a dwelling house;
- the use is carried out totally within the existing building;

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- there will be no loss of amenity for neighbouring residents - for example from noise, vibration, advertising, visual amenity or traffic generation; and
- the use is not one which by its nature would attract more than occasional visitors.

Where approval is granted the permission will be strictly controlled by conditions.

This policy will not apply to industrial uses such as car vehicle repairs at residential properties - see instead policies IC 1 and 2.

Telecottages - small scale centres designed to provide a centralised information and communication service using modern technology - may be approved in villages or smaller settlements where the objective is to reduce remoteness and stimulate local rural development. Approval will however be subject to the normal environmental and other policy considerations.

Minerals

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In planning legislation the definition of minerals includes ‘all minerals and substances in or under land of a kind ordinarily worked for removal by underground or surface working except that it does not include turf cut for purposes other than sale’.

Minerals are an important natural resource and their exploitation makes an essential contribution to the nation’s prosperity and quality of life. The mineral extraction industry provides employment often in rural areas and produces a wide range of products for a variety of purposes in construction, agriculture and industry.

In Northern Ireland the primary minerals are sand and gravel and crushed rock used mainly as aggregate in construction. In the foreseeable future, supplies of primary minerals are likely to come from traditional sources. Transport costs will continue to require workings to be in relatively close proximity to markets.

Exploration continues to take place for valuable minerals. However it should not be presumed that successful future exploration will guarantee planning permission to exploit any proven reserves since the environmental effects of specific proposals must first be considered.

Environmental Impact

Minerals can only be extracted from where they are found, though with common minerals, there may be a choice of site. Whilst they are essential, their working can have a significant effect on the landscape and on people’s living conditions. Because of their nature, scale, location and duration of operation, mineral developments often impact more severely on the environment than other forms of development so they must be subject to rigorous control standards.

While there will be a general presumption in favour of development, in considering a particular application account will be taken of the value of the mineral to the economy, the environmental implications of the proposal and the degree to which adverse effects can be mitigated in relation to the character of the local area.

Where proposals for mineral development are likely to have significant effects on the environment, applications will be subject to environmental assessment. Whether a particular mineral development proposal will warrant formal assessment will depend upon such factors as the sensitivity of location, size, working methods, proposals for disposing of waste, the nature and extent of processing and ancillary operations, the arrangements for transporting products away from the site, and proposals for restoration. The duration of the proposed workings is also taken into account.

The cost of meeting acceptable environmental standards falls on industry in line with the “polluter pays” principle. In practice certain of these standards are set when planning permission is considered, taking into account the benefits that can be achieved, and the costs they impose on the industry. Where permission is granted, conditions will be attached to ensure that the development takes place in an orderly manner and that the amenity of the area is safeguarded.

The principle of “sustainable development” is that we have a moral duty to look after our environment and to hand it on in good order to future generations. In the context of minerals this principle poses particular difficulties. Mineral working can never be entirely reversed. However, to accord with the principles of sustainable development, the rate of consumption of finite minerals should be reduced by encouraging the use of renewable and recycled alternatives whenever this is practical and economically viable. In Northern Ireland, compared with Great Britain, the range of secondary materials available as alternatives to primary aggregates is extremely limited and the price of primary aggregates is low. This being the case, the impact of recycling on the overall situation will be minimal. The designers of schemes, contractors and the minerals industry should nevertheless aim for the best use of the total aggregates resources by minimising wastage and avoiding the use of higher quality materials where lower grade materials would suffice.

POLICY MIN 1 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

To assess the need for the mineral resource against the need to protect and conserve the environment.

Restoration work at a sand pit beside Ballynabvee Rath, Strabane.



important nature conservation sites, historic buildings and ancient monuments along with their settings.

Mineral developments within or in close proximity to areas such as Areas of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserves which have been declared or proposed for declaration on the basis of their scientific value in regard to flora and fauna, etc, will not normally be given permission where they would prejudice the essential character of such areas. The same will apply to areas which have been or are to be designated, scheduled or listed because they contain features of archaeological or historic interest.

The Department will balance the case for a particular mineral working proposal against the need to protect and conserve the environment, taking account of all relevant environmental, economic and other considerations. In all areas, decisions on mineral applications will be made with regard to the preservation of good quality agricultural land, tree and vegetation cover, wildlife habitats, natural features of interest in the landscape and sites of archaeological and historic interest.

Extensions to existing mineral workings which minimise environmental disturbance in the countryside will normally be preferred to new workings on green field sites.

Permission for the extraction of peat for sale will only be granted where the proposals are consistent with the protection of boglands valuable to nature conservation interests, and with the protection of landscape quality particularly in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Where applicable, measures designed to prevent pollution of rivers, watercourses and ground water should be included in applications for mineral extraction and processing plant, including settlement ponds. The provision of reliable protective measures will be an important factor in assessing the acceptability of the extraction proposal.

POLICY MIN 2 VISUAL IMPLICATIONS

To have regard to the visual implications of minerals extraction.

Visual intrusion is often the most significant environmental impact associated with mineral workings. Where permission is granted landscape quality will be protected by attaching conditions designed to avoid or mitigate visual disturbance. To minimise their visual impact in the landscape workings should, where possible, be located to take advantage of existing landforms and features. Particular regard will be paid to the preservation of skylines and to the proposed location of plant, stockpiles and overburden/waste within the working.

It is a fact of geology that some of the more beautiful parts of the countryside such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and areas of high scenic value contain easily workable reserves of rock and sand and gravel. It would be unrealistic to dispense with essential sources of supply. Nevertheless applications for new mineral workings and extensions to existing workings in these areas will be subject to rigorous examination with particular attention being given to the landscape implications of the proposals.

**POLICY MIN 3
AREAS OF
CONSTRAINT**

To identify Areas of Constraint on Mineral Developments.

If for visual, conservation or other reasons, areas require to be protected from mineral developments they will be identified as Areas of Constraint on Mineral Developments in development plans.

Areas of Constraint may form all or part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or be outside an AONB altogether. They may include or be part of areas designated, listed or otherwise protected for their scientific value or archaeological or historic interest. Within these Areas of Constraint there will be a presumption against the granting of planning permission for the extraction and/or processing of minerals. Exceptions to this policy may be made where the proposed operations are short-term and the environmental implications are not significant. In such cases, on-site processing of the excavated material is unlikely to be permitted.

**POLICY MIN 4
VALUABLE
MINERALS**

Applications to exploit minerals, limited in occurrence and with some uncommon or valuable property, will be considered on their merits.

From time to time minerals may be discovered which are particularly valuable to the economy. Oil, gas and lignite are examples. Exploitation may create environmental effects which are particular to the methods of extraction or treatment of that mineral. There will not be a presumption against their exploitation in any area. In considering a proposal where the site is within a statutory policy area due weight will be given to the reason for the statutory zoning.

**POLICY MIN 5
MINERAL
RESERVES**

Surface development which would prejudice future exploitation of valuable mineral reserves will not be permitted.

Where there are mineral reserves, eg, lignite (brown coal) which are considered to be of particular value to the economy and those reserves have been proven to acceptable standards, surface development which would prejudice their exploitation will not be permitted. Policy Areas in respect of such minerals will, where appropriate, be defined in development plans.

**POLICY MIN 6
SAFETY AND
AMENITY**

To have particular regard to the safety and amenity of the occupants of developments in close proximity to mineral workings.



Quarrying near a farm complex at Annacramph, Armagh.

The continuous and disruptive nature of mineral operations make them “bad neighbours” particularly of housing. The potential for conflict will be reduced by requiring a degree of separation to be kept between mineral workings and other developments particularly where mineral operations involve blasting. The distance required will vary according to the nature of the mineral operations and neighbouring developments.

Permission will not normally be granted for mineral workings and other developments to be in close proximity where potential sources of nuisance are judged to be incompatible with standards of amenity acceptable to the Department and other relevant authorities. Where permission is

granted for a mineral working in close proximity to other developments, conditions designed to mitigate disturbance from the working will, where appropriate, be attached to the permission.

In relation to proposals to extract minerals by underground methods, careful consideration will be paid to the effect such developments are likely to have on the stability of the surface lands directly above and surrounding the mine areas. Where there are existing buildings, in particular housing, on these surface lands planning permission for mining will not normally be permitted.

Conversely, proposals to develop the surface lands directly above or surrounding areas from which minerals have been or are being extracted by underground methods will be carefully considered in relation to the attendant risks. Developments which involve the erection of buildings will not normally be permitted in the interests of public safety.

POLICY MIN 7 TRAFFIC

To take account of the safety and convenience of road users and the amenity of persons living on roads close to the site of proposed operations.

Mineral resources can occur where the public road network is unsuitable for the volume of heavy traffic which mineral developments can generate. Where traffic from such a development would prejudice the safety and convenience of road users planning permission will normally be refused unless the roads can be satisfactorily improved. If the traffic using an access from a proposed mineral development would prejudice the safety and convenience of road users planning permission will normally be refused, unless a satisfactory access can be provided.

When considering applications for new mineral developments with access onto the main traffic route network, particular attention will be paid to the importance of the mineral to the economy of the area, alternative sources of the mineral, the availability of an alternative access and the suitability of the access having regard to the standards of sightlines, radii, gradients, etc.

Vehicles transporting materials from a mineral site may be directed to use particular routes in order to avoid environmental disturbance to people living adjacent to other roads in the locality.

Where appropriate, conditions will be applied to prevent dirt on the wheels of vehicles being deposited on the public road.

POLICY MIN 8 RESTORATION

To require mineral workings to be restored at the earliest opportunity.

Restoration is required to make mineral workings fit for beneficial use and environmentally acceptable following extraction. The standard of restoration has generally improved in recent years and there are a number of uses to which sites can be restored. The preferred types of reclamation and after use depend on the characteristics of the deposits, nature of excavation, availability of fill materials, the surrounding landscape, the needs of the local community and the potential for nature conservation on the site.

Applications for the extraction of minerals must include satisfactory restoration proposals. Where practicable such proposals should provide for progressive restoration of sites.



Progressive restoration of a sand pit near Donemana, Strabane.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland has much to offer as a tourist destination - in particular the quality of the rural landscape and its rich cultural heritage. A relatively unspoilt coastline, attractive mountain areas and a wealth of lakes and rivers create a scenic beauty which places Northern Ireland among some of the best potential holiday destinations. Many of the natural attractions are of international acclaim including the Giants Causeway, the Mountains of Mourne and the Fermanagh Lakeland.



Tourism makes an important contribution to the Northern Ireland economy with income derived from tourist activity being distributed across many economic sectors. Tourism can also be of particular significance in the diversification of the rural economy and in the regeneration of certain towns and villages.

At the same time there is a growing concern about the impact of tourism on the environment and on local communities. Tourism can damage and destroy the assets it seeks to exploit, in particular through excessive visitor numbers, inappropriate development, various types of pollution and other forms of adverse impact. The relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed so that tourism continues to support local communities and remains viable in the long term.

POLICY TOUT 1 TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

To give favourable consideration to proposals for tourist development which are appropriate in terms of nature, scale and location.

The outstanding quality and variety of the natural and built environment in Northern Ireland underlines the importance of sustainable tourism development which should not damage the resource or prejudice its future tourist value. Tourists can be attracted by a wide range of features - areas of high scenic quality, heritage towns and cities, traditional seaside resorts, archaeological sites and monuments and historic buildings, gardens and landscaped parks and demesnes, and by our industrial heritage.

Through the development plan process the Department will seek to facilitate and protect the tourist industry. Where appropriate area plans will contain a tourist development strategy tailored to the needs and assets of the particular locality. Such a strategy may indicate:

- how future tourist demand can best be accommodated;
- the protection of key tourist assets;
- the identification of potential growth areas and activities;
- environmental considerations resulting from tourist development; and
- the contribution of tourism to economic development, conservation and urban regeneration.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

Within Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas, proposals for tourist development will be balanced against the objectives of protecting these areas and keeping new development to a minimum. Appropriate tourist development proposals may be approved. Within some Countryside Policy Areas, there are particularly precious areas, for example, high mountain areas or certain stretches of coast, where no development would be acceptable. Such areas which should be left in their undeveloped state for the appreciation of both visitors and the local population, will normally be identified in area plans.

All proposals for tourist developments will be judged on their contribution to the tourism industry and the degree to which they contribute to the conservation of the natural, man-made and built heritage. Advice will be taken from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and other appropriate bodies. Such developments will need to be acceptable in terms of the scale and design of any new building, the level of activity and type of use, and integration into the local environment.

New tourist attractions should have regard to the rural character or heritage of an area - Gortin History Park.



New tourist attractions which have regard to the rural character or heritage of the area, such as the opening of historic houses or gardens to the public, farm visits, museums and interpretation centres will generally be looked on sympathetically.

The Department recognises that in some scenic areas, where development must be strictly curtailed, there may be a need, exceptionally, for a “one-off” unique facility to meet a particular tourist need. Such unique proposals will be considered on their merits taking into account need, location, siting and an assessment of environmental impacts.

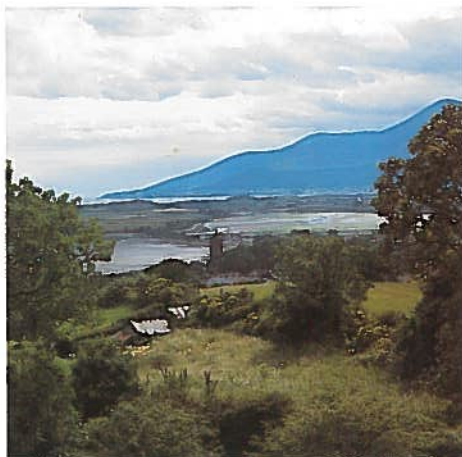
Where permission is granted for tourist development, the highest standards of design and landscaping will be required.

The promotion and enhancement of existing tourist attractions is seen as significant to the development of tourism in Northern Ireland. In assessing the acceptability of any proposal which seeks to consolidate and enhance existing attractions, the balance between the economic benefits and possible environmental costs will be an important consideration.

POLICY TOU 2 PROTECTION OF TOURIST ASSETS

**To protect key
environmental assets
for the tourist industry.**

Many areas which are important to the tourist industry owe their attraction to the exceptional quality of the landscape or particular features of the built environment. Examples include Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas and historical and archaeological sites. It is important however to protect the qualities of such areas from unnecessary or excessive development. There is a delicate balance in many cases between exploitation of a natural resource and overdevelopment which would destroy its intrinsic character and quality.



Many areas owe their attraction to the exceptional quality of the landscape.

This Strategy sets out policies to protect various areas of quality landscape and important features of the natural and man-made environment. In some cases, tourist development may be acceptable in an area of stricter planning control - see policy CON 5. Other individual tourist assets may not be protected by such policies. In all situations the policy will be to protect important assets for the tourist industry, including scenic routes, and to prevent their damage or destruction for short term gain and exploitation.

**POLICY TOU 3
TOURIST
ACCOMMODATION**

To give favourable consideration to proposals for Hotels, Guesthouses and Self-catering accommodation in existing settlements and in appropriate rural locations.

Weaknesses, in terms of shortcomings of quality and quantity, have been identified in the accommodation sector in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board is seeking to encourage improvement in both the range and quality of accommodation available. While much of the accommodation needs may be met within existing settlements it is accepted the nature of tourism is such that a wider choice of locations is required.

Within Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas planning permission may be granted for the sympathetic conversion of existing buildings or the change of use and minor extension to buildings to provide tourist accommodation. Proposals for new-build tourist accommodation may be acceptable in some locations provided a special tourist need, or exceptional benefit to the tourist industry, can be demonstrated.

Outside Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas proposals for tourist accommodation will normally be acceptable in the countryside where they are farm-based or where they meet a clearly identified tourist need. It is vital that the scale and location of any new development is appropriate and that the design and materials to be used are in keeping with the locality. The loss of amenity by local residents will also be an important consideration.



It will be necessary for applicants to identify and detail a positive need for a particular type of tourist accommodation in any area.

Hotel development can bring economic and employment benefits for the local community and support a range of amenities. A major hotel development with function and conference facilities which serves as a social focal point for the community would rarely be acceptable in the open countryside as a result of the scale of the development and level of activity generated.

In some locations outside Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas a well-conceived hotel development which meets a clearly identified tourist need may be acceptable. The location, scale and environmental implications of the proposed development will be the critical considerations - see policy DES 5.



The design and materials to be used should be in keeping with the locality - Ely Island chalets.

The provision of additional good quality self-catering accommodation is a development priority for the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

Northern Ireland has a wealth of old rural houses built in a traditional and vernacular style. The renovation of such houses to form self-catering holiday accommodation would ensure their continued use and may be acceptable provided the development meets normal planning and environmental considerations.

Often proposals for self-catering accommodation are in areas in which the provision of permanent housing would be contrary to policy on development in the countryside - see policy GB/CPA 1. Where such a proposal is acceptable on the basis of meeting tourist need, it is essential that the accommodation intended for tourists is retained as such. To this end, the Department will attach a condition requiring that the accommodation be used for holiday occupation only and not for permanent residential accommodation.

POLICY T0U 4 CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES

To consider proposals for small-scale touring caravan and camping sites in terms of their locational merits with regard to landscape quality, siting and availability of screening.

The provision of sites for caravans and camping is an important element in the accommodation of holiday-makers. The main planning issue raised by the use of land for stationing caravans is that of countryside protection. Caravan sites can be very obtrusive features in the landscape detracting from its scenic quality and amenity.

Parts of the coast have been adversely affected by the development of static caravan sites, which are seen by many as ugly, obtrusive and regimented. The case for any new static caravan development, or the expansion of existing facilities, will be assessed against the need to protect the coastal zone and countryside. The creation and extension of static caravan parks on open or exposed sites, especially adjacent to the coastline, will be discouraged. This will be particularly important in environmentally vulnerable areas.

Appropriately sited small-scale extensions to existing static caravan sites may be permitted where, by rounding-off and improvement to landscaping and layout, the result would be a less intrusive site.

Small-scale touring caravan parks and camping sites are distinct from static caravan sites by being seasonal in character, leaving relatively little evidence of their usage in the winter months. Permission may be granted for touring sites at appropriate locations, where they are effectively screened and not visually intrusive. Access to sites should be carefully planned and should be designed to allow safe movement for cars and caravans to and from the site.

The demand for sites has concentrated traditionally on the most popular holiday areas, particularly on the coast, although there is some demand inland. The policy for new touring caravan parks in coastal Countryside Policy Areas is set out in policy CO 6.

POLICY T0U 5 ADVANCE DIRECTION SIGNS

Signs directing visitors to tourist attractions will generally be permitted, subject to amenity and safety criteria.

The tourist industry, being so dependent on visitors, has a recognised need for advance signs directing people to the facilities available. Signs may be provided for permanent places or facilities to which the people make excursions for sightseeing, entertainment or for historical or cultural purposes. Signing may also be available for tourist information points, leisure drives, camping, caravan and picnic sites, youth hostels and certain other facilities. Where considered appropriate such signs will be erected by the Department, will be of a standard format and will be at the developer's expense. The erection of signs other than those provided by the Department will not normally be acceptable. The main criteria for the use of tourist signs are as follows:

- the attraction must be recognised by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and deemed to merit signing;
- the distance at which attractions may be signed and the standard of road on which signs may be provided will be determined generally by reference to visitor numbers;
- traffic will be directed only on to a route considered suitable;
- minimum signage will be provided particularly where clear guidance is given by existing direction signs. Exceptionally more extensive signing may be permitted on traffic management or safety grounds;
- signs will conform with the current design rules for traffic signs; and
- signs shall be sited with due regard to the amenity of the locality.



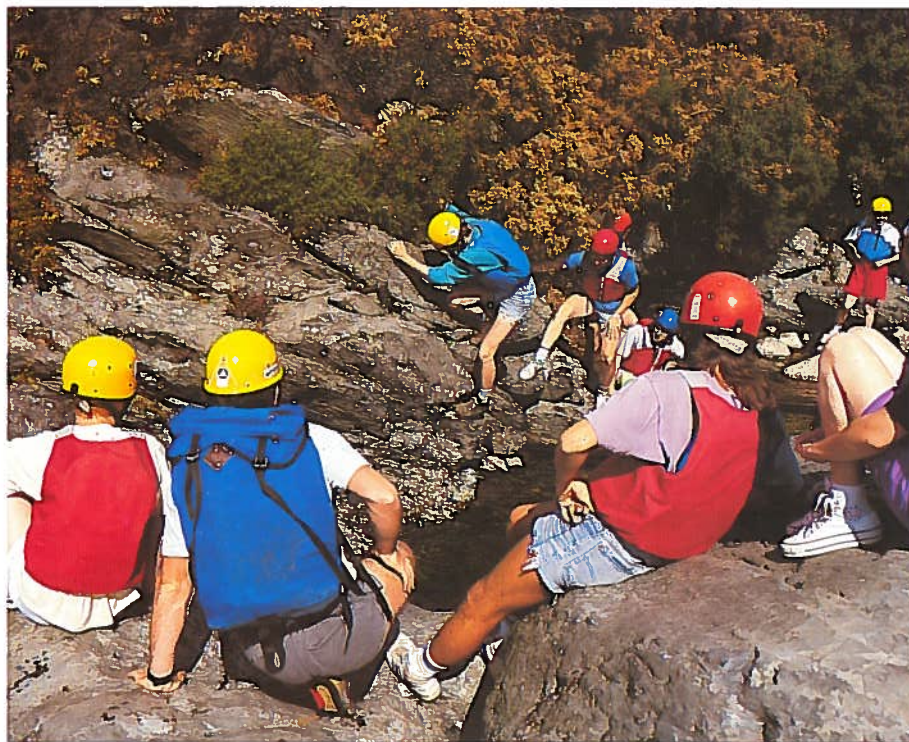
Further detailed guidance is available from Divisional Offices of the Department's Roads Service.

Sport & Recreation

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

There has been an increase in participation in sport and recreation due mainly to people having more leisure time with flexible and part-time working hours. There is a realisation of the benefits and enjoyment to be gained from a fit and healthy lifestyle. There is a need, therefore, to accommodate this increase in demand and to facilitate new provision.

The demand is for both formal recreational facilities, such as playing fields, sports halls and golf courses and more informal activities such as walking, riding or simply enjoying the countryside.



POLICY REC 1 RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE AND AMENITY LAND

To safeguard existing recreational open spaces and amenity land within settlements and make provision within development plans for new facilities.

Informal open space or "greenspace" is a key element of urban structure.

Indications are that leisure time and the demand for recreation facilities are likely to increase. Recreational open space and amenity land can come in any variety of size, shape or form and be either in public or private ownership. It is part of the function of the planning system to ensure, through the preparation of development plans, that adequate land is allocated both for organised sport and for informal recreation. The District Councils, voluntary sport, education and commercial providers all generate programmes for recreation/sport development and their needs will be taken into account in the preparation of development plans.



The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommends a minimum standard for outdoor playing space, commonly referred to as the "NPFA 6 Acre Standard". This standard, is the basis for the allocation of land for recreation use, taking into account mobility, accessibility and local participation rates, both current and latent.

Informal open space or “greenspace” is a key element of urban structure in that it helps to maintain and improve the environmental quality of urban areas providing space for recreation for residents and assists nature conservation, and the preservation of archaeological sites and monuments. Consideration of proposals for the development of open space for other purposes will take into account the long term impact of the loss of such space.

It is important that people, particularly children and elderly people should have access to open space close to where they live and it is considered that all residential areas should, where possible, have adequate provision of open space. The Department will liaise with District Councils and seek to ensure appropriate provision as an integral part of the design process.

POLICY REC 2 OUTDOOR RECREATION

Proposals for outdoor recreational uses which rely primarily on the use of open land will normally be approved in appropriate rural locations.

Some recreation needs, by their very nature cannot be accommodated in an urban area. The acceptability of countryside recreation activities depends upon the effect of the proposal on the environment including nature conservation and man-made heritage; the effect on the physical appearance of the land, the scale of any associated or ancillary built development, and access and parking arrangements.

The long term existence of countryside recreation activities depends upon the existence of finite ‘natural’ resources. It is important to ensure that recreational activities are generally sustainable in that they do not conflict with the overriding requirement to preserve and enhance the environment for future generations.

Government policy has sought to encourage diversification in the use of agricultural land. This has generated proposals for the change of use of open land to sports and leisure activities. Some of these recreational uses can be located on the urban edge where they can help to define the town and contribute to its setting and also assist environmental improvements in degraded areas.



Golf courses can provide for recreation, but they can also have a significant impact upon the countryside. They should be located and designed in harmony with the surrounding countryside and to conserve the natural environment. Each proposal should contain full details of the site and of the impact of the development proposed, including the effect on public rights of way. Any significant associated developments, such as hotels, will be considered on their merits. Special care will be taken in considering applications in or near Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Areas of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, Green Belts, Countryside Policy Areas and historic landscapes. The Department proposes to produce a Development Control Advice Note on Golf Courses providing advice on the planning criteria to be applied when an application for this form of development is being considered.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

The keeping and riding of horses for recreational purposes is increasingly popular in many parts of the countryside also. Outdoor participatory recreational uses such as riding schools will normally be considered appropriate in areas subject to policy restraint. Activities which relate to spectator sports such as show jumping will normally be inappropriate due to the scale and nature of the activity generated - see policy AG 3.

Outdoor recreational uses such as motor car and motorcycle racing, including trials, can be a major cause of contention with noise as the principal planning objection. The General Development Order allows for the temporary use of land for such activities for a period of 14 days in total in any calendar year. Where there is a clear demand for noisy sports activities it is important to identify suitable sites which will minimise conflicts with other uses. Criteria for the suitability of sites for regular use will include the potential impact of the activity on the site itself, on neighbouring land and land-use and on nearby occupiers as well as any other relevant environmental considerations.

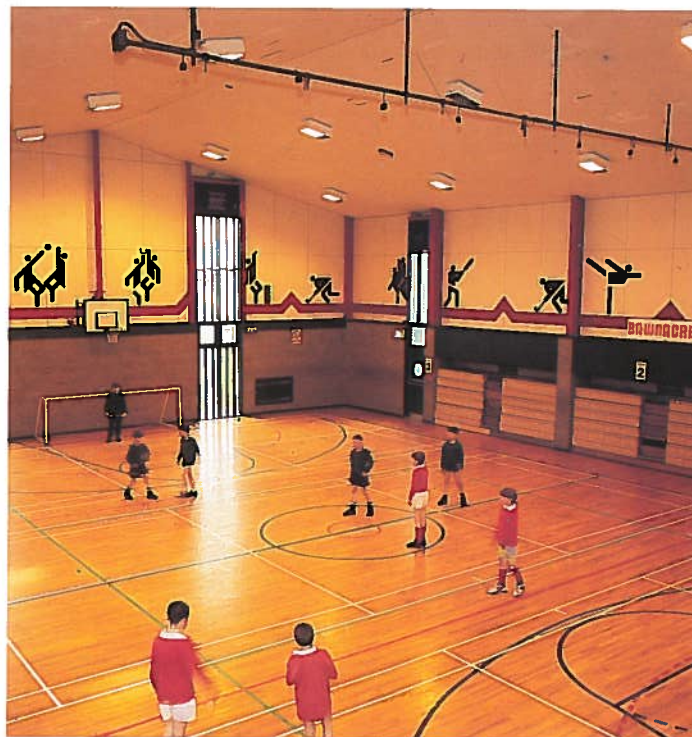
POLICY REC 3 INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

Facilities for indoor or primarily indoor recreation will not normally be permitted in the open countryside.

Sometimes it is proposed to meet the leisure needs of urban populations through the provision of indoor recreational facilities in the neighbouring countryside. Large scale recreational buildings such as multiple use leisure and sports centres are not appropriate in the open countryside.

Buildings for such purposes would specifically fail to meet the criteria for development in Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas and will generally also fail to meet the design standards required in the countryside.

Such provision should normally be located in a settlement where it is readily accessible to a large section of the potential catchment population and the building is more readily assimilated into its setting.



*Bawnacre Recreation Centre,
Irvinestown.*

Often existing or proposed outdoor recreation uses require associated buildings eg pavilions or clubhouses. Such buildings will normally be acceptable provided they are of an appropriate scale and ancillary to the outdoor use. In appropriate circumstances they should be grouped with existing buildings - see also policies PSU 4 and DES 5 and 10.

**POLICY REC 4
INFORMAL
RECREATION**

To improve and extend the opportunities for the public to enjoy the countryside.

Countryside recreation is the term used to describe informal use of the countryside. It includes activities such as walking, country drives, cycling, horse riding, visits to country parks and to historic parks and gardens, and picnicking. People visit the countryside in their local areas and as tourists; indeed countryside recreation is a major tourism activity throughout Northern Ireland.

Countryside recreation can create a demand for facilities such as car parks, picnic areas and pathways. Such facilities should be carefully designed and sited so as not to harm the attractiveness or character of the area, or its natural and man-made heritage. In some cases facilities may need to be limited so that a particular site is not over-used.

Glenariff Forest Park



In consultation with District Councils, the Department will facilitate greater public access to the countryside and seek to ensure that public rights-of-way are not obstructed by new development - see policy SP 9.

**POLICY REC 5
WATER
RECREATION USES**

Proposals for recreational development associated with watersports on lakes and waterways will be given favourable consideration where the development does not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of the area or lead to water pollution.

Water related sport is an important leisure activity and our lakes and waterways are important recreational resources. Water recreation can vary from the more tranquil uses such as angling and sailing to noisy watersports including power boat uses. Management plans for particular water areas deal with the compatibility of such varying demands.



Development associated with watersports uses such as slipways, boathouses and parking areas/access roads requires planning permission. It is the general intention of the Department to conserve the character of inland lakes and waterways and to protect them and their surroundings from development which may be detrimental to this character.

Northern Ireland has an extensive former canal system which provides an important potential recreational and tourist resource. Development proposals which would prejudice the use and future development of this system will be resisted.

Water related sport is an important leisure activity.

Conservation

NATURE CONSERVATION

Northern Ireland has a rich variety of habitats containing numerous plant and animal species. Over many decades, however, development, changes in agricultural techniques and other environmental changes have continued to threaten this diversity of wildlife habitats. Development can damage the habitat of individual sites. Through factors such as disturbance, alterations to drainage and pollution, it can also affect the ecology of a much wider area.

The Government attaches great importance to various international obligations it has assumed in the area of nature conservation. There is widespread public support for the protection of important habitats. A key task is to ensure the effective conservation of wildlife and natural features while making adequate provision for development and economic growth.



A major component of the nature conservation strategy is the designation and protection of sites which are of significant nature conservation importance. The protection of key sites in itself is however not sufficient. Account will therefore be taken of the need for nature conservation in the production of development plans and in decisions on individual development proposals.

A new Development Control Advice Note entitled "Nature Conservation" is to be published setting out the current policy of the Department on planning matters concerned with nature conservation. It will also provide background information about the relevant legislation and various categories of area designation.

POLICY CON 1 AREAS OF NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE

To prevent development which would adversely affect areas of nature conservation importance.

The conservation and enhancement of the natural environment will be encouraged and promoted. Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Nature Reserves (NRs) will be protected and development likely to adversely affect them will not normally be permitted. Development which would adversely affect other defined areas of nature conservation importance will also not normally be permitted.

Some sites are particularly important because what they exemplify is rare and irreplaceable; such features of scientific, educational or research interest, once destroyed, cannot be recreated. Others are important as representative examples of their type on a local, national or international scale. Designated sites will, as far as possible, be protected from damage or destruction.

The designation of sites does not form part of the development plan process. Some sites may be referred to in the text of plans or may be indicated on maps for information purposes. Others will not be publicised in order to protect the fragile interests in them.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

Designated sites made under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order 1985 include:



Areas of nature conservation importance will be protected - Peatlands Park.

- National Nature Reserves - sites of national and sometimes international importance usually managed by the Department's Environment Service or by agreement with a voluntary conservation body;
- Nature Reserves - sites of regional importance including sites particularly appropriate for educational, research or public information purposes;
- Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) - land which in the Department's opinion is of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features;
- Marine Nature Reserves - inter-tidal or sub-littoral areas established for the conservation or study of areas of marine flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest.

Under the terms of the Wildlife Order 1985, Wildlife Refuges may be established in locations where some particular aspect of the fauna or flora requires a degree of special protection from disturbance.

In considering proposals for development affecting a designated site, the potential damage to species, opportunities for alternative siting or potential mitigating measures, the possibilities for replacement sites, opportunities to enhance nature conservation and the regional importance of the proposal, will be taken into account.

Development outside, but close to, the boundaries of a protected site may have serious repercussions within it, even to the point of destroying its scientific value. Wetlands (including marshes and estuaries as well as rivers and lakes) are particularly vulnerable to the effects of drainage, alterations to the water-table, water-borne pollution and other developments within catchment areas. In considering applications in such locations, the Department will bear in mind the possible threats.

The Government attaches great importance to the various international obligations it has assumed and which now underlie the legislative framework for conservation. The relevant international measures include:

- the Ramsar Convention on the Conservation of Wetlands of International Importance especially as Natural Habitat;
- the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC);
- the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats;
- the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals;
- EC Directive on the Assessment of the Effects of certain public and private projects on the Environment (85/337/EEC);

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

- the World Heritage Convention;
- the Biodiversity Convention; and
- the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna (92/43/EEC).

In many cases the Department will fulfil the international obligations through the process of statutory site designation. Other obligations are more wide ranging and the Department will take due account of all the international obligations in the general processing of planning applications.

The Department will bear in mind its commitment to the wise use of wetlands in considering any application relating to any wetland site, whether or not the site is listed under the Ramsar Convention.

POLICY CON 2 NATURE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

To pay due regard to nature conservation issues when considering proposals for development which might adversely affect habitats, species or features worthy of conservation.

However important the network of protected sites may be, it is recognised that it will cover only a tiny proportion of the land area. They cannot therefore contain more than a representative sample of what is most valuable in the natural resource; indeed, most of the rare species protected under the Wildlife Order are not confined to Nature Reserves or Areas of Special Scientific Interest, but occur elsewhere. There is a gradation of nature conservation interest throughout the countryside and in many urban areas.

Survival of the entire range of the Province's wildlife populations and the maintenance of the full diversity of its geological and physiographical features cannot be achieved solely by site protection, but will require the wise management of the total land resource. In addition great importance will be attached to the wider conservation responsibilities of international obligations.

The preparation of all development plans will include an environmental appraisal in order that due regard is paid to nature conservation issues in the formulation of proposals.



Careful consideration will be given to proposals that may threaten protected species.

Each Area or Local Plan will include among its objectives the conservation of natural resources and conservation requirements will be integrated into the Plan as a whole.

Nature conservation will be considered in assessing planning applications generally. Careful consideration will be given to the nature conservation implications of any development proposal where it is known that the proposal may threaten any protected species of flora and fauna, any area of wetland as defined in the Ramsar Convention, or any other significant feature of nature conservation value. Wildlife habitats and physical features can sometimes be protected by the careful siting and treatment of developments. In some cases, conditions will be attached to a planning permission to minimise or compensate for the impact on wildlife or physical features.

POLICY CON 3 TREES AND WOODLANDS

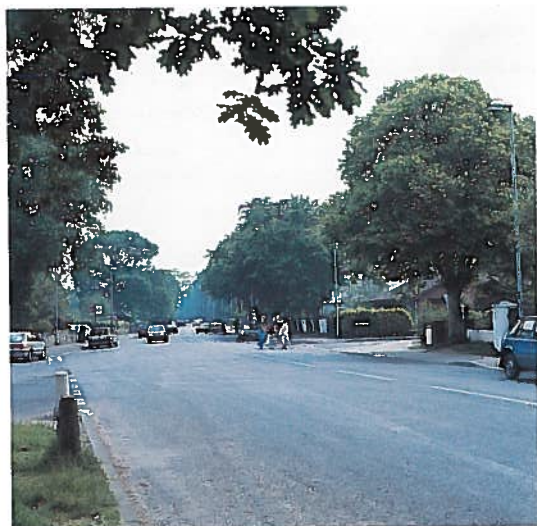
To protect individual trees, groups of trees and woodland areas of particular importance because of their nature conservation value or their contribution to the amenity of a particular locality.

Northern Ireland is currently one of the least wooded countries in Europe. Over the last fifty years the amount of tree cover on farmland has decreased. Many of the existing trees and woodlands are old and in a state of decline. Trees on the other hand are of immense importance, providing a strong visual element which helps create the varied, interesting and attractive landscape so typical of large areas of Northern Ireland. Landowners and developers will therefore be encouraged to retain existing trees where practicable and to plant additional trees.

Careful consideration will be given to the potential impact of proposed development upon trees. Wherever possible, existing trees, woodlands, important hedgerows and other natural features will be protected by the imposition of conditions on the grant of planning permission. Opportunities will also be taken to secure new tree planting in development schemes. Where development involves the loss of trees, permission will normally be conditional on a replanting scheme with trees of appropriate numbers, species and size.

Tree Preservation Orders may be made by the Department to:

- reinforce a condition, for the preservation of existing trees, which has been attached to a planning approval;
- protect trees of outstanding natural beauty or of special value to a particular area, even though no direct threat exists to them - for example, where trees make an important contribution to the character of a Conservation Area;
- ensure the retention of trees not protected by a condition of a planning permission which are threatened and whose loss would significantly lower amenity. Special attention will be given to proposed land zonings or other areas where a threat to trees by building development can be anticipated;
- protect a woodland area by requiring trees to be replanted after they have been felled with the Department's consent. This provision is not designed to interfere with the normal forestry operations of landowners who grow trees as a crop, but to preserve woodlands of amenity value by securing the replacement of trees which have been felled.



Trees provide a strong visual element - Eglinton.

HERITAGE

The Northern Ireland landscape is almost entirely man-made or man-modified, the outcome of some 9,000 years of human activity which has left us with a rich legacy of archaeological and historical features. Tombs and forts, castles and churches, townhouses and farmhouses, grand architecture and vernacular buildings and industrial features are all significant sources of information about our past, and often landmarks in our present surroundings. They are part of our common heritage.

The modern landscape and townscape is the product of continuing change, and will continue to change in response to the needs of society. However it is important to protect the archaeological, historical and architectural legacy for the enjoyment and understanding of future generations. The Department has the responsibility for identifying, recording and protecting the man-made and built heritage through scheduling historic monuments, listing buildings of special architectural interest and designating Conservation Areas and other areas of heritage significance.

POLICY CON 4 BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

To conserve the character of buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest.

Conservation needs have to be balanced with development pressures. In some cases protection will be essential, in others it is sufficient to ensure that changes are appropriate for the particular situation. In dealing with historic buildings it is also important to retain as much of the original fabric of the building while extending the working life of the property.

Northern Ireland contains many buildings of special architectural or historic merit, important for their intrinsic value and for their contribution to the character and quality not only of settlements but also to the open countryside. The continued conservation of such buildings and their settings is therefore of considerable importance in retaining the quality of the built environment.

In dealing with proposals for development which would affect listed buildings, the architectural quality or historic interest of the building or its setting will be considered together with their importance to the character of the landscape or townscape.

There will be a general presumption in favour of the preservation of all buildings listed as being of architectural or historic interest. Only in the most exceptional circumstances will consent be granted for demolition or partial demolition. Retention and repair is always preferable to replacement. Proposals to retain only the facade of a building will not normally be acceptable.

Alterations to a listed building may sometimes be necessary in order to repair, modernise or adapt the building. Such alterations may be acceptable but will be expected to:

- maintain the architectural character and integrity of the building;
- preserve the original fabric;
- preserve and retain external and internal features considered to be of architectural or historic importance; and
- use traditional materials; the use of non-traditional materials will not normally be permitted.

The conservation of listed buildings is of considerable importance in retaining the quality of the built environment.

Alterations or extensions which are unsympathetic to the character, structure or appearance of listed buildings will not be permitted.



The continued use of listed buildings will be encouraged. Proposals for the change of use of a listed building may be acceptable - especially where they help prolong its viable use or enhance its appearance. Uses which would detract from the appearance or character of the building or its setting or result in a loss of architectural integrity will not normally be permitted.

The setting of a listed building is often of great importance. As a result, development which is likely to adversely affect the setting of a listed building will not normally be permitted.

Where necessary the Department will use its powers under the Planning Order to deal with unauthorised works to a listed building or the carrying out of urgent works to preserve such a building.

POLICY CON 5 CONSERVATION AREAS

To preserve and where possible enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas.



Many of our towns and villages contain areas worthy of conservation - Bessbrook Conservation Area.

Many of our towns and villages contain areas of architectural or historic interest which retain a particular character considered worthy of conservation. Already many have been designated as Conservation Areas and other areas will be identified and designated where appropriate. Existing designated areas will be reviewed periodically and adjustments to boundaries made as necessary. Great importance is attached not only to preservation of the existing character of such areas but also the promotion of their economic well-being and development. Conservation Area status may be used as a mechanism to facilitate enhancement of the townscape character and aid the process of regeneration.

As each Conservation Area has its own unique style and character, specific policies and proposals for the conservation and enhancement of the area will be set out at the designation stage. Proposals for development will be assessed against the specific policies for that particular Conservation Area. In general, development will be expected to make a positive contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the area. Modern design may be acceptable where it is sympathetic to the existing character of the area.

Applications for development in or close to existing Conservation Areas will be considered in light of the need to retain and, where possible, protect and enhance the unique character and buildings of the area. Development which would be detrimental to the character of a Conservation Area or its setting or which would have an adverse impact on important views into or out of the area will not be acceptable.

Many buildings, not just those which have been listed, make a contribution to the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. Others make little or no contribution to the area. In some cases a modern development of sympathetic design and character may be appropriate.

Outline planning applications for development in Conservation Areas will not normally be acceptable. The Department will require all applications to include:

- full detailed drawings illustrating the proposal in its setting; and
- sufficient information on materials, colour and landscaping to allow the Department to make a full assessment of the proposal.

Demolition

Proposals for the demolition of unlisted buildings within Conservation Areas will be considered in the light of:

- the condition of the existing property;
- the contribution made by the existing building to the character and appearance of the area; and
- the potential contribution of the proposed development to the character and appearance of the area.

Consent for demolition will normally only be granted where the Department has approved or is in the process of approving an acceptable scheme for a replacement development. Consent for demolition will normally be tied by condition to implementation of the approved scheme.

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Proposals which involve retention of the facade only may be acceptable provided the scale of development is appropriate for the area and the scheme can be implemented without serious risk to the retained structure.

Alterations

Alterations and extensions to buildings in or close to a Conservation Area which would prejudice the character of the area will not be acceptable. Extensions should where possible be located on rear elevations and should not make an undue impact on the scale or proportions of the existing property. The setting of the existing building together with the character and appearance of adjacent properties should not be prejudiced.

Alterations and extensions which affect the roof of a property can be particularly incongruous. Such extensions will only be acceptable where they are in keeping with the existing buildings and the architectural form of the surrounding area.

In most circumstances the retention of existing features such as doors or windows will be required. Replacement of such features must be of appropriate design and be constructed in traditional materials. Aluminium and uPVC will not normally be acceptable.

Change of Use

Applications for the change of use of a property within a Conservation Area may be acceptable. Consideration will be given to both general land use policies and the contribution of the existing use and the impact of the proposed use on the character of the Conservation Area. Uses considered detrimental to the character, fabric or appearance of an area will normally be resisted.

Where possible developers will be encouraged to take opportunities to restore buildings to their original appearance and replace historic features which have been lost. Original shopfronts within conservation areas should where possible be retained and restored. It is important that new shopfronts are sympathetic to the setting and relate in scale, proportions and material to the remainder of the building and the local street scene. Shopfronts which span more than one building frontage will not normally be acceptable.

Advertisements which are inappropriate in terms of scale or materials will be resisted as will signs which would detract from the architectural quality of the building on which it is displayed or the area in general. The proliferation of signs will not be acceptable.

Enhancement

An enhancement strategy will be prepared for each Conservation Area. In it proposals will be set out to improve the environment within the area, encourage regeneration and promote the area as an attractive place to live or work. Proposals may include the landscaping of open spaces, the removal of overhead lines, and improvements to paved areas and street furniture consistent with the retention of the unique character of the area.

Where necessary the Department will consider making a direction under Article 4 of the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993 restricting permitted development rights within the Conservation Area. This will only be necessary where it is judged that the exercise of permitted development rights could lead to a serious erosion of the character of the area. In all cases such a direction will only withdraw those specific permitted development rights which are considered to be inappropriate.

The Department will consider ways to give greater protection to trees within Conservation Areas. Where other areas of particular townscape character are identified policies will be identified to maintain or enhance that character.

**POLICY CON 6
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SITES AND
MONUMENTS**

To safeguard features of the historic landscape including archaeological sites and monuments, and their settings.

Archaeological remains can provide evidence, sometimes the only evidence, of thousands of years of human activity and settlement in Northern Ireland. They are all individually important, and can have group value as an area of historic landscape. Some are distinctive landmarks, others are scarcely visible except to the trained eye or are no longer visible above ground but survive beneath modern fields and settlements. They are fragile, and vulnerable to damage and destruction. They are a finite and diminishing resource which, once destroyed, cannot be replaced. Every archaeological site or monument which is destroyed means loss of part of the record of our past.

The work of scheduling historic monuments continues. The fact that an archaeological site or monument has not received specific statutory protection does not diminish its individual archaeological importance, or its significance as an element in the historic landscape.

Development plans will contain policies for the protection and, where appropriate, the enhancement of archaeological sites and monuments and their settings, and will, where appropriate:

- indicate measures to protect the surroundings of State Care monuments;
- take account of opportunities to enhance specific monuments;
- ensure that monuments, within development limits, which are to be preserved, are appropriately zoned; and
- identify areas within historic settlements which may require mitigation (which may include excavation) in the context of redevelopment.



Archaeological remains are part of our common heritage - Lagananny Dolmen.

Development plans may also designate Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest, for example, as around Navan Fort outside Armagh. Such areas will define the overall setting within which a number of individual and related monuments are located, or areas of historic landscape. The potential effect of proposals on specific sites and their settings, as well as on the integrity, or the overall character of the area, will be a major consideration in determining applications for development.

Great weight is attached to the protection and preservation, and, where appropriate, the enhancement of sites of archaeological interest and their settings. In all cases the desirability of preserving an archaeological site or monument and its setting, whether scheduled or otherwise, is a material consideration in determining planning applications. There will be a presumption in favour of the physical preservation of archaeological sites, monuments and remains and their settings.

Development which would be likely to alter, damage or destroy individual sites or monuments, or result in inappropriate change to the settings of such sites or monuments or to the essential character of an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest or to the historic landscape will not normally be permitted.

In assessing the archaeological implications of a development proposal, the potential impact of the proposal on the site or monument and its setting, or on buried remains, will be considered and in particular, whether the development would cause damage or whether the existing quality of the site or monument, and its setting, will be retained.

Developers should seek to identify the existence of archaeological remains which may be affected by their proposals so that appropriate strategies to deal with the archaeological implications can be designed at an early stage. Where development proposals are acceptable, but archaeological mitigation is appropriate, consideration will be given to:

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- proposals to retain the remains within the final development;
- design alterations to avoid disturbance of remains, or to minimise potential damage; and
- opportunities to preserve remains for the future even though they may currently be inaccessible.

Planning permission will not be granted for a development which would destroy archaeological remains which ought to be preserved in situ, even if the developer offers to facilitate excavation.

Where a decision is taken to permit development which will result in archaeological destruction, planning permission will normally be conditional on the completion of a licensed excavation and recording of remains, before development commences. In such cases an agreement may be made under Article 40 of the Planning Order (NI) 1991. Planning permission may be refused if archaeological mitigation or protection measures cannot be agreed upon.

In situations where significant remains are discovered after approved development has commenced, the Department will consider whether or not it is expedient to schedule the remains and may, if necessary, revoke the planning permission. In most cases it should be possible to reach an agreed solution with the developer.

Where an archaeological site or monument or its setting or an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest might be prejudiced by development permitted under the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993 the permitted development rights may be withdrawn.

Archaeological research continues and new and exciting discoveries are made. The discovery of archaeological remains, which have not been previously known, may represent a material change which can affect the nature of the development which will be permitted in respect of an area within a development limit, or within the countryside.

POLICY CON 7 HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

To protect the special attributes of parks, gardens and estates, which are of historic interest, from inappropriate development.

Northern Ireland is rich in its legacy of historic houses situated in parkland settings and formal gardens. These estates and their boundary features make a valuable contribution to the quality and character of the local landscape whether or not the original house survives. Where open to the general public they provide an important recreational resource. It is important to protect and where possible enhance the character of these parts of our heritage.

Where appropriate historic parks and gardens will be identified in development plans.

Development in or adjacent to historic parks or gardens which is likely to have an adverse effect on:

- the quality and character of such estates or demesnes;
- formal or informal gardens;
- landscaped parkland;
- historic buildings and other buildings or features of character within such estates including historic boundary walls; and
- the setting of any estate, gardens, parkland or associated buildings;

will normally be refused planning permission.

Public Services & Utilities



POLICY PSU 1 COMMUNITY NEEDS

To allocate sufficient land to meet the anticipated needs of the community, in terms of health, education and other public facilities.

Land will be identified for community needs - Stewartstown Health Centre.

Changing circumstances determine the requirement of land to meet the needs of the community in terms of health, education and other public facilities. With the possibility of rationalisation and further privatisation of services, emphasis will be placed upon making the best possible use of existing sites. Should circumstances require that new sites are needed, land will be identified by individual site assessment or through the process of preparing a development plan.



POLICY PSU 2 MAJOR PROJECTS

Major projects will be subject to the most rigorous examination of potential environmental impacts.

It is necessary to strike a balance between economic growth and protection of the environment. All major development, both public and private, will be required in its conception, design, implementation and use to take full account of the need to protect the environment so that the present day, sometimes short term, needs can be met without compromising the long term ability of future generations to benefit from the same or an enhanced environment. Stewardship must underlie all environment policies. It is our duty to look after the environment prudently and conscientiously and to hand it on in good order to our children and their children.

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Some major projects will be clearly acceptable. Others will cause concern because of their potential planning or environmental effects. The planning process will allow for the informed examination of all issues associated with such proposals. In considering the balance between the development proposed and its potential effects some proposals may be approved because there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In any case where permission is granted appropriate conditions will be applied to minimise or mitigate adverse impacts or effects.

Major development projects will be assessed taking account of:



*Almahinch Reservoir,
Loughguile.*

- the contribution of the proposal to the national or regional economy or to meeting national or regional needs;
- its environmental effects; and
- the availability of alternatives.

A developer will need to demonstrate that there is an overriding national or regional reason for the development and, where appropriate, that a thorough exploration of alternatives has been made and that the alternatives are unsuitable.

It will be the responsibility of the developer to explore all environmental impacts both local and of wider consequence. The Department will consider not only the immediate needs and benefits but the wider long term environmental effects of the proposal.

Certain types of major public and private development projects require a formal assessment of their potential effect on the environment where planning permission is sought. The projects requiring formal environmental assessment are listed in the Schedules to the Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989. The Department's Development Control Advice Note 10 gives general guidance on the implications of these regulations. Each application for a development of a type listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulations must include an Environmental Statement. Those developments in Schedule II may require an Environmental Statement where the Department considers they have significant environmental effects. The Appendix to Development Control Advice Note 10 lists criteria and thresholds for the categories of project on Schedule II which indicate the types of development that, in the Department's view, may require formal environmental assessment.

POLICY PSU 3 TRANSPORT FACILITIES

Planning permission may be granted for proposals necessary for the improvement of strategic transportation facilities such as regional ports and airports.

Due to Northern Ireland's peripheral location in relation to both Great Britain and mainland Europe regional ports and airports have an important role to play in providing adequate transportation links for local industry and commerce.

Permission will normally be granted for development considered necessary to maintain current operational requirements or for appropriate improvements to or expansion of existing facilities. Development which is related to and dependent on siting adjacent to a port or airport will normally be considered acceptable unless it would result in an unacceptable loss of safety or amenity for adjacent communities.

Development at regional ports or airports which is not automatically permitted, by Classes 13-15 of the General Development Order, will normally be granted permission provided:

- it is necessary for the current operational requirements of the facility;
- it forms part of a scheme for the improvement to or for an appropriate level of expansion of the existing facility;

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- the proposal is for development which is clearly related to and dependent on siting adjacent to the facility. General industrial or warehousing development is unlikely to be permitted adjacent to airports which are located in rural areas;
- the proposal would not result in an unacceptable reduction in the amenity of adjoining residents or businesses as a result of noise, dust, smell, pollution or excessive traffic generation;
- in relation to port development the proposal would not lead to an unacceptable impact on coastal ecology or processes; and
- the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on any area, feature or species of nature conservation importance or feature of archaeological or historic interest.

In the preparation of development plans adequate land will be zoned for the known requirements of the facility including acceptable proposals for expansion.

Careful consideration will be given to proposals for development in the vicinity of regional airports and ports. In particular attention will be given to:

- **Public safety.** Within public safety zones adjacent to airport runways, which will normally be identified in the relevant development plan, the Department's policy is to prevent development which would significantly increase the population working, living or congregating in the area;
- **Aircraft safety.** The Department will consult with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) or the airport operators about proposals for developments, the heights of which would exceed the various specified limits within the safeguarded area (defined by the CAA) around the airport. This is to ensure that precision instrument approaches are not adversely affected and that airport flights are not endangered;
- **Public amenity.** Ports and airports by nature can give rise to problems of noise, dust and smell as well as leading to substantial levels of vehicular traffic on the adjacent road networks. In general the Department will wish to be satisfied that proposals for expansion or improvement will not lead to an unacceptable loss of amenity for adjacent residents or businesses. Particular attention will be given to likely noise levels, especially at night time; and
- **Proposals for new development adjacent to existing airport or port facilities.** These will not normally be permitted where they would seriously jeopardise the potential improvement or expansion of the facility.

Strategic transportation facilities are important to the Northern Ireland economy - Belfast International Airport.



POLICY PSU 4 ACCESS LAYOUT SERVICING AND PARKING

Development proposals will normally be required to meet the Department's standards for access, car parking, servicing and the design and layout of roads.

New development will often affect the road network surrounding it, and it is part of the function of development control to ensure that any adverse effects are avoided or minimised. Planning permission can be considered for development where:

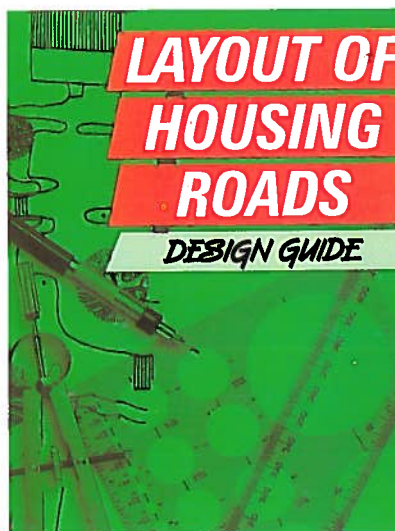
- the proposal would not result in a significant increase in traffic congestion or be a hazard to road safety;
- the design and layout of roads, footpaths and accesses are to a satisfactory standard; and
- sufficient off-street parking and servicing is made available in a manner which is visually satisfactory.

The extra traffic which will be generated by a new development may occasionally necessitate road improvements in the area of the scheme. To the extent that any traffic problems can be expected to arise directly from the proposed development, a condition may be imposed requiring appropriate improvements to be made before implementation and a Planning Agreement may be made.

Access

New development will generally require an access to a public road, whether by the opening of a new entrance, or by utilising an existing access. Direct access on to main traffic routes must be avoided as far as practicable - see policy PSU 5. Where feasible, access should be to a secondary road. The standards for access onto classified roads, including sight lines, radii and gradients, will vary according to the road classification. Unclassified roads account for the remainder of the road network and new accesses to these roads will normally be permitted provided the appropriate standards are complied with and there is no unacceptable traffic hazard as a result.

The number of accesses onto a given stretch of road and proximity to junctions will be relevant in the assessment of traffic hazards. The combining of individual access points along a road will be encouraged as this tends to increase road safety.



The Department's publication "Layout of Housing Roads, Design Guide" sets standards for the dimensions and layout of residential roads. This will assist developers with the preparation of layout proposals. It sets out standards consistent with a safe layout, whilst giving freedom to designers to experiment with alternative designs in both traditional and shared surface layouts. The primary objective is to encourage safe and attractive residential areas. Designers will be expected to pay particular attention to the formation of accesses, the capacity of roads and the type of traffic appropriate to them. Due regard should also be paid to the access requirements of cyclists and pedestrians, including those with a mobility handicap.

The safety of pedestrians and other road users is of paramount importance when designing the layout of residential developments. The Design Guide has therefore:

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- established a road hierarchy which will restrict the generation of large volumes of traffic in housing areas, by limiting the numbers of houses served by each category of road; and
- introduced speed control measures to restrain vehicle speeds.

In town centre locations, developers will normally be expected to include proposals for the provision of rear servicing facilities where practicable. The need for rear servicing will be assessed on the merits of each individual case. It is recognised that historic settlement patterns may be a constraint upon the provision of rear servicing.

Car Parking

The objective of car parking standards is to ensure that sufficient space is provided for the accommodation of parked vehicles, having regard to the location, layout, size, shape, access needs and design quality of the space. The provision of parking spaces to appropriate standards will ensure that parked vehicles do not become either a safety hazard, an obstruction to vehicle or pedestrian movement, or a visual nuisance.

The provision of parking spaces to appropriate standards - Killymaddy Tourist Centre, Dungannon.



The standards incorporate the concept of operational and non-operational parking. Operational parking space is required for cars and other vehicles regularly and necessarily involved at the operation of a business or a particular building. Non-operational parking space is required for traffic which does not have to park at the particular premises.

Full operational parking will normally be required with all development. The provision of non-operational parking by developers will be decided after consideration of the following factors:

- access and traffic management;
- environmental impact;
- the level of parking provision which can be provided within the site being developed;
- the availability of adjacent public car parking; and
- the acceptable level of local on-street car parking.

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A condition on a planning permission may require a maximum or a minimum number of spaces to be provided.

In some instances developers who cannot provide adequate car parking at their sites may be required to contribute to the cost of public car parking in the vicinity.

The Department will publish its car parking standards in due course. In the meantime, Divisional Planning Offices will give guidance on parking provision.

POLICY PSU 5 MAIN TRAFFIC ROUTES

The strategic road network will be protected by controlling accesses to main traffic routes.

There is a network of main roads in Northern Ireland which enables the free and safe movement of traffic over long distances. These routes contribute to economic prosperity by providing efficient links between all the main towns, the airports, sea ports and with the Republic of Ireland. The network of main roads has been improved over the years by the building of motorways, bypasses and ring roads.

If these main roads are to fulfil their function the consequences of allowing accesses which could either increase road accidents or create traffic congestion must be considered. It is therefore generally accepted that the number of junctions and accesses on these routes must be limited.

It is the Department's policy to restrict the formation of new accesses and to control development which would lead to an intensification of the use of an existing access on selected roads in Northern Ireland. (A field gate is not an access for the purposes of this policy).

The Department, therefore, has designated the roads on which this policy of access control will be exercised. The network will be known as the Protected Routes Network. Any alterations to the designated routes will be published.

The designated routes are:

- primary roads;
- routes between the principal town in each District and/or cross border;
- routes to ports and airports; and
- selected routes with high traffic flows (over 5000 vehicles per day in 1989).

These roads represent just over 6% of the total road network in Northern Ireland.

Policy for Motorways

The Department has a strict policy of not allowing any direct access from adjacent development (other than motorway service areas) to motorways, motorway interchanges and/or slip roads.

Policy for Rural Roads

This policy covers the inter-urban sections of the designated network outside development limits and is detailed as follows:-

Planning permission will not normally be granted for development involving direct access to these stretches of the Protected Routes Network or for the intensification of the use of existing accesses. However an access for the following types of development would qualify for approval unless it does not meet the Department's standards of sightlines radii, gradients etc:

- **Replacement Dwellings**
Where a building to be replaced would meet the criteria for development within a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area - see policy HOU 13. A condition requiring the improvement of the access may be imposed.
- **Farm Dwelling**
Where a farm dwelling, including a retirement dwelling, would meet the criteria for development within a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area - see policies HOU 9 and HOU 10. Access to it can only be obtained from a protected route. Normally the existing access should be used and this should be improved if appropriate.
- **Dwelling Serving an Established Commercial or Industrial Enterprise**
Where a dwelling would meet the criteria for development within a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area - see policy HOU 11, and access can only be obtained from a protected route.
- **Other Categories of Development**
In particular cases approval may be justified for other developments which would meet the criteria for development within a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area.



Main traffic routes contribute to economic prosperity.

Policy for Roads in Urban Areas and Settlements

In the settlements as defined by development limits in the relevant Area Plans the Department will assess the access requirements of development areas in association with other planning criteria. The main factors which will be taken into consideration include:

- the nature and scale of development;
- its contribution to urban/village regeneration, environmental improvement and/or housing need;
- the standard of the existing road network;
- the location and number of existing accesses; and
- the availability of practical alternative access.

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Protected Routes in Towns

In considering proposals for new development in areas zoned in area plans the Department will seek to minimise the number of new accesses on to the protected routes. Access to development areas should be taken from the minor road network where this is practicable and in appropriate circumstances the Department may require developers to contribute to the improvement of a minor road or its junction with the protected route.

In the case of those designated routes designed to an appropriate standard as ring roads, throughpasses or bypasses, planning permission will not normally be granted for development involving direct access or for the intensification of the use of existing accesses.

When designated roads are already subject to numerous direct accesses in existing urban areas the Department will generally seek to promote infill development by linking to a limited number of development accesses serving contiguous areas of land. Individual accesses will only be allowed if building plots would otherwise be sterilised.

Villages

The Department will seek to minimise the number of new accesses to a protected route within a village in the interests of road safety and the free movement of traffic. Development accesses will be directed to the minor road network where this is practicable. Exceptionally an access or intensification of use may be approved if an individual plot would otherwise be sterilised.

Other Rural Settlements

Generally it will not be acceptable for reasons of road safety, traffic management and environmental considerations to allow additional accesses to a protected route through other rural settlements. Exceptionally an access or intensification of use may be approved if a building plot would be otherwise sterilised. As far as possible, however, accesses shall be directed to the minor road network.

Planning Applications

All applications for planning permission for development involving an access or the intensification of the use of an existing access to the protected routes will be determined on their particular merit in light of the above policy considerations. Standards required for sightline splays, radii, gradients and junction spacings will vary depending on the speed of traffic on the protected route and the scale of development proposed. The need for merging and diverging lanes and other road improvements will be considered in conjunction with the Department's standards for design of major and minor road junctions.

POLICY PSU 6 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Traffic management and traffic calming measures may be considered, where appropriate, in the interests of road safety, traffic movement and improvement of the environment.

Traffic management schemes will be implemented in order to make the best use of available resources, to enhance the safety of vehicle users and pedestrians and to safeguard and improve environmental amenity. Schemes can include one-way systems, computerised traffic signalling systems and bus priority measures.

It is desirable to reduce detrimental effects of road traffic, particularly in residential areas and shopping centres, by various measures which are described as "traffic calming". The justification for traffic calming is fourfold:

- to reduce the possibility of accidents and casualties;
- to reclaim space from the carriageway for pedestrians and non-traffic activities, and to reduce the barrier effects of motor traffic on pedestrian movement;

- to promote greater feelings of security, particularly among residents, shoppers, pedestrians and cyclists.
- to reduce problems in historic settlements developed before the motor car.

Traffic calming reduces accidents and improves the environment - Lough Rd, Antrim.



The term “traffic calming” refers to traffic management measures to reduce the conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, particularly in residential areas, by devices largely aimed at reducing vehicle speeds. Road narrowing, pedestrian refuges, road humps and a variety of other engineering measures and the introduction of 20 mph zones can be used to reduce and prevent accidents and to contribute to environmental improvement. The introduction of such measures reflects a response to greater public concern about vehicle speeds, the growth in the volume and weight of traffic, and a general desire to reduce potential hazards in the vicinity of residential properties. Where appropriate the lower traffic speeds can be reinforced by specific landscape measures to further improve the local environment.

Measures to restrict traffic flow in new developments are important. Advice on the design of residential roads and footpaths is given in the Department’s publication “Layout of Housing Roads Design Guide”. New residential layouts will have to demonstrate a suitable approach to the problems of vehicles in residential areas.

POLICY PSU 7 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The needs of people with disabilities will be taken into consideration by measures to create an accessible environment and in the determination of planning applications for the development of buildings to which the public have access.

Careful design of the pedestrian environment is particularly important for people with disabilities. Poorly maintained pavements constitute obstacles and are dangerous to everyone. Street furniture that clutters the footway and poorly located landscape features can be a hazard to people with a visual impairment. Crossing roads is made easier by the installation of tactile surfaces to locate the crossings.

The aim is not just the availability of access, but its quality, and the integration of access in all aspects of design. Such a design approach will also benefit all through a better thought out, easier and more accessible environment.

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (NI) Act 1978 requires developers of specified types of buildings to provide suitable means of access, parking and toilet facilities to meet the needs of people with disabilities, where practicable and reasonable. The types of building to which the Act applies are those open to the public (such as shops, restaurants, hotels, places of entertainment, leisure and community buildings), places of employment and education buildings ie - most types of buildings other than those for residential use - see also policy DES 2.

Comprehensive access facilities should be provided as a matter of good design practice.



It will be expected that comprehensive access facilities will be incorporated in completely new developments, including extensions, as a matter of good design practice. In the case of existing buildings to be altered or refurbished, there will be a presumption that disabled access and facilities will be incorporated as far as possible. In the case of historic buildings, the incorporation of facilities needs to be considered with regard to safeguarding character and special architectural interest.

Guidance for developers is given in the Department's published Development Control Advice Note 11 entitled Access for People with Disabilities.

POLICY PSU 8 NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

The need for new infrastructure including extensions to existing facilities will be balanced against the objective to conserve the environment and protect amenity.

In the consideration of proposals for new infrastructural provision which requires the express grant of planning permission, including major extensions to existing facilities, the need for the facility will be balanced against the objective of conserving the environment and protecting amenity.

Developments such as new roads, sewage treatment works, water sources or electricity generation can all be of vital importance not only to industry and commerce but to the quality of life of society as a whole. Due to their scale and nature many such projects can have a significant impact on the environment and on the amenity of local communities. An Environmental Statement will normally be required for such major infrastructural schemes. Where requirements for new infrastructure is known at an early stage land will normally be reserved for such a purpose in the relevant development plan.

In dealing with specific proposals the Department will wish to be satisfied that there is an overriding regional or local requirement for the development and that a thorough exploration of alternative sites has been carried out. Normally the Department will wish to see the development sited so as to minimise the environmental effects, for example, the alignment and landscaping of a new road should be designed to achieve the maximum possible degree of integration into the landscape.

The following criteria will be of importance to the consideration of such applications:

- need for the facility;
- impact on the environment - in particular the visual and ecological impacts;
- impact on existing communities;
- impact on the natural or man-made heritage;
- existence of alternative sites or routes; and
- provision to mitigate adverse effects

In the case of extensions to existing facilities it is recognised that the possibilities of alternative sitings may be reduced due to the costs of relocating existing infrastructure.

Where appropriate, zonings in development plans will reflect the need to separate incompatible land uses. The potential adverse impact of existing infrastructure upon neighbouring land uses will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the development of that land. In particular, planning applications involving land within 300 metres of sewage treatment works will not be approved where there would be a loss of amenity from smell nuisance.

Applications will be approved or refused depending on the circumstances prevailing at particular locations. Relevant considerations will include the nature and capacity of the treatment works, local topography, prevailing wind direction, screening and disposition of existing development, the nature of the proposed development, the precise position of actual smell sources within the boundaries of the works and advice on relevant environmental health matters.

POLICY PSU 9 SEPTIC TANKS

Subject to other policy constraints, planning permission will normally be granted for a development which requires the provision of a septic tank, provided it would not result in the creation of or an addition to an unacceptable pollution problem.

The provision of mains water and sewerage services is the responsibility of the Water Executive. Consultation will take place with the Water Executive on all applications for new buildings in rural areas. In the countryside it is desirable to connect new development to mains services if possible. However few buildings in the countryside will be within reach of a public water borne sewerage system and will rely instead on a septic tank or other small disposal plant for sewage disposal. Effluent from such installations is normally dispersed through a system of field drains before percolating to the nearest watercourse.

The District Council and the Department's Environment Service advise on the acceptability of sewage disposal where public facilities do not exist. In such circumstances the number of septic tanks which will be permitted in a particular area will be determined by the subsoil conditions, the capacity of the receiving watercourse and the vulnerability of water catchment areas. Where the Department is satisfied that further development could cause or add to a serious problem, that development will be refused planning permission.



In some circumstances septic tanks can give rise to a pollution risk.

Throughout the Northern Ireland countryside soil conditions are generally conducive to the safe and effective use of domestic septic tanks and soakaways. However, with the increasing number of rural developments and the use of chemical detergents in the daily water consumption of individual households, there is a potential pollution risk involved in this form of drainage. This policy is designed to ensure the protection of water resources from the build-up of septic tanks, particularly in areas protected for the abstraction of water for human consumption.

The planning and pollution control systems are separate but complementary. Pollution controls seek to protect public health and the environment. Planning controls are concerned with the appropriate use of land and the impact of development. Close consultation takes place between the planning and pollution control authorities.

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Development plans will identify water catchment areas that are used or proposed to be used for public water supplies. In preparing plan policies and proposals account will be taken of the constraints on development as a result of the need to comply with any statutory environmental quality standards within these areas. In some circumstances, in order to protect the most vulnerable environments, it may be necessary to set thresholds for the number of septic tanks that would be acceptable. Exceptionally, where these thresholds have been passed or are threatened, planning permission may be refused for any further development involving an additional septic tank.

Planning Service will consult with the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) of the District Council on all planning applications involving the installation of septic tanks. Applicants must satisfy the EHO and the Department's Environmental Protection Division that the ground conditions are suitable for accepting a septic tank and soakaway discharge. The Department's consent to discharge effluent from a septic tank into a watercourse, or to a soakaway into the ground, is required under the Water Act (NI) 1972. Planning permission will be refused where it is clear that the necessary consent under the Water Act is unlikely to be forthcoming.

Applications involving the use of septic tanks must show accurately the proposed location of the installation and soakaways, and of drainage ditches and watercourses in the vicinity. Septic tanks and soakaways must be located within the application site and be within the applicant's control and therefore subject to any planning conditions relating to the development of the site. Septic tanks should be located at least 15 metres away from any dwelling and the soakaways should not drain across the curtilage of any neighbouring dwelling. If planning permission is granted for a development requiring a septic tank the requirements of the Environmental Health Officer and the Department's Water Executive and Environmental Protection Division will be added as informatics on the decision notice or incorporated as conditions of the planning consent.

POLICY PSU 10 DEVELOPMENT AT RISK

Development will not normally be permitted in areas known to be at serious risk from flooding, coastal erosion or land instability.

Problems resulting from flooding, erosion or land instability can result in danger to life, damage to property and wasteful expenditure of public and private resources on remedial works. As a result, new development in areas at risk will be kept to an absolute minimum.

It is important that these issues are considered at all stages of the planning process. Development plans may set out specific planning policies to control development on land subject to flood risk, coastal erosion or land instability. Major areas which are subject to specific problems may also be identified in the relevant development plan.

Coastal Development

Development adjacent to the coast can be at risk from inundation by the sea, erosion, land slips and rock falls. The policy in these areas will be to avoid putting further development at risk. New development will not normally be permitted in areas where expensive engineering works would be required either to protect development on land subject to erosion by the sea, or to defend land at risk from coastal flooding.

In areas of coastal erosion development will not normally be permitted in areas where such erosion is likely to occur during the lifetime of the building. There will be a presumption against development in areas of coastal land instability. Development will not be permitted in areas of flood risk where the existing sea defences, properly maintained, would not provide an acceptable standard of safety over the lifetime of the development or where new flood defences would have adverse impacts.

Land Instability

In the determination of planning applications, account will be taken of known hazards of land

instability which would affect the development site or would as a result of development pose a potential threat to neighbouring areas.

Where such hazards are known the applicant will be advised at the earliest stage possible. Where an applicant is aware of such a hazard pre-application discussions would be helpful.

In those situations where land instability is of such a scale as to render a site potentially unsuitable for development or would have a major impact on surrounding areas, the developer will be required to carry out and submit a specialist investigation and assessment to:

- determine the stability of the ground; and
- identify any remedial measures required to deal with any instability.

In particular the report should highlight the most suitable forms of development, if any, and the measures required to stabilise the site and to protect buildings and/or structures.

Planning permission will normally be refused where:

- instability problems cannot be overcome; or
- there is insufficient information to resolve the issue as to whether development should proceed or not.

Where planning permission is granted conditions may be imposed to:

- specify measures to be carried out in order to overcome stability; and
- require an adequate site investigation and assessment where there is insufficient information on points of detail and to require the development to have incorporated all measures shown to be necessary.

Warning to Developers/Landowners - It is important to note that where permission is granted it does not infer that the land is free from instability and the responsibility for safe development and secure occupancy of the site remains with the developer and/or landowner.

Flooding

The Department of Agriculture's Watercourse Management Division is consulted on applications for development:

- on land protected by sea embankments;
- on land subject to flooding;
- of a size which would significantly increase surface water run off (normally developments of more than five dwellings or comprising an area more than one hectare of land); and
- which would have drainage implications - for example those affecting designated watercourses.

There will be a general presumption against development, including the raising of land, where such development:

There is a presumption against development where it would be at risk from flooding.

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- would be at risk from flooding;
- would be likely to increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; or
- where the works required to alleviate flood risk would result in unacceptable damage to visual amenity, nature conservation interest or the man-made heritage.

Where planning permission is granted conditions may be imposed:

- to require necessary alleviation works; and
- to ensure adequate access to watercourses.



POLICY PSU 11 OVERHEAD CABLES

The siting of electricity power lines and other overhead cables will be controlled in terms of the visual impact on the environment with particular reference being given to designated areas of landscape or townscape value.

One aspect of modern life is the presence of pylons and poles carrying overhead wires for telephone or electricity supply. This “wirescape” can be visually obtrusive particularly where the wires and poles figure above the skyline or where they dominate the streetscape in a built-up area.

Proposals for the development of new power lines or alterations to existing power lines may require to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

When considering a development proposal for the siting of electricity power lines and other overhead cables, the lines should be planned to:

- avoid areas of landscape sensitivity;
- avoid sites and areas of nature conservation or archaeological interest;
- minimise their visual intrusion;
- make sure that they follow the natural features of the environment; and
- ensure that wirescape in urban areas is kept to a minimum with preference being given to undergrounding services where appropriate.

In designated areas of landscape or townscape value, for example Conservation Areas or AONBs Planning Service will seek to enhance the visual amenity of the area by encouraging the removal of all unnecessary overhead wires and wires on building elevations. When new paving and footpaths are being laid, as part of an Environment Improvement Scheme, consideration will be given to putting services underground. The main emphasis will be placed on integration into the existing landscape/townscape.

**POLICY PSU 12
RENEWABLE
ENERGY**

To assess proposals for developing renewable energy sources against the need to protect and conserve the environment.

Renewable energy is that which occurs naturally and repeatedly from sun, wind, waves and falling water. Geothermal sources, plant growth and waste materials in combustible or digestible forms are generally regarded as renewable but are not necessarily sustainable in any single location.

Government policy is to stimulate the exploitation and development of renewable energy sources wherever they have prospects of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable.

In planning for the use of land for electricity generating installations the general aim is:

- to ensure that society's needs for energy are satisfied, consistent with protecting the local and global environment;
- to ensure that any environmental damage or loss of amenity caused by energy supply and ancillary activities is minimised; and
- to prevent unnecessary sterilisation of energy resources.

The geographical position of Northern Ireland and its terrain offer favourable conditions for the development of certain renewable technologies. Sites proposed for projects will often be in rural or coastal areas which the Government recognises to be not only of intrinsic value but also major tourist assets. A careful balance will be needed between the need for renewable resources to contribute to Northern Ireland's energy supply and the need to conserve the environment and amenities of local communities. Harm to the environment, caused by renewable energy projects, must therefore be kept to the minimum.

Wind Energy

The following policies have been prepared to guide the development of projects to harness wind power. Policies for other forms of renewable energy projects will be prepared in future.

Renewable energy for the people of Rathlin Island.



All proposals for wind turbines or wind farms or groups of wind turbines (including any associated ancillary development) will be assessed in respect of their implications for the visual, ecological and historic landscapes; the implications for agriculture; and the safety and amenity of local residents. Conditions will be attached to permissions, as appropriate, to safeguard particular interests. Permission will not be granted to turbine developments within, or in any location, where they would have a seriously detrimental impact on the amenity of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or any area designated for its conservation, scientific, archaeological or historic interest.

Permission will be granted for wind turbine developments in any other area indicated in an Area Plan as being of particular landscape, conservation or amenity value if it can be shown that the proposal would not significantly detract from the character of that area.

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Exceptions may be made for single turbines or small groups of turbines which are intended primarily to supply the premises of the developer, provided that siting can be accomplished with no significant effects on the landscape or special character of the area.

Particular regard will be had to the degree of visual intrusion and noise disturbance to be expected, and the proximity of existing infrastructure such as airports, power-lines, railways and roads where public safety implications will be assessed. Consideration will also be given to possible loss of amenity through disturbance during site construction; shadow flicker when the turbines are operating and possible electro-magnetic interference with communications, including television reception.

Where appropriate, the planning assessment will include the cumulative effects of successive developments within a particular area.

In considering proposals, account will be taken of the extent to which development would provide research benefits which will assist the future assessment and consideration of wind energy projects.

The determination of proposals for neighbouring developments which might impair the performance of a turbine will take into consideration the threat to the public benefit of the power output from the turbine.

POLICY PSU 13 TELECOMMUNI- CATIONS

Telecommunications apparatus which requires planning permission will normally be permitted, provided it does not detract from the natural or man-made environment or the character of its setting.

Modern telecommunications are an essential element in the life of the local community and in the national economy. Both new technology and the maintenance and improvement of the established networks entail the physical development of land, and so have implications for both development plans and development control.

The overall policy approach is to seek to balance the need and demand for maintaining and developing telecommunications systems on the one hand and the protection of amenity on the other. A large number of such installations do not require planning permission, however, in view of their potentially intrusive appearance, it is considered appropriate to control their siting and appearance, in the instances where planning permission is required.

Applications for planning permission for satellite and terrestrial microwave antennae will be determined taking into account the technical requirements of the apparatus, the effect on the appearance of any building or structure on which the apparatus is to be installed, the effects on the visual amenity and character of the area and the following guidelines:

- whenever possible, apparatus shall be sited on the ground in a position which minimises its visual impact and shall be adequately screened from the street, public areas and adjoining properties by appropriate landscaping or walls;
- satellite dishes will not normally be permitted if they project above the highest point of the roof of a building or structure;
- wall mounted dishes should not normally be attached to any wall of a building or structure which fronts onto a highway and, in all cases, should be sited in the least obtrusive position and respect any architectural features of the building or structure;
- there will be a presumption against installations in Conservation Areas or on listed buildings where these would be readily visible and would adversely affect the character of the area or building;

- where, because of technical requirements, the most ideal siting for antennae would result in a breach of these guidelines, the applicant should consider siting antennae in less obtrusive positions on adjoining buildings or sites and cabling the service to their premises;
- where appropriate, the equipment will be required to be coloured or painted so as to be less visually obtrusive in relation to the background against which it would be installed; and
- to prevent the unnecessary retention of obsolescent equipment and to monitor the condition of the installation in the interests of visual amenity permission will be granted in appropriate cases for a maximum period of five years.

POLICY PSU 14 WASTE

Proposals for the disposal or treatment of waste materials will not be permitted where the development would lead to an unacceptable impact on the environment or to unacceptable pollution problems.

In considering proposals for new, or extensions to existing, waste disposal or treatment facilities, the Department will carefully balance the need for the facility against the need to protect and conserve the environment.



Installation of a liner at a landfill site - Green Road, Ballyclare.

Proposals for the disposal of waste materials by landfilling or land raising will only be acceptable in circumstances where the Department is satisfied that:

- the types of waste to be deposited and the proposed method of disposal will not be likely to cause environmental problems by virtue of noise, dust, windblown litter, odour, leachate escape or landfill gas emissions;
- the visual impact of the landfilling or land raising operations and the final landform will not be such as to outweigh any benefits which may accrue from permitting the development to proceed;
- the access to the site and the nature and frequency of associated traffic will not prejudice the safety and convenience of road users or constitute a nuisance to neighbouring residents by reason of noise; and
- the proposal will not have a significantly adverse effect on areas of amenity, nature conservation, scientific, archaeological or heritage value or on wetlands considered to be of significant ecological value.

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Subject to other policies, proposals for the disposal of waste materials on derelict sites and land of low agricultural value by landfilling or land raising, which on completion of operations and reinstatement of the new landform would enable the sites to be put to more beneficial use than originally, will receive favourable consideration.

There will be a presumption against permission being granted for incinerators and chemical waste treatment plants for the disposal of controlled or special wastes either in, or in close proximity to areas designated for their amenity or conservation value, including Green Belts. For a planning application to succeed in such locations it will be necessary to demonstrate a need for the facility to be located in the designated area and that the proposal will not prejudice its essential character. In dealing with planning applications for such facilities in any part of the rural area, the Department will give careful consideration to the disposal of residues, the potential effects of aerial and aqueous emissions and the implications for the landscape.

POLICY PSU 15 INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

Developers may be expected to bear all or part of any additional costs of works required to facilitate their development proposals.

Many development sites will require the provision of additional infrastructure to enable the development to take place. The infrastructure works could include roads, water and sewerage or land drainage.

Development plans will highlight potential infrastructure constraints to the development of zoned sites. Before making a planning application, developers should consult with the Department for guidance on these matters.

It is Government policy to require developers to bear all or part of additional infrastructure costs. This policy applies to both public and private sector developments. Where appropriate, planning agreements under Article 40 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 may be used to enable development to proceed.

Contributions, in part or in total, to the additional infrastructure works may be required in a variety of circumstances including:

- where a potential development requires the provision of infrastructure works over and above those programmed by Departments when preparing Area Plans or where early implementation of a programmed scheme is required;
- where the proposed development is outside the area zoned in the Area Plans and/or is dependent on the carrying out of other works outside the site; and
- for mineral related applications to facilitate, for example, restoration of landscaping schemes.

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Building on Northern Ireland's environmental strengths is a strategic priority. A balance is necessary between the need to facilitate new developments and the need to protect or enhance the natural and man-made environment.

The Department does not view the design principles outlined in the policies and practice of this section, together with other environmental standards, as subsidiary to social and economic needs. Rather they form the fundamental basis for sound policies and proposals in development plans and for the control of development in rural Northern Ireland.

Even in Districts which face severe social and economic problems, for example, as a consequence of rural depopulation or high unemployment, there are good reasons for such an approach. A high quality environment is vital in helping to attract inward investment and in encouraging tourism both of which can help to create new jobs.



Design in this context includes the location of the development site in the landscape, the positioning of the development within its site boundaries, as well as the detailed architectural design of the building or buildings and the layout of the site.

POLICY DES 1 COUNTRYSIDE ASSESSMENTS

To carry out Countryside Assessments as part of the preparation of development plans.

Northern Ireland is blessed with a rich diversity of countryside. The distinctive character is dependent on the combination of the many different elements of the natural and man-made landscape. A quality countryside is a very important resource and should be highly valued. It contributes significantly to the identity of rural Northern Ireland and is a source of enjoyment and inspiration. A high priority will be given to its conservation and enhancement.

The Department proposes to carry out Countryside Assessments as part of the development plan-making process. These assessments will be an essential foundation for the environmental appraisal of lands being considered for development within towns and villages and will help to highlight the opportunities for, or constraints on, that development. They will also contribute to site development briefs and identify features worthy of retention or protection. The District Councils will have an important consultative role in relation to the preparation and use of the Countryside Assessments.

Countryside Assessments will be concerned with topography, landscape and settlement including among other things landform, elevation, aspect, vegetation, wildlife habitats, archaeological and historic features, and buildings. They will describe the particular characteristics and features of significance, to allow subdivision of the countryside into areas of broadly similar character. Each assessment will identify the forms of development traditional and appropriate to particular countryside areas. It will also identify the capacity of

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the landscape, within each area, to absorb further development and the manner in which such development might best be integrated into the particular landscape setting.

The assessments will assist in defining:



A quality landscape is a source of enjoyment and inspiration - the Glenelley Valley, Plumbridge.

- the planned limits of development of towns and villages;
- the opportunities and constraints imposed on development by the character and features of the landscape within these planned limits;
- the urban fringe and the potential for restoration or enhancement of degraded landscapes;
- areas of countryside subject to, or likely to be subject to, excessive development pressure, relative to the capacity of their landscapes to absorb development and where loss of rural character would result;
- areas of special landscape quality, or specific locations of national or regional significance, where any development would be undesirable because of its adverse effect; and
- areas of countryside where rural character is not under threat from excessive development pressure and where the landscape has capacity to absorb more development without loss of character.

Areas identified as under threat from excessive or inappropriate development will be designated as Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas through the development plan system. The relevant regional development control policies will apply to each area - see policies GB/CPA 1-4. Additional local policies may be drafted, in the development plan, to amplify the regional policies on matters specific to the local circumstances of particular countryside areas.

POLICY DES 2 **TOWNSCAPE**

To require development proposals in towns and villages to make a positive contribution to townscape and be sensitive to the character of the area surrounding the site in terms of design, scale and use of materials.

Some towns and villages have been deliberately planned, others have slowly evolved, but their modern form has usually been achieved gradually, in a series of small changes. Financial restrictions, lack of machinery and reliance on local materials have often constrained the degree of change, but have provided our heritage of distinctive buildings. The builders of settlements may not always have been concerned with aesthetics. However, their responses to the natural environment often resulted in the design of settlements in which the relationship between landscape and built form was, and remains, aesthetically pleasing.

Development is necessary to adapt the fabric of settlements to present and future needs and to ensure the economic well-being of the community. It will affect townscape quality and character. The character and interest of townscape depends on street patterns, open space and the scale, architectural quality, detailing and materials of individual buildings.

This policy emphasises the importance of urban design within the built environment. Each settlement needs to be viewed at the human scale. An attractive and interesting townscape is essential to the well-being of residents and visitors. New development should therefore minimise visual, functional and physical disruption and enhance or create interest, vitality and variety.

An attractive and interesting townscape - Cushendall.



Many of the environmental concerns outlined below can be overcome by thoughtful design, which is concerned not just with how the development will look but also how it will be used in practice. The highest standards of architectural design and detailing are necessary to create new areas of townscape character and interest and these should be employed in all extensive new developments and particularly in all developments within existing Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character. Bland unimaginative development does not enhance the townscape and will be discouraged.

Special attention will be paid to the entrances to towns and villages, to the visual and physical links, landmarks, and views and spaces within settlements as identified in development plan appraisals. Careful consideration will be given to the treatment of form and space, the massing and arrangement of buildings and the spaces within and around them. Insensitive development which disrupts the scale and rhythm of townscape will be resisted. Development will not normally be approved where important views would be unduly interrupted or seriously prejudiced or where an opportunity to enhance such a view would be lost.

Development

The physical appearance of new development will have an effect on the townscape of a settlement now and in the future. It should therefore be of sufficient quality to make a positive contribution to the townscape.

Developments should make a positive contribution to townscape - redevelopment and infill scheme, Strangford.



A new development will normally be required to be appropriate in use and sensitive in siting, scale, layout, design and materials both in itself and in relation to adjoining buildings, spaces and views. The main concern is to ensure that development proposals neither conflict with or detract from the character, amenity and design of an area.

This approach should not preclude appropriate new development and is not intended to limit imaginative and new ideas. However designers will need to be responsive to the real concerns of the community about issues like the quality of the environment, the scale of development, unsympathetic design, and, of particular relevance in towns and villages, the conservation of valued buildings, spaces and views, and the implications of proposals for crime and personal security, and access and traffic.

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In interpreting the policy, each application for planning permission will be assessed against the three main elements of land use, amenity and design.

Land Use

An initial assessment is required, as to whether the type of development is suitable for the site. The assessment will establish the main use in the surrounding area, the appropriateness of a diversity of uses and the desirability of introducing a proposed development which may alter the balance of uses. If the proposed development is likely to alter the character of the area adversely, it will normally be refused.

Amenity

New development should provide reasonable standards of amenity both in terms of the environment which the development creates and in terms of the effect it has on neighbouring properties. Where there is an inherent incompatibility with neighbouring developments, or where remedial action cannot be made effective, applications will normally be refused.

Design

The appearance of new buildings can play a major part in the overall character and quality of an area and they can also do much to shape the image of a settlement. Good design is therefore extremely important. There is no simple definition of what constitutes good design. However the best buildings are only ever produced by an architect of real design ability working for an enlightened client.

The Planning Service does not wish to be prescriptive about architectural style, which is a matter for the architect and client. However it does wish to see designs that enhance townscape and improve the image of settlements. This can mean modern and forward-looking designs.

Building design will need to be architecturally sympathetic to the important townscape elements of sensitive locations, such as Conservation Areas or the settings of listed buildings. Elsewhere in locations where the environment is visually dull or if there is no context of neighbouring buildings more assertive design may be appropriate.

The Department is concerned to ensure that developments do not deteriorate in appearance because of inadequate detailing and materials. This will require materials to be suited to the proposed building, appropriate to their surroundings, durable and they must weather well.

The sensitive floodlighting of buildings can bring added visual interest to areas after dark. It is particularly appropriate to floodlight landmarks, public buildings such as churches, theatres, cinemas and restaurants, and fine examples of architecture.

Access for the Disabled

All new buildings open to the public such as shops, offices, restaurants etc, are required by law to make adequate provision for access by disabled people. Relevant policy and practice is in Policy PSU 7, and Development Control Advice Note 11 gives general guidance for developers, designers and agents on the planning criteria to be applied.

Housing

Proposals for large residential developments are unsuitable in rural settlements and should be broken down into small discrete and separate areas. Layout designs will have to take account of "traffic calming" techniques where the requirements of the car will be subordinate to those of the residents. Further guidance is given in the Department's Design Guide for the Layout of Housing Roads.

Houses with large back gardens are a common feature in many towns and villages. Sometimes it may be acceptable to develop back gardens for new housing provided it is in keeping with the character and quality of the local environment. Where development of back gardens or back land is considered acceptable, it will be subject to strict planning criteria defined in the development plan. There must be a proper means of access, convenient and safe for drivers and pedestrians, and adequate provision for car parking.

“Tandem” development, consisting of one house immediately behind another and sharing the same access, is generally unsatisfactory because of the difficulties of access to the house at the back and the disturbance and lack of privacy suffered by the house at the front.

Alterations and Extensions

All alterations and extensions to buildings should normally respect the scale, form, detailing and materials of the original building. The degree of sensitivity required will vary according to the quality of the building and the visual importance of the area, such as the setting of a listed building or within a Conservation Area or an Area of Townscape Character.

Shop Fronts

Shop fronts are particularly vulnerable to commercial pressures for their replacement and the piecemeal downgrading of the character of shopping streets. Retailing changes have tended

to accelerate a trend towards mediocre shop front design. A good shopfront enhances its surroundings, a bad one debases them.

Every shop front should make a positive contribution to the street. Developers wishing to replace shop fronts should consult their local planning office at an early stage for advice on the particular local requirements.

In general traditional shopfronts should be preserved. In Conservation Areas, the removal of existing shop fronts will normally require consent and in all cases of listed buildings, they will require listed building consent. Replacement shop fronts should be designed and detailed in an appropriate manner, so that the ground

floor relates satisfactorily to the elevational design of the upper parts of the building.

Appropriate displays inside first floor windows above shops are often acceptable and can help to create lively and attractive shopping streets in town centres.

A good shopfront enhances its surroundings.



POLICY DES 3 THE SETTINGS OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES

To protect the settings of towns and villages from inappropriate development and urban sprawl.

A settlement's identity can be as much a result of its setting, within the surrounding countryside, as with the quality of its buildings.

Landscapes around settlements have a special role to play in maintaining the distinction between town and country, in preventing coalescence between adjacent built-up areas and in providing a rural setting to the built-up area. However, proximity to urban populations brings special problems in some locations. There are often exceptional pressures for new development - demands for access, vandalism, rubbish dumping and trespass, creating problems for landowners. The fabric of the landscape can easily become downgraded if unprotected.



Landscapes around settlements have a special role to play in maintaining the distinction between town and country.

The principle of drawing a limit of development around each settlement, in the development plan, is partly to promote and partly to contain new development within that limit and so maintain the clear distinction between countryside and built up area. Some urban fringe landscapes will be more sensitive than others and, where appropriate, will be designated Green Belts.

Applications for built development in the countryside in the immediate vicinity of any defined settlement limit, or on a site which clearly mars the distinction between the open countryside and the built-up edge of the settlement will not normally be approved. Additionally urban fringe landscapes within Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas will be subject to policies GB/CPA 1-4.

Urban fringe developments should complement rather than detract from the amenity of the Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area. Similarly care must be taken to ensure that the visual amenities of the Green Belt or CPA are not injured by proposals which are conspicuous from the CPA.

Where green spaces are situated on the edge of urban areas and within the development limits, they may be of importance as significant links and buffers between the urban edge and open countryside. In considering planning applications for development in these spaces, special regard will be given to the relationship of sites to the open countryside; the need to protect green links between town and country; and the need to retain existing, and to create new, buffer areas to soften the impact of development on the urban edge.

POLICY DES 4 AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

To require development proposals in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to be sensitive to the distinctive character of the area and the quality of their landscape, heritage and wildlife.

Northern Ireland is fortunate in having a rich variety of high quality landscapes, within a relatively small land area. Approximately 26% of the Province is within existing and proposed Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

AONBs are areas not only of high scenic quality but often of wildlife importance and rich in both cultural and architectural heritage. The Department designates them as AONBs in recognition of the national importance of these qualities.

The objectives of designation are to:

- conserve or enhance the natural beauty or amenities of the area;
- conserve wildlife, historic objects or natural phenomena within it;
- promote its enjoyment by the public; and
- provide or maintain public access to it.

These objectives are based on wider environmental considerations than the control of development and AONB boundaries will not necessarily be synonymous with the application of one particular planning policy.

The Countryside Assessments, to be produced as part of the development plan process (policy DES 1), will consider each designated AONB, to identify distinctive local landscape character types and their potential for protection, enhancement or limited development.

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The various planning policy areas for each AONB will be set out in the relevant development plan and not in the Department's AONB designation document.

While the designation policy is one of protection and enhancement of these special landscapes, in applying the planning policy, account will be taken of the needs of local communities and the need to sustain the economic and social well-being of those living in the AONBs.

Detailed advice will be published on the design principles to be applied in each AONB.



In assessing development proposals within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including those parts subject to policy constraint, the Department's aim will not only be to protect their unique qualities but also to promote their enjoyment and make a positive contribution to their conservation. New buildings should respect, and may have to reflect, the traditional architectural styles and settlement pattern. Applicants and their professional advisers should take particular care over the retention or reconstruction of traditional boundary details, such as hedges, walls, trees and gates, around new developments in AONBs.

Planning applications for housing, industrial, and tourist-related development, in AONB towns and villages, will be judged on the basis of the effect of the proposals on the setting of the settlement within the AONB, as well as scale, design and other planning and environmental considerations.

The Department will publish guidance and provide detailed advice on the design principles to be applied in each AONB. Design guides have already been published for the Mournes, and Antrim Coast and Glens. Particular attention will be given to local styles and layout.

Designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty does not necessarily rule out certain forms of development. However the first principle of practice is that the Department will not be prepared to permit schemes that would be detrimental to environmental quality. It is up to architects and designers to put forward proposals which reflect an appreciation of, and sympathy for, the special character of each AONB.

Dry stone walling repair within the designated Mournes Environmentally Sensitive Area.



Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) are designated by the Department of Agriculture and particular management programmes and grant aid schemes apply to farms within them. ESAs are areas of special landscape, wildlife or historic interest which can be protected or enhanced by supporting specific agricultural practices. While they are not planning designations, applications for new development within them will be approved if the proposals respect and are sensitive to the particular character of the area.

POLICY DES 5 BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Planning permission will be granted for the erection of a building in the countryside which is:

- **in a locality which has the capacity to absorb another building, without adverse impact on visual amenity;**
- **on a site which can be visually integrated into the landscape; and**
- **of an appropriate design for the locality;**

and provided it meets other planning criteria and policy requirements.

Much of the character and quality of the countryside in Northern Ireland stems from the presence of a wide range of traditional buildings of local styles and largely local materials. Traditional buildings evolved in response to their setting and their function in the countryside. New buildings should respect that long-established link and not attempt, through their siting and design, to impose alien or urban standards.

A new building, particularly a dwelling, is a permanent and obvious feature in the landscape and its development requires forethought. In practice too many bungalows and houses have been imposed on the landscape in suburban forms and in a wide variety of styles. Many of these bungalows and houses have been built in the last fifteen years.

Society cannot compromise on the quality of development in the countryside. Developers must acknowledge the range of circumstances which exist and the differing capacity of various landscapes to absorb development when considering the design of new buildings. The capacity of different areas depends largely upon the land form, vegetation and the existing pattern of settlement.

Prominence

In practice, the location of a new development frequently determines its prominence and the degree of visual impact it will have on the landscape. In assessing the potential impact of a development, particular regard will be had to the quality and nature of the landscape in the locality and at the site. This will require analysis of the capacity of the landscape to absorb the development and the extent to which the development of the site will be visible or prominent from other parts of the countryside, especially from the public road system and from areas of general public access and assembly.

A new building in the countryside will be acceptable if, when viewed from these surrounding vantage points, it meets all of the following criteria:

- it blends sympathetically with landform;
- it uses existing trees, buildings, slopes or other natural features to provide a backdrop;
- it uses an identifiable site with long established boundaries, which separate the site naturally from the surrounding ground; and
- it does not spoil any scenic aspect or detract from the visual appearance of the countryside.

Alternatively a new building will not be acceptable if, when viewed from surrounding vantage points:

- it occupies a prominent, skyline or, top of slope/ ridge location; or
- the site lacks existing long established boundaries or is unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure for the building in the countryside.

In flat landscapes or exposed hill areas, where some degree of prominence may be unavoidable, careful siting using existing natural or man-made features can still ensure a new building does not appear to be out of place or unduly conspicuous.

Siting

If a site is unduly prominent, the task of placing a building on it which does not look out of place is made extremely difficult. It is the siting of the building that has the most impact. Even good design cannot always redeem the damage done by inappropriate siting.

Development will be required to respect the traditional pattern of settlement in the countryside, that is the disposition and visual appearance of land and buildings in the general locality of the proposed development.

Each development proposal will be assessed and considered acceptable if:

- it is positioned sensitively along with a group of buildings such as a farm complex;
- it adopts the spacing of a dispersed pattern of settlement and has integrated sensitively with the existing land forms so as to blend unobtrusively with its surroundings, and;
- it avoids contributing to a build up of development in any particular locality, so as to cause a change in the rural character of that area.

Houses close to a public road may be a traditional form of settlement pattern in some localities. However these buildings were invariably small in size, of modest design, constructed of simple traditional materials, positioned at right-angles or parallel to the public road and had little or no formal garden. Building in this tradition will require these features to be incorporated into the design proposals.

The large rectangular plot cut out of the frontage of a roadside field is unlikely to be acceptable, even if it does have hedges defining some of its boundaries. Similarly suburban housetypes are unlikely to be acceptable on frontage sites. A site set back some distance from the road, along a farm lane or behind the immediate roadside field, might be more acceptable. However, set-back is of little use if the area between the house and the road is developed as a large and very prominent garden area. Therefore, in some circumstances, it may be necessary to control the size and location of the curtilage by condition.

New developments often create a much greater impact on the landscape than the use of existing buildings and sites, as well as ignoring the potential for using mature sites and preserving and developing Ulster's rich heritage of traditional buildings. There are many instances of rundown, dilapidated and unoccupied traditional buildings in the countryside. Some are structurally sound and largely intact and could be renovated to provide accommodation with modern standards of amenity and fittings. Most of these buildings occupy mature sites which meet the environmental standards required for the erection of a new house.

Landscaping

Landscaping, garden areas and the design and type of site boundaries are all important visual elements in the countryside and can add significantly to the setting and integration of a building.

Landscaping, garden areas and site boundaries are all important visual elements.



New buildings should be sited to take advantage of natural or previously planted features which could provide protection and integration. It will be necessary for all applications to include details of proposals for site works and, where appropriate, proposals for landscaping to integrate the proposed development into the surrounding landscape - see policy DES 10. Where trees exist they should be retained and opportunities for new planting with native or other species characteristic of the area should be sought. New tree planting for integration will be considered in addition to existing vegetation, however, new planting alone will rarely be sufficient. An unacceptable site can not be successfully integrated into

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the open countryside by the use of landscaping.

The potential loss of landscape features such as trees, hedgerows or walls or archaeological sites and monuments may be a reason for the refusal of a planning application. Where valued landscapes are threatened by activities that are otherwise permitted by the General Development Order, consideration will be given to the use of Article 4 directions to remove permitted development rights.

Access

Access should be taken from existing lanes, where available. Where an access road and services, such as electricity and telephone lines, are required, they should be run unobtrusively alongside existing hedgerows or wall lines. Access roads and driveways should respect site contours and cross them gently, thus integrating the dwelling with its entrance and site. Sweeping driveways which create a suburban emphasis should be avoided.

While adequate visibility of the road access must be provided, access roads surfaced in tarmacadam and with concrete kerbing can look out of place in the countryside and less formal solutions should be sought. The traditional field pattern should be preserved and roadside and field boundary hedges and stone walls retained or reinstated following any access works. It may be necessary to control retention or reinstatement of boundaries, hedges and walls by condition, especially in AONBs.

Design

The form and proportions of a new building are key elements in the design and determine the building's visual impact on the landscape. If form and proportion are wrong, then little can be done with any other features to mitigate the impact of a poor design.

The most successful rural designs are those which use the simple shapes and forms of traditional buildings. For example the traditional house has an elongated rectangular plan with wall and door openings on the front and rear walls. The house plan has limited depth and if extended it is usually linearly or with the addition of another storey. Where a return is provided it is normally to the rear with only a porch on the front elevation. The roof is either gable or hipped depending upon the locality and chimneys are expressed along the ridge line.

The traditional house has an elongated rectangular plan.



Some buildings were altered over time and they may show the influence of more formal architecture. Indeed there are many rural houses of a formal design which could act as appropriate models for modern houses in the countryside.

The acceptability of the silhouette, in relation to the natural contours and its relationship with any existing buildings, will frequently be the yardstick against which the suitability of the siting is judged. Conditions will not normally be imposed regulating the number of storeys contained in a

new building, although the height of a new building may be restricted and the pitch of the roof lowered, if justified by considerations of scale or form which would make the building dominant or incongruous in the local landscape.

Unequal pitched roofs reflect the traits of suburban rather than rural architecture and will not be acceptable. Similarly, buildings where the roof is designed to span the length, rather than the width of the structure, will normally be unacceptable.

A good relationship of solid wall to openings, such as windows and doors, is extremely important in a rural setting. Windows are traditionally small and vertical in proportion. New houses, particularly bungalows, favour larger areas of glass usually with a horizontal emphasis out of keeping with traditional design. Unusually large horizontal windows on elevations facing roads or footpaths are not acceptable and should be avoided. Picture windows and patio doors are more effectively located on the secluded elevations where shelter and personal privacy can be guaranteed, provided the overall design and orientation are acceptable.

Relative simplicity of design and discretion in the use of materials, texture and colour will greatly enhance the appearance of a building. The use of non-traditional materials such as brick, concrete and random stone-cladding tends to introduce too much diversity of colour and texture. Combinations of materials on walls, the use of feature panels and excessive ornament should be avoided.

POLICY DES 6 RURAL CHARACTER

To ensure that the cumulative effects of new buildings in the countryside do not cause detrimental changes to the overall character of rural areas.

New buildings should be sympathetic and not appear incongruous with their surroundings. A carefully sited and well designed building, which respects the local landform and pattern of vegetation, not only looks more pleasing but will be in harmony with its immediate and wider surroundings and integrated into the landscape. One building by itself may meet required planning and environmental standards and have little impact on an area. However, the cumulative impact of a number of buildings could be significant and lead to the gradual erosion of the rural character of that area.

Parts of the countryside have already changed. The problem is a product of many houses being built in recent years, and some of what has been built being insensitive in design, lacking in character and not integrated into the landscape. Without a change in policy this loss of rural character will continue. Therefore, the planning policy will be to resist development which would cause a detrimental change to the rural character of an area of countryside.

Where a rural landscape is threatened by development pressure, the locality will be designated through the development plan system as a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area.

Change of rural character will be used as a reason for refusal, if:

- the proposed dwelling is unduly prominent, or
- it would create an adverse impact on an area of countryside when added to the existing buildings in that area.

Each application will be treated on its merits and the threshold of planning approvals will depend on local circumstances. These will include the number of existing buildings in the area; the potential number if all valid planning approvals were implemented; the vulnerability of the landscape as defined in the development plan Countryside Assessments; and the scale and design of the proposed development.

The scale and design of a building should be sympathetic and not appear incongruous with its surroundings. There will be circumstances where a different design solution could make a development proposal acceptable where otherwise it would cause a detrimental change to the rural character of an area and be refused.

POLICY DES 7 RIBBON DEVELOPMENT AND INFILL

Planning permission will be refused for a building which creates or adds to a ribbon of development.

Ribbon development is a line of buildings, served by individual accesses, extending along a road, without accompanying development of the land to the rear. A ribbon does not necessarily have a continuous or uniform building line. Buildings sited back from a road, staggered or at angles to the road and with gaps between them can represent ribbon development, if they have a common frontage to the road and are visually linked when viewed from the road.

Demand for this type of development arises for several reasons, most notably on the roads radiating from settlements, because services may be in existence along the road and proximity to these reduces the cost of development.

Ribbon development has consistently been opposed and will continue to be unacceptable, primarily on grounds of visual amenity, reinforced on occasions by road safety objections. This type of development is not attractive. It often uses suburban siting and design solutions, which are detrimental both to the character and amenity of the countryside. It creates a built-up appearance when viewed from the road; it sterilises backland, often hampering the planned expansion of settlements; and makes access to farmland difficult.

Ribboning is not a category of development that can be defined by numbers, although, if there are two buildings proposed fronting a road and beside one another, there could be a tendency to ribboning. In these circumstances, unless the developer can produce a design solution to integrate the new building or buildings into the landscape, and there are exceptional and special circumstances for building on that site, permission will not be granted.

The infilling of gaps between houses in the countryside will not normally be permitted. Exceptionally, there may be situations where the development of a small gap, sufficient to accommodate one house and within an otherwise substantial and continuously built up frontage, may be acceptable. Each application will be considered on its merits and in relation to the constraints set out in policy DES 6. The proposed building would have to be well designed, appropriate in size and form to the neighbouring buildings, and the whole development should integrate with its surroundings. There must also be no site specific objections such as road safety.

Most frontages however are not intensively built up and have substantial gaps between buildings, giving visual breaks in the developed appearance of the locality. Development of these gaps would be visually undesirable.

Approval for infill development will be the exception rather than the norm, as in most cases infilling amounts to the creation of ribbon development.

POLICY DES 8 RENOVATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

Sympathetic design schemes for the renovation or extension of existing buildings will be encouraged.

Alterations to the structure of a building can radically alter its appearance and detract from its original character. Proposals to renovate, rehabilitate or extend existing buildings will be considered on their individual merits and, subject to any Green Belt or CPA policy constraints, the primary consideration will normally be design.

In considering proposals for the renovation or extension of existing buildings, special attention will be paid to the form, proportion, design and materials of the development, in relation to the original building and the effect on its setting and surroundings. Strict control will be exercised in assessing applications for all alterations to listed buildings. There will however be a sufficient degree of flexibility for alterations to non-listed buildings, to allow for the introduction of modern

A sufficient degree of flexibility to allow for the introduction of modern facilities.



Extensions should normally be confined to the rear or least important facades, and any extension should be of a height and form, which is in scale with the existing building and its setting. More detailed design practice for development proposals in settlements is given in policy DES 2 and specifically for extensions to houses in policy HOU 16.

POLICY DES 9 ADVERTISEMENTS

To grant consent to display outdoor advertisements if the proposal does not adversely affect amenity or public safety.

Outdoor advertisements can play a vital role for both industrial and commercial enterprise. However the display of advertisements, at inappropriate and sensitive locations, can result in a loss of visual amenity and may constitute a danger to public safety.

All advertisements affect the appearance of the building, structure or place where they are displayed. A good building can contribute to a sense of pride and of place. However, its appearance or its setting can be spoiled by a poorly designed or insensitively placed sign or advertisement.

The main purpose of advertisement control is to ensure that outdoor advertising will contribute positively to the appearance of an attractive and cared-for environment.

Poster advertising will normally only be considered acceptable in predominantly commercial and industrial areas, where the character and the scale of the buildings are such as to accommodate the scale of this type of display, without adverse effect on visual amenity.

Small scale advertising may be appropriate in villages, depending on the character of the village and the relationship of the proposed display to surrounding buildings and the environment generally.

There will be a presumption against freestanding advertisement displays in villages, Conservation Areas and within the curtilage of listed buildings, and in residential areas, because of the impact on visual amenity and obstruction of views.

There will be a presumption against the general display of advertisements in the open countryside, in order to protect the unique quality of the rural landscape.

Exemptions to this presumption will be:

- advertisements for which consent is deemed to be granted under the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (NI) 1992; and
- on-site advertisements for existing or approved commercial enterprises which may be considered acceptable, where they are small in scale and are judged not to detract from the quality of the local landscape.

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Exceptionally consent may be given to applications for forward directional signs in the countryside advertising certain tourist attractions - see Policy TOU 5).

The display of outdoor advertisements will be controlled in the interests of amenity and public safety. In this context, amenity is defined as the effect upon the visual amenity of the immediate neighbourhood, where the advertisement is to be displayed. Public safety refers to the safety of people using any form of transport likely to be affected by the advertisement.

Applications for advertisement consent will be treated on their merits within the context of the policy requirements. Particular regard will be paid to the general characteristics of the locality in which the advertisement is to be sited.

Amenity

The relevant amenity considerations in deciding whether or not to grant consent will be:

- the need for the size, location, design and materials of the advertisement to respect the character of the locality and not be obtrusive or over-dominant;
- the proximity to a residential area;
- the number of existing signs in a locality or on a particular building and whether the proposals will create clutter or excessive advertising; and
- in the case of an advertisement attached to buildings, the need to respect the scale of the building and its architecture. A sign or advertisement should be designed and positioned so as to be seen as an integral and not a dominant feature of the building.

Public Safety

The relevant public safety considerations in deciding whether or not to grant consent will include the need to ensure that:

- an advertisement, which is proposed to be positioned close to a highway, road junction or traffic sign, does not obscure visibility or detract from the attention of users of the highway so as to create a traffic hazard;
- the colours of an advertisement or its illumination does not obscure or reduce the clarity of any traffic sign; and
- the size or positioning of any advertisement does not hinder the free passage of pedestrians.

When considering public safety factors, the Planning Service will consult with the relevant organisations who have an interest in the display. Advice will be given, by the Roads Service of the Department, for advertisements displayed alongside a road or within view from a motorway, or where the safety of people using the highway may be affected.

Planning Criteria

The criteria for considering advertising signs on commercial premises in towns and villages are:

- all advertisements should normally be contained on the front elevation and below the level of the sills of the first floor windows;
- advertisements should not normally intrude into the space between windows particularly if there is an existing fascia board;
- where there is a separate business on the upper floors of a building, advertisements should be in the form of traditional simple lettering painted on windows;
- shop fascia signs should be of an appropriate size, designed and sited sympathetically in relation to the shop front, the facade of the building and any detailing thereon; and
- projecting signs should relate to the design of the building and should normally be located at fascia level. Normally only one sign will be permitted per fascia and this should not project excessively.



In Conservation Areas signs of the traditional hanging type indirectly illuminated by spotlight are generally preferable to an internally illuminated box sign. More practice on shop front design and floodlighting of buildings is given in policy DES 2 and advertisements in Conservation Areas in policy CON 5. The Department is considering more detailed design guidance on advertisements and signs for future publication.

POLICY DES 10 LANDSCAPING

A landscape scheme will normally be required for all development proposals involving new building.

Trees are a vital element in the environment. Apart from their visual appeal, they help to reduce pollution, form screens to break up and soften the landscape, integrate developments into the landscape and are invaluable to many forms of wildlife.

Existing trees should be protected as an environmental resource. New development offers the opportunity to improve and enhance this resource, through the planting of new trees. A development site will be considered, not only in terms of building design but also, in terms of the contribution that it can make to the amenity of the surrounding area. Each development scheme involving new buildings will normally require a landscape scheme.



Trees are a vital element in the environment.

The requirements of a landscape scheme will include:

- a full survey of existing landscape features such as trees, hedgerows and other vegetation, and archaeological and historic features;
- details of the protection proposed, throughout the construction period, for all existing features which are to be retained;
- appropriate provision for the planting and initial maintenance of new trees and vegetation; as well as
- details of all hard and soft landscaping.

In areas with poor tree cover particular attention will be paid to the need for appropriate new tree planting in development proposals. Even where existing tree cover is good there may be a need to renew the tree stock. There will be a preference for native trees in the rural area.

Where a development proposal affects a site containing trees or woodlands of significant amenity value, a Tree Preservation Order may be made to protect the trees while the application is being considered.

There will be a presumption against proposals which cause unacceptable tree loss, which do not allow for successful retention of existing trees or which do not make adequate provision for replacement planting to compensate for the potential loss of trees which would result from development.

This policy applies to development sites in both urban and rural situations. Its basic objective is to sustain and increase a scarce local resource and it is intended to complement the landscaping requirements for built development set out in policies DES 2 and 5

Green Belts & Countryside Policy Areas

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This section outlines the planning policy for the control of development in Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas (CPAs). More detailed policy and practice is given under the individual topic headings.

New Green Belts and CPAs and the alteration of boundaries will be implemented through the statutory development plan system.

The new policy applies to all existing rural policy areas which will now change in title to either Green Belts or Countryside Policy Areas. A list of the changes for each District Council Area will be available from the relevant Divisional Planning Office.



POLICY GB/CPA 1 DESIGNATION OF GREEN BELTS AND COUNTRYSIDE POLICY AREAS

To establish Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas through the development plan process.

Green Belts

The strategic objectives of these planning policy areas are:

- to prevent the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring settlements from merging;
- to safeguard the surrounding countryside;
- to protect the setting of settlements; and
- to assist in urban regeneration.

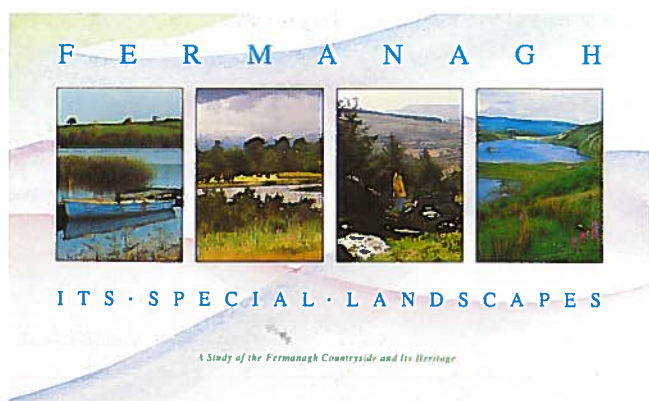
In addition to its strategic role in restraining development pressures it is important that the open countryside in the Green Belt makes a positive contribution to meeting the outdoor recreation needs of the urban population.

Green Belt designation also provides the opportunity for the enhancement of urban fringe areas in the knowledge there is a long-term commitment to retain their open character.

Countryside Policy Areas

The strategic objectives of these planning policy areas are:

- to protect areas of countryside under pressure from development;
- to protect the visual amenity of areas of landscape quality; and
- to maintain the rural character of the countryside.



All new Green Belts and CPAs and alterations to the boundaries of existing Green Belts and other previously designated policy areas will be based on Countryside Assessments and will be established through the development plan system after consultation with District Councils, local communities and the public.

It will be essential to strictly control development within Green Belts and CPAs in order to achieve the strategic objectives. There will therefore be a clear presumption in Green Belts and CPAs against any new building and against any new use of land, which might create a demand for more

buildings, apart from a limited number of uses, which are in principle appropriate to a rural location. No other development will normally be allowed unless there are overriding reasons why that development is essential and could not be located in a town or village, or in a part of the open countryside not subject to policy constraint.

Policy GB/CPA 2 defines the development that is appropriate to a Green Belt or CPA but also makes it clear that to be acceptable, even those types of development must respect the open character and environmental qualities of these rural policy areas in terms of their visual amenity and local impact. Protection of these qualities is paramount and in certain special landscapes of national importance, within Green Belts or CPAs, no development at all will be permitted unless it is in the wider public good.

Much of previous rural policy has generally stood the test of time and has been retained. Individual policies and practice have been refined and amplified in the topic sections, from the benefit of experience and to ensure greater clarity and consistency of application. Any changes from previous policy have been made to have greater regard for local Northern Ireland circumstances, to take into account new issues such as farm diversification and to reflect the wide ranging comments of the consultation exercise.

Appropriate non-residential development in a Countryside Policy Area - Killowen Centre, Rostrevor.



**POLICY GB/CPA 2
NON-RESIDENTIAL
USES**

In Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas, planning permission will be granted for the construction of new buildings, or for the change of use of existing buildings for appropriate non-residential development that is:

- **essential to the needs of the agricultural industry;**
- **necessary for outdoor sport and recreation;**
- **a necessary community facility to serve the local rural population; or**
- **a tourist scheme requiring a specific Green Belt or CPA location.**

Planning permission will be granted to anyone in a Green Belt or CPA who can demonstrate either that the proposed development is required for a purpose appropriate to a Green Belt or CPA (eg for agriculture) or that there is some special reason why it should be allowed. It is not enough to show that the building will be inconspicuous or will do no harm on the particular site, though these arguments could reinforce a case which has other merits.

A change of use is as much development as is new building. The same principles shall be applied to an application for a change of use in a Green Belt or CPA as to an application for new building. The exception to this is the change of use of a redundant building which may also be suitable for small-scale industrial development - see policy GB/CPA 4.

Appropriate tourist developments may be permitted in Green Belts and CPAs where the proposal complies with the criteria for the change of use of buildings - see policy GB/CPA 4, or is a minor extension to an existing facility - see policy TOU 3. Favourable consideration may also be given to a tourist scheme that provides a significant planning gain in upgrading a degraded landscape - see policy DES 3.

Minerals by their nature must be extracted where they are found. While with some minerals there is a choice of sites for extraction, with others the choice is limited and extraction cannot necessarily be excluded from Green Belts or CPAs. In considering applications, account will be taken of the value of the mineral to the Northern Ireland economy, the potential damage to the environment and the impact on the local area and population.

There may be instances where development, by a public service or a statutory undertaker, is desirable to maintain or improve services to the general public or to assist the rural economy. In many cases, it may not be possible to avoid affecting the Green Belt or CPA, due to the nature of the proposals.

Development, which does not interfere with the open character of the land, may be acceptable in terms of siting and design. However, in all but the most special cases, the decision will depend on the need for the proposal, or whether it is an appropriate rural use, as well as whether it will do harm to the rural character of the landscape.

POLICY GB/CPA 3 DWELLING HOUSES

In a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area, planning permission will be granted for a new dwelling house if it is:

- **to meet the essential needs of an established agricultural, commercial or industrial enterprise (policies HOU 9 & 11);**
- **to facilitate a retiring farmer (policy HOU 10);**
- **to meet special personal or domestic circumstances (policy HOU 12);**
- **to replace an existing dwelling (policy HOU 13);**
or
- **to infill a small gap in an otherwise substantially and closely built-up frontage (policy DES 7).**

In order to preserve the open character and visual amenity of Green Belts and CPAs it is necessary to prevent the proliferation of isolated new buildings, including rural dwellings. There will however be circumstances in which new dwellings are justified.

In all cases, other than replacement or the infilling of a small gap, the onus is on the applicant to provide justification of the need for the dwelling. In considering applications for dwellings on farms regard will be given to advice on agricultural need and viability. For dwellings serving non-agricultural enterprises, it will normally be a pre-requisite that the enterprise has been established for several years.

Exceptionally a residential caravan or mobile home may be permitted as a temporary solution to meeting the need for accommodation in a Green Belt or CPA, even when the need is insufficient to justify a permanent dwelling - see policy HOU 15.

Restrictive occupancy conditions will be imposed on all permissions, for the construction of new dwellings granted on need, to ensure that the dwellings are retained for that need.

POLICY GB/CPA 4 REDUNDANT BUILDINGS

Planning permission will be granted for the change of use of an existing building in a Green Belt or Countryside Policy Area provided the proposal complies with certain criteria.

The criteria for re-use of redundant buildings are:

- the building is redundant and its re-use would not result in the need for a new building as a replacement;
- the building is structurally sound and its re-use would not result in the need for major alterations;
- if the change of use is to a dwelling house, the building is of architectural or historic merit, or is an attractive building of traditional construction, which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the locality - see policy HOU 14;
- the building is large enough to accommodate the proposed use, and the site is of adequate size;
- services and access are available or can be supplied or upgraded without adverse environmental impact; and
- the nature and scale of the proposed use is appropriate to a Green Belt or CPA and is not detrimental to agriculture, residential amenity or landscape quality.



*Adaptation for residential use -
the old school house
Ballymacrae Road, Portrush.*

There will be opportunities for re-using or adapting existing rural buildings for new and appropriate industrial, tourism and recreational uses or community facilities. Retailing, unless small-scale and ancillary to the main use, will not be considered appropriate in these circumstances.

Such re-use or adaptation will help to reduce demands for new building in the countryside, may encourage new enterprises and may provide jobs needed in rural areas. There should generally be no reason for preventing the re-use or adaptation of agricultural and other rural buildings for new uses, provided they meet the criteria and their form, scale and general design are in keeping with their surroundings.

The criteria in the main relate to the suitability of the building for conversion. Not all redundant buildings can be satisfactorily converted. The development must be an appropriate use and the proposals must demonstrate that the building is genuinely redundant, structurally sound, of sufficient size for the use proposed and capable of being adequately serviced. In all cases the need to maintain the character of the landscape of the Green Belt or CPA will be paramount.

In order to contain the proposed new uses to an acceptable level, and to protect the visual amenities of the Green Belt or CPA, it may be necessary to impose conditions to restrict the use of the building, to control any alteration or extension of the building, to prevent the erection of any further agricultural buildings, and to control or prevent any external storage, or the undertaking of any industrial activities outside the buildings.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland is noted for its beautiful and relatively unspoilt coast including such well known features as the Giant's Causeway (World Heritage Site), Benone Strand, Antrim Coast Road, Strangford Lough and the Mourne Coast. The coastline - which is some 650 kilometres in length - is a unique part of our natural heritage.

The undeveloped coast includes a wide variety of landscapes many of which are of high scenic quality. It is also of immense importance in terms of its scientific interest, nature conservation value and its wildlife habitats. Coastal areas have also attracted settlement and provided food for man since earliest times. Today the coast is still the location of many of our towns while its seaports provide a strategic economic link to Britain and Europe. It is important that the undeveloped coastal environment is protected - in particular from increasing urbanisation, industry, pollution and recreational demands. Opportunities exist within coastal towns not only to locate developments which require a coastal location but also to enhance and regenerate existing waterfront areas.

The landward limit of the coastal zone is more difficult to define but it will generally be determined by the geographical extent of coastal natural processes and human activities related to the coast. In some areas the coastal zone will be relatively narrow - for example along cliff lines, however in low-lying areas and estuaries it will be much wider.



POLICY CO1 THE UNDEVELOPED COAST

To conserve the natural character and landscape of the undeveloped coast.

It has long been recognised that the Northern Ireland coastline with its diversity of landscapes and habitats, some of outstanding quality, is a very important but non-renewable resource. Already much of the coast has been designated within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Areas of Special Scientific Interest, Nature Reserves or falls within existing rural policy areas. The effect of development on both wildlife and the beauty of the landscape can be serious and widespread. There are few types of development which require a coastal location and the undeveloped coast will rarely be an appropriate location for new development.

The undeveloped coastal zone will therefore be designated as a Countryside Policy Area in relevant development plans. It shall be taken to include those areas directly related to the coastline and including river estuaries. The shoreline of Strangford Lough is included within the definition of the coast. Certain stretches of shoreline of inland lakes and loughs may also be designated as a Countryside Policy Area. Such designations will be set out in the relevant area plan and will be based on the Countryside Assessment for the particular area.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

Within the coastal Countryside Policy Area the Department will apply the policies as set out in the Green Belt and Countryside Policy Areas section. However, greater emphasis will be placed on the visual impact of proposals on the coastal zone. In general development will only be permitted where there is a clear site specific need.

Certain parts of the coast are, for a variety of reasons, of such unique quality that it would be in the public interest to restrict all development. This policy will only be applied in exceptional circumstances and such areas will be identified in development plans.

Particular attention will be paid to the maintenance of public views to the coast.

Certain developments require a coastal location - examples include ports and marinas, industries which require a location near a port, certain tourist and recreational projects and the energy generation industry. In dealing with proposals for this type of development the Department will carefully assess the need for such a proposal, its effect on the local or regional economy and potential impacts on the environment - see policy PSU 2. Such developments, where necessary, will normally be located within existing urban areas or within areas zoned for such use within the relevant area plan. Exceptionally, development may be permitted on the undeveloped coast in the following circumstances:

- where the proposed development is of such national or regional importance as to outweigh any potential detrimental impact to the coastal environment; and
- where no feasible alternative site within an existing urban area exists.

Applications for major developments on the coast may be required to be accompanied by an environmental statement.

Regard will be paid to the visual and physical impact of coastal protection schemes, particularly on the undeveloped coastline.

Where development is approved within the undeveloped coastal zone, conditions may be imposed to minimise any adverse impact on the environment. In particular conditions will be used to:

- minimise the visual impact of development by the careful siting, design and landscaping of the proposal;
- ensure the design of the development is of a high standard and of traditional style and materials; and
- keep important public views of the coast free from development.

Development will not normally be permitted in areas known to be at serious risk from flooding, coastal erosion or land instability. New development will generally not be acceptable where it would require the provision of expensive engineering works to protect the development from erosion or coastal flooding - see policy PSU 10.

Where it is considered necessary the location of major risk areas may be indicated in the relevant area plan.

POLICY CO2 THE DEVELOPED COAST

To encourage and support proposals for the enhancement and regeneration of urban waterfronts.

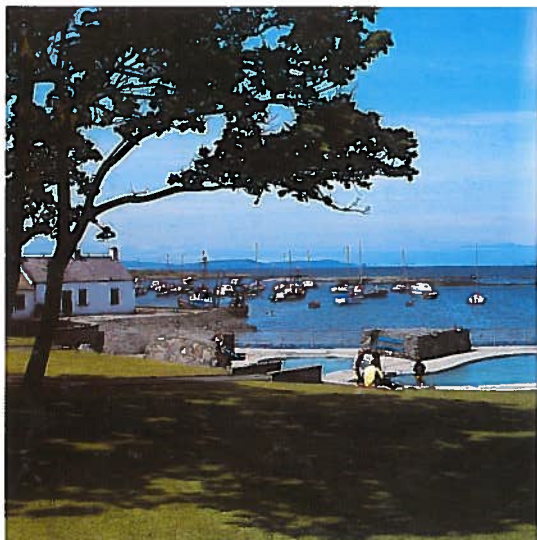
Many of Northern Ireland's towns and cities have a coastal location. Within such urban areas the shoreline can exhibit a wide range in character and use - from docks and heavy industries, to tourist resorts and well maintained public recreation areas. In some settlements an attractive feature has been made of the waterfront while in others it can have a run-down or even derelict appearance. Certain waterfront areas contain impressive historic features such as harbours, lighthouses and sea defences some of which have been listed. The developed coastline includes not only urban areas but also other major developments such as ports, isolated industrial units and power stations.

There are many opportunities to enhance and regenerate areas of urban waterfront. Already much has been achieved by public and private investment. Favourable consideration will be given to further schemes proposed by local authorities or private investors to improve urban waterfronts.

Where new development requires a coastal location, it will normally be directed into urban areas, where there are many waterfront areas which would be suitable locations for such uses. The imaginative re-use of redundant ports and industrial areas will be encouraged. Tourist development can make a contribution to the regeneration and upgrading of existing seaside resorts.

In dealing with the future development of coastal settlements through the area plan process, new build development will generally be accommodated on the landward boundary of the settlement rather than permitting additional development along the coast.

In considering proposals for development on the coast within existing urban areas, opportunities will be sought to:



Waterfront scheme, Groomsport.

- enhance the waterfront by the careful siting and design of new development and by the implementation of appropriate and attractive landscaping schemes;
- retain and where possible seek further development of public access to and along the coast;
- protect existing wildlife habitats and where appropriate seek opportunities for new habitat creation;
- protect existing coastal open space within settlements;
- conserve areas and/or buildings of historical architectural or landscape significance;
- safeguard archaeological sites and remains;
- encourage suitable tourist and recreational proposals and strengthen where appropriate the existing tourist role of settlements;
- use the assets of the coastal location as development opportunities;
- encourage uses which will help promote a vibrant and attractive waterfront; and
- open up additional views of the sea from existing public areas.

Development proposals should be of a design appropriate to the particular location and of a high visual quality when viewed from adjacent public areas and from the shoreline. Proposals which would locate unsightly rear elevations or services provision on the coastal aspect will not normally be considered acceptable.

**POLICY CO3
AREAS OF
AMENITY OR
CONSERVATION
VALUE ON THE
COAST**

To protect from development those parts of the coast, within urban areas, which are important in terms of their amenity or nature conservation value.

Within many of Northern Ireland's coastal settlements there are stretches of coastline which are of amenity value - public and private parkland, golf courses, coastal walkways and general amenity open space. Such areas are of great importance to the character of settlements.

There will be a presumption against inappropriate development on green areas and open space along the coast within existing urban areas. Appropriate development would include small scale tourist or recreational development in association with existing open space uses.



Amenity areas are of great value to settlements.

The enlargement and enhancement of existing amenity open space along the coastline within existing settlements will be encouraged.

The coastline, and in particular its estuaries, has long been a prime location for human settlement. Along with human settlement however has come great pressure - from industry, pollution, harbours, land reclamation and recreational demand. On the other hand, the sheltered nature of many estuaries, together with a range of habitat types, has resulted in them being of considerable wildlife value. They are particularly important as feeding grounds for migratory wild fowl and wading birds.

Areas of nature conservation interest will be identified, protected, and their positive management and enhancement promoted. Proposals for development will therefore normally be unacceptable if they would seriously affect areas of significant nature conservation importance or other nature conservation interests - see policies CON 1 and 2. The introduction of new amenity areas or habitats in waterfront redevelopment schemes will be encouraged.

Coastal areas, as a result of their long history of settlement, can have significant historical and archaeological potential. The need to protect this maritime heritage will be an important consideration in relation to proposals for development on the coast - see policy CON 5.

**POLICY CO4
ACCESS TO THE
COASTLINE**

To encourage schemes which provide or extend public access to the coastline.

A very large number of people derive enjoyment from the natural beauty, beaches and amenities of the coast. Some of the coastline however remains inaccessible to the general public. Proposals both for the provision of or extension of public access to the coastline will be supported.

In considering development proposals in or adjacent to the coast attention will be paid to the retention of existing public accesses and coastal walkways. Development which would result in the closure of existing access points will normally only be acceptable where a feasible alternative is provided.

Proposals from public bodies or private individuals to provide or extend access to the coastline will normally be permitted provided:

- the proposal would not adversely affect any area of nature conservation, geological or landscape value or the man-made heritage; and
- the provision of access including associated facilities such as pathways, local car parks and picnic areas are of a scale that can be satisfactorily accommodated without impairing the amenity of the local area.

**POLICY CO5
TOURIST AND
RECREATION
SCHEMES**

Exceptionally, proposals for the provision of tourist or recreational schemes in undeveloped coastal areas may be granted permission in situations where a coastal location is essential, provided the development would not lead to an unacceptable impairment of the amenity of the area.

Many recreational and tourist facilities depend on a coastal location or the natural beauty of the coastline. Such facilities are often a valuable resource for large sections of the population while others can make an important contribution to the tourist industry. Development can itself however result in a loss of the visual quality or the tranquil nature normally associated with the coastline. In determining applications for recreational or tourist schemes the Department will balance the advantages of such facilities against the need to preserve the amenity of the coast.

In general, tourist and recreational schemes and facilities will be directed to existing urban areas. Exceptionally, proposals on the undeveloped coastline may be acceptable where the development is judged to be of considerable regional importance to the tourist industry and:

- an urban location is not feasible;
- the facility makes use of an existing unique feature of the coastline.

In addition, it will be important that:

- the facility, together with associated access and car parking, etc, can be accommodated in the local landscape without any serious impairment to the amenity of the area; and
- the facility is one to which the general public will have access.



Tourist facility at an unique coastal feature.

Permission will normally only be granted where the development can be satisfactorily integrated into the environment and the proposals include the highest standards in the siting, design and landscaping of any built development. The submission of an Environmental Statement may be required.

Favourable consideration may be given to low intensity coastal recreational uses which are considered to be acceptable in that they would not lead to an unacceptable impairment to the amenity of the area.

**POLICY CO6
CARAVANS AND
CHALETS**

To resist proposals for new static caravan sites, or chalet development for holiday purposes, or the enlargement of existing facilities within the undeveloped coastal zone.

By their nature and extent caravan parks normally detract from the visual quality of coastal areas. Already some parts of the coastline have suffered a serious loss of amenity by the development of caravan parks. Proposals for new caravan or chalet development or the expansion of existing facilities within the undeveloped coastal zone will normally be resisted - see also policy TOU4.

Favourable consideration will however be given to the provision of small sites solely for use by touring caravans. The location of such sites will be restricted to the landward side of coastal settlements or the landward side of the coastal zone, rather than on the undeveloped coast. Approval will be dependent on the site being acceptable in terms of design standards, normal planning criteria and environmental considerations.



While the enlargement of existing sites or the intensification of use of existing sites will be resisted, proposals for the redevelopment of existing sites, including the introduction of ancillary social and recreational facilities, may be given favourable consideration provided there is no intensification of use and that measures are taken to reduce the impact of the development on the local environment.

Consideration will be given to small sites for touring caravans.

Exceptionally, small scale rounding off or infilling in existing developments may be approved where it is clear the proposal would make no material impact on the amenity of the area and where the scheme makes a positive contribution to the amelioration of the impact of the total site.

**POLICY CO7
MARINAS**

Proposals for the creation of new marinas or the extension of existing marinas within existing settlements will be given favourable consideration provided they are of a scale appropriate to the settlement.

In recent years there has been a rapid rise in the demand for mooring space within marinas. It is anticipated that this demand will continue to increase. In determining applications for marinas consideration will be given to both the aspect of need and the capacity of the local environment to accommodate further development. It is recognised that a properly planned and located marina has the advantage of concentrating large numbers of boats in a small area, thereby reducing pressure on vulnerable areas of coastline and offering the possibility of facilities to prevent or contain pollution.

Due to the impact that such developments have on the coastline, it is unlikely that any new marina development would be acceptable other than within an existing settlement. The location, siting and design of any proposals would need to be carefully considered. In particular, the provision of on-shore facilities and the potential increase in traffic would need to be of a scale acceptable for the settlement. A number of recently developed marinas have however demonstrated that they can make a significant contribution to the regeneration of existing urban waterfronts. Sympathetic consideration will be given to other schemes which would help re-develop urban waterfronts and assist the local economy.

A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

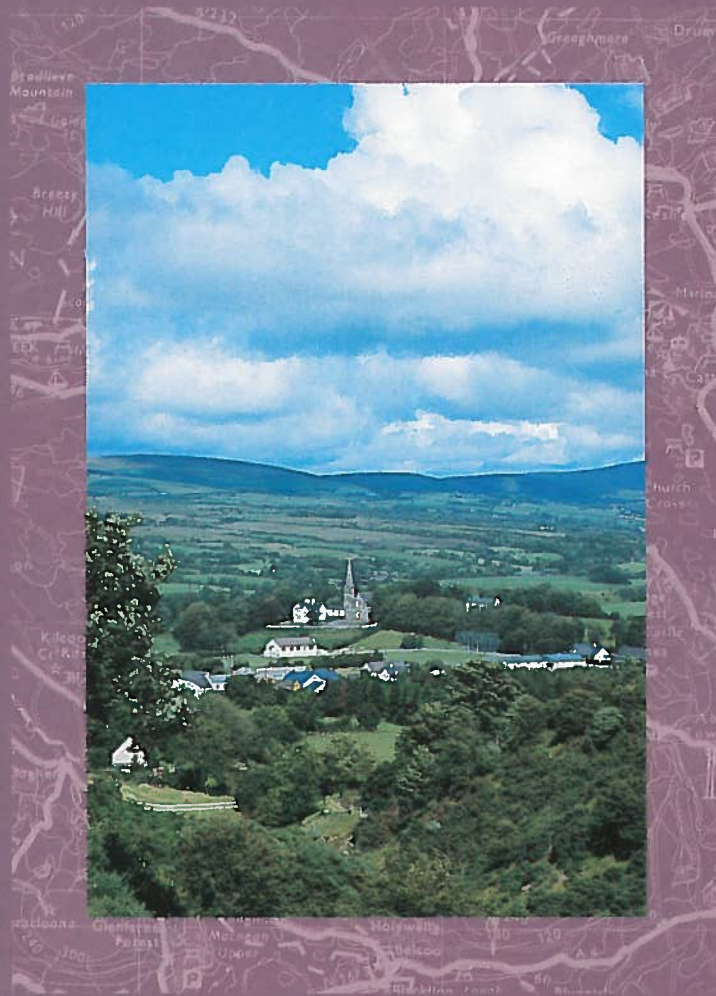
In the consideration of proposals for marina development within existing urban stretches of the coast particular regard will be given to:

- the visual impact of the development from both the landward and seaward aspects;
- the impact of any necessary engineering works on the coast, including its ecology, and, in particular, on areas of nature conservation interest and on sites and features of historical or archaeological interest;
- the scale and design of on-shore facilities;
- the relationship with adjacent land uses and in particular with residential properties;
- the anticipated increase in traffic and the suitability of the existing road network; and
- the provision of adequate parking and landscaping.

Where permission is granted conditions may be applied to regulate the design, scale and operation of the facility.



The demand for mooring spaces in marinas may continue to increase.



Implementation

The Strategy consists of broad regional policies to provide a planning framework for the way in which land is used and development takes place in Northern Ireland. Its successful implementation, or in other words, what happens on the ground, depends on the outcome of the decisions of individuals, companies and agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Department, as the planning authority, has a positive role in facilitating development through the process of designating land in statutory plans and controlling development when determining planning applications.

Development Plans

Implementation of the Strategy will be principally through the statutory development plan system - plans produced in consultation with the District Councils and the general public which interpret at District and local level the broad principles contained in this Strategy. They will set out the detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land in the rural area and will guide most day to day planning decisions. They are not prescriptive and should not be considered as such but rather provide an important framework for sound and effective development control within which appropriate development can take place.

Development plans in Northern Ireland comprise:

- *Area Plans* - dealing with matters affecting the development and use of land for the whole or a substantive part of one or more District Council's area;
- *Local Plans* - affecting part of one or more District Council's area; and
- *Subject Plans* - based on consideration of a particular description of development or other use of land in the area to which it relates.

The principal vehicle for applying the Strategy to local areas will be the area plan.

The proposals and policies to be included in area plans will be identified only after a thorough planning assessment of the District and its communities, landscapes and environment. The proposals and policies will therefore be tailored to the specific circumstances and particular needs of each area. For example, in planning for the growth of settlements, limits of development will be defined and land will be zoned for the principal land uses; based on an assessment of any strategic, environmental and/or servicing constraints. A thorough assessment of the latter is important as developers may be expected to bear all or part of the costs involved in providing any new infrastructure required to facilitate the development of zoned land. Indeed, it may be necessary to phase the release of zoned land to enable developers to set priorities for infrastructure investment, and to encourage the orderly implementation of the plan provisions.

Some of the regional policies relate to specific issues of development control, for example, the policy for the control of development in the open countryside. The Department's policy published in 1978 was included within a number of area plans for information, together with the particular definitions of the areas to which the policy applied. The development control policies for the countryside set out in this Strategy come into effect immediately and supersede the previous expressions of policy in existing plans. Proposed plans will review the area definitions of where these policies apply and decisions on the location and extent of the policy areas will be based on a Countryside Assessment for the district. Particular importance is attached to consultations with District Councils in reviewing area definitions.

Planning Applications

A relevant and up-to-date development plan is a very important basis for deciding planning applications. Decisions are not arbitrary, each application is carefully considered against published criteria and standards, the Department's strategy and its associated policy and practice, statutory development plans so far as they are material to the application, and other material considerations.

Pre-application advice is available at your local Planning Office.



Generally, planning permission will be granted if the proposed development will not cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance. The Department strives to provide a speedy and efficient service for processing planning applications, commensurate with the proper assessment of their planning merits, including the important contribution of District Councils, consultees and the general public. The development control process is both open and accessible. In the case of some applications for major developments a public inquiry may be held and in some cases the applicant will be required to provide additional information by way of an Environmental Statement assessing the

likely impact of the project upon the environment and describing any measures envisaged to deal with any significant adverse effects.

Many planning permissions will be subject to conditions designed to ensure that the proposed development is acceptable. Conditions will be imposed only where reasonable, necessary and relevant both to planning and to the actual development. In some instances a developer may be prepared to enter into a planning agreement to facilitate, regulate or restrict the proposed development and in some cases, as a matter of policy, the Department would expect developers to complete an agreement.

Enforcement

The Department will monitor planning decisions and particularly those conditions which enable permission to be granted; for example, occupancy, replacement or landscaping conditions. Enforcement action may be taken to ensure that planning conditions are complied with.

Regrettably there are occasions when development is carried out without the benefit of planning permission. It is therefore important that the Department has recourse to efficient and effective enforcement procedures to deal with breaches of planning control. In each case of unauthorised development it is for the Department to consider whether it is expedient to serve an Enforcement Notice or not. An Enforcement Notice will specify the steps required to remedy the breach of planning control and failure to comply with these is an offence and liable, on summary conviction, to a fine. It should be noted, however, that in practice most breaches are resolved, by co-operation, without the need for formal action.

Development Control powers alone cannot secure implementation of the Strategy. For example, the Department can control the design and layout of a building, although it cannot ensure that it is actually built or occupied. The Department may control the change of use of premises, but it cannot stop an existing business from closing down. It can however ensure, through the operation and enforcement of its development control policies, that there is a balance between development and conservation.

Planning Guidance

The Department accepts that it has a responsibility not only to regulate development but also to provide positive guidance to assist members of the public and their agents to bring forward satisfactory proposals. For example, the quality of rural development is a matter of particular importance and the Department proposes to prepare a guide setting out design principles for new

development in the countryside. The Design Guide will augment the information made available through the Countryside Assessments carried out as part of the plan making process.

When it is necessary, the Department will produce additional guidance in relation to its development control policies and practice. In addition, the Department may prepare design briefs for individual sites. These relate the overall guidance provided by a local planning policy to the particular characteristics of specific sites.

Strategy Implementation

Apart from planning controls, the Department may influence the implementation of the Strategy's objectives by direct action. For example, it is directly involved in a number of areas of physical development and is responsible for the improvement of public areas within selected settlements. It is also preparing enhancement strategies for designated Conservation Areas. A positive approach has been taken to conserving areas of architectural and historical interest with a recognition of the contribution that they can make to economic regeneration.

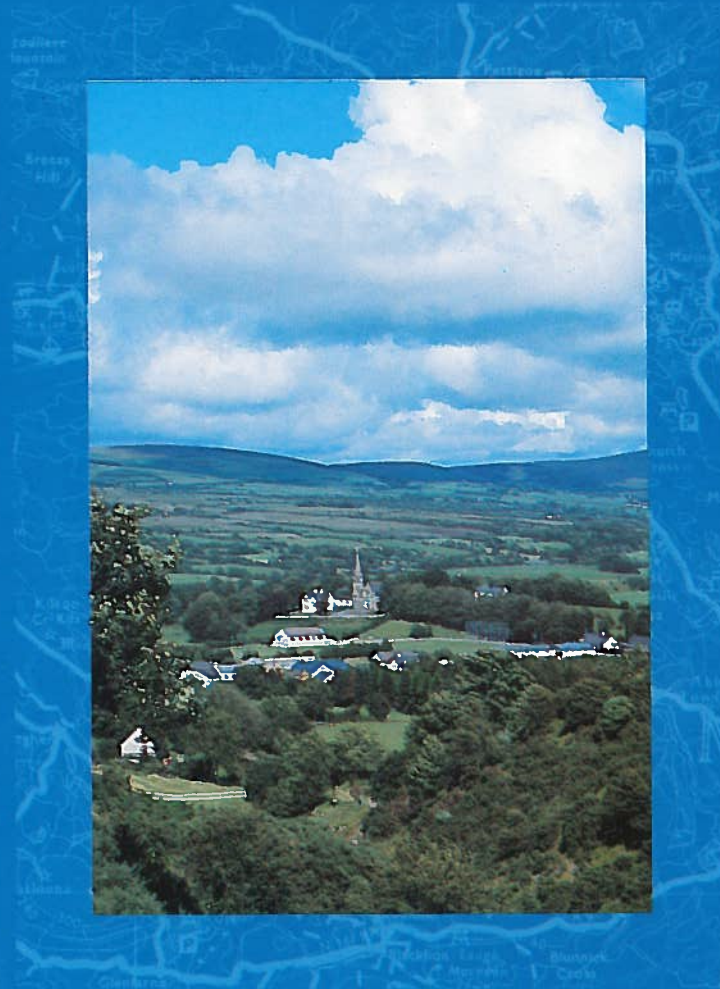
The Department has a positive role in implementing initiatives aimed at assisting economic development, by stimulating private enterprise such as the Urban Development Programme. Likewise, community regeneration projects are supported. The Community Regeneration and Improvement Special Programme (CRISP) is designed to provide regeneration projects in towns and villages in disadvantaged areas with a view to encouraging economic revival. The Department works, in concert with the International Fund for Ireland and in partnership with local community organisations. Regeneration is fostered by a variety of types and combinations of projects. The CRISP schemes and the Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Programme are complementary regeneration activities in disadvantaged rural areas. The two Departments work closely together to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness in implementation.

The Department has power to promote comprehensive development schemes where it is considered necessary that an area should be developed, redeveloped or improved as a whole. It can acquire land in connection with a development scheme and also in the interests of the proper planning of an area. Use of such powers is naturally dependent upon an assessment of need and priority and is subject to the availability of resources.

Review

The Department wishes to ensure that the Rural Strategy remains relevant and up-to-date. It is considered that the Strategy, with its associated policies, has inherent flexibility and will be able to respond to changing circumstances. The plan making process allows for modification and alteration to cater for necessary change and adaptation, as circumstances vary over time.

The Department will evaluate and review implementation by monitoring a number of key environmental and developmental indices. Circumstances can alter, the needs of society can change, and the community's awareness of and response to environmental issues can develop. It normally takes a period of time before a new strategy is fully implemented and operating effectively. Therefore a five year period would be an appropriate time for evaluation. The Department will consider the need for a formal review of the Strategy in the year 2000 when it would be appropriate to consider its progress and the potential for adjustment to ensure its continued relevance to meet the needs of society in Northern Ireland. A major review of the Strategy will be subject to public consultation.



Appendices

APPENDIX 1 - SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Antrim Coast and Glens, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Design Guide, Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, 1989.*
- Business Success in the Countryside, The Performance of Rural Enterprise, Department of the Environment, 1992.*
- Demographic Trends in Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Economic Council Report 57, April 1986.*
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- Diversification on Northern Ireland Farms 1989, S A E Magee, Economics and Statistics Division, Department of Agriculture, 1990.*
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- The Six Acre Standard, Minimum Standards For Outdoor Playing Space, National Playing Fields Association, 1992.*
- This Common Inheritance, Britain's Environmental Strategy, Command Paper, September 1990.*
- Tourism in Northern Ireland, An Indicative Plan, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, 1990.*
- What kind of Countryside do we want?, Options for a new planning strategy for rural Northern Ireland, Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, August 1991.*

In addition to the selected bibliography, a wide variety of relevant publications were consulted, including:

- *all Northern Ireland Area Plans and Rural Subject Plans;*
- *a selected number of other publications relevant to rural development issues in Northern Ireland;*
- *policy guidance by Government Departments and other statutory bodies;*
- *a selection of English, Scottish and Welsh Development Plans and publications; and*
- *European Community reports, directives and other international publications.*

APPENDIX 2 - RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Planning (Tree Preservation Order) Regulations 1973.

Planning (Conservation Areas) (Demolition) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1988.

Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989.

Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 1989.

Planning (Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1991.

Planning (Listed Buildings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992.

Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992.

Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993.

Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993.

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1978.

Water Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

APPENDIX 3 - DEVELOPMENT CONTROL ADVICE NOTES

Published by and available from the Department's Planning Service

1. *Amusement Centres*
2. *Multiple Occupancy*
3. *Bookmaking Offices*
4. *Hot Food Bars*
5. *Taxi Offices*
6. *Restaurants and Cafes*
7. *Public Houses*
8. *Small Unit Housing*
9. *Residential and Nursing Homes*
10. *Environmental Impact Assessment*
11. *Access for People with Disabilities*
12. *Hazardous Substances*

APPENDIX 4 - CONSERVATION AREAS

Location	Date of Designation
<i>Gracehill, Co Antrim</i>	<i>26 March 1975</i>
<i>Cushendall, Co Antrim</i>	<i>6 October 1975</i>
<i>Hillsborough, Co Down</i>	<i>25 June 1976</i>
<i>Sion Mills, Co Tyrone</i>	<i>25 March 1977</i>
<i>Antrim (Riverside), Co Antrim</i>	<i>30 September 1977</i>
<i>Glenarm, Co Antrim</i>	<i>12 May 1978</i>
<i>Rostrevor, Co Down</i>	<i>9 February 1979</i>
<i>Draperstown, Co Londonderry</i>	<i>26 October 1979</i>
<i>Cushendun, Co Antrim</i>	<i>13 June 1980</i>
<i>Moneymore, Co Londonderry</i>	<i>12 September 1980</i>
<i>Carnlough, Co Antrim</i>	<i>30 January 1981</i>
<i>Killough, Co Down</i>	<i>27 March 1981</i>
<i>Armagh</i>	<i>1 July 1981</i>
<i>Portaferry, Co Down</i>	<i>11 March 1983</i>
<i>Newry, Co Down</i>	<i>20 May 1983</i>
<i>Bessbrook, Co Armagh</i>	<i>14 October 1983</i>
<i>Moirea, Co Down</i>	<i>9 December 1983</i>
<i>Moy, Co Tyrone</i>	<i>24 May 1984</i>
<i>Caledon, Co Tyrone</i>	<i>24 May 1984</i>
<i>Downpatrick, Co Down</i>	<i>6 March 1985</i>
<i>Strangford, Co Down</i>	<i>19 September 1985</i>
<i>Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh</i>	<i>11 March 1988</i>
<i>Ballycastle, Co Antrim</i>	<i>28 June 1990</i>
<i>Armagh (Extensions)</i>	<i>14 February 1991</i>
<i>Antrim</i>	<i>1 April 1992</i>
<i>Bushmills, Co Antrim</i>	<i>26 June 1992</i>
<i>Dromore, Co Down</i>	<i>28 August 1992</i>
<i>Whitehead, Co Antrim</i>	<i>25 November 1992</i>
<i>Newry (Extension)</i>	<i>1 December 1992</i>
<i>Linen, Belfast</i>	<i>11 December 1992</i>
<i>Castlewellan, Co Down</i>	<i>22 December 1992</i>
<i>Loughgall, Co Armagh</i>	<i>2 February 1993</i>
<i>Richhill, Co Armagh</i>	<i>2 February 1993</i>
<i>Killyleagh, Co Down</i>	<i>30 March 1993</i>
<i>Newtownstewart, Co Tyrone</i>	<i>20 April 1993</i>

APPENDIX 5 - LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS STRATEGY

ACT	- <i>Advisory Committee on Travellers</i>
AONB	- <i>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i>
ASI	- <i>Area of Scientific Interest</i>
ASSI	- <i>Area of Special Scientific Interest</i>
BUA	- <i>Belfast Urban Area</i>
CAA	- <i>Civil Aviation Authority</i>
CPA	- <i>Countryside Policy Area</i>
CRISP	- <i>Community Regeneration and Improvement Special Programme</i>
EC	- <i>European Community</i>
EHO	- <i>Environmental Health Officer</i>
ESA	- <i>Environmentally Sensitive Area</i>
GB	- <i>Great Britain</i>
GDO	- <i>Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993</i>
IDB	- <i>Industrial Development Board</i>
IFI	- <i>International Fund for Ireland</i>
LEDU	- <i>Local Enterprise Development Unit</i>
LOTS	- <i>Living over the Shop Project</i>
NIHE	- <i>Northern Ireland Housing Executive</i>
NNR	- <i>National Nature Reserve</i>
NPFA	- <i>National Playing Field Association</i>
NR	- <i>Nature Reserve</i>
RSPB	- <i>Royal Society for the Protection of Birds</i>
UK	- <i>United Kingdom</i>

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APPENDIX 7 - DEFINITION OF STRATEGY AREA

For the purposes of definition, the Planning Strategy for rural Northern Ireland will apply to all of Northern Ireland outside the development limits of:

- Bangor;
- Carrickfergus;
- Londonderry; and
- beyond the Inner Edge of the Green Belt for the Belfast Urban Area.

The Strategy will apply to the rural portions of Belfast City Council Area, Carrickfergus Borough Council Area, Castlereagh Borough Council Area, Derry City Council Area, Lisburn Borough Council Area, Newtownabbey Borough Council Area and the North Down Borough Council Area.

APPENDIX 8 - STATISTICAL COMPENDIUM

Table 1 - Population of Urban and Rural Areas 1971-1991

1971	Population 1981	Population 1991	Population 1971-1981	Change 1981-1991	Change 1971-1991	Change
Belfast Urban Area (a)	599,700	507,900	476,000	(91,800)	(31,900)	(123,700)
%	39.0	33.1	30.2	-15.3	-6.3	-20.6
District Towns (b)	406,900	470,300	490,900	63,400	20,600	84,000
%	26.5	30.7	31.1	15.6	4.4	20.6
Rural Areas (c)	529,500	554,000	611,000	24,500	57,000	81,500
%	34.5	36.2	38.7	4.6	10.3	15.4
Rural Towns (d)	101,200	127,700	166,100	26,500	38,400	64,900
%	6.6	8.3	10.5	26.2	30.1	64.1
Small Settlements (e)	87,400	87,800	85,400	400	(2,400)	(2,000)
%	5.7	5.7	5.4	0.5	-2.7	-2.3
Countryside (f)	340,900	338,500	359,500	(2,400)	21,000	18,600
%	22.2	22.1	22.8	- 0.7	6.2	5.5
Total	1,536,100	1,532,200	1,577,900	(3,900)	45,700	41,800

- Definitions:
- (a) The city of Belfast and the built up area adjoining it.
 - (b) The main town in each local government District outside the Belfast Urban Area.
 - (c) All of Northern Ireland outside the Belfast Urban Area and the District Towns.
 - (d) Non-District towns with a population over 1000.
 - (e) Settlements with a population in the range 100 to 1000.
 - (f) All of Northern Ireland outside towns, villages and small settlements.

Source: Census of Population 1971, 1981 (as subsequently adjusted) and 1991. Ward based data used for (a) and (b), grid square data used for (d) and (e).

Table 2 - Northern Ireland Age Structure 1971-1991

	1971	1981	1991
0-15 Years	413,900	443,200	409,900
%	31.5	28.9	26.0
16-60 Years	814,200	837,100	898,700
%	53.0	54.6	57.0
Over 60 Years	238,000	251,900	268,400
%	15.5	16.4	17.0
Total	1,536,100	1,532,200	1,577,000

Source: Census of Population. 1981 figures adjusted to compensate for non-enumeration.

APPENDIX 8 - STATISTICAL COMPENDIUM

Table 3 - Employees by sector 1989

Sector	All Northern Ireland	Rural Northern Ireland (a)
Agriculture (b)	19,180	19,180
%	3.6	15.5
Industry (c)	140,750	43,760
%	26.6	35.5
Services	368,300	60,470
	69.7	49.0
Total	528,320	123,410

Definitions: (a) All of Northern Ireland outside the Belfast Urban Area; (b) Excludes forestry and fishing; (c) Includes forestry, fishing and construction.

Source: Unpublished data from Census of Employment, September 1989

Table 4 - Persons working on Farms 1971 - 1991

	1971	1981	1991
Full Time Owners, Partners and Directors	{39,700}	26,400	22,300
Part Time Owners, Partners and Directors		10,500	12,000
Wives of Owners, Partners and Directors	10,300	5,500	4,600
Full Time Family Workers	11,600	4,900	2,900
Part Time Family Workers	5,600	5,800	6,600
Full Time Hired Workers	4,600	2,700	2,000
Part Time Hired Workers	4,900	5,000	7,000
Total Agricultural Labour Force	76,700	60,800	57,400

Source: Department of Agriculture

Table 5 - Households in Urban and Rural Areas 1971-1991

	Households 1971	Households 1981	Households 1991	Change 1971-1981	Change 1981-1991	Change 1971-1991
Belfast Urban Area	177,400	167,500	177,900	(9,900)	10,400	500
%	41.5	36.2	33.5	-5.6	6.2	0.3
District Towns	110,000	138,300	163,400	28,300	25,100	53,400
%	25.7	29.9	30.8	25.7	18.1	48.5
Rural Areas	140,000	156,500	189,000	16,500	32,500	49,000
%	32.8	33.9	35.6	11.8	20.8	35.0
Rural Towns	28,300	38,700	58,400	10,400	19,700	30,100
%	6.6	8.4	11.0	36.7	50.9	106.4
Small Settlements	23,600	26,000	28,000	2,400	2,000	4,400
%	5.5	5.6	5.3	10.2	7.7	18.6
Countryside	88,100	91,800	102,600	3,700	10,800	14,500
%	20.6	19.9	19.3	4.2	11.8	16.5
Total	427,400	462,300	530,300	34,900	68,000	102,900

Definitions and Source: As for Table 1.

APPENDIX 8 - STATISTICAL COMPENDIUM

Table 6 - Planning Permissions Granted for Dwellings in the Countryside 1979-1992

District	Approvals inside strict control areas (a)	Approvals outside strict control areas	All approvals in the countryside (b)
Antrim	600 (62%)	1154 (80%)	1754 (73%)
Ards	930 (54%)	771 (70%)	1701 (60%)
Armagh	394 (70%)	2491 (87%)	2885 (85%)
Ballymena	582 (71%)	1402 (86%)	1984 (81%)
Ballymoney	118 (69%)	869 (87%)	987 (85%)
Banbridge	608 (67%)	1246 (90%)	1854 (80%)
Belfast	41 (65%)	8 (67%)	49 (65%)
Carrickfergus	166 (64%)	103 (68%)	269 (65%)
Castlereagh	406 (62%)	30 (88%)	436 (63%)
Coleraine	369 (65%)	806 (86%)	1175 (78%)
Cookstown	214 (75%)	1460 (89%)	1674 (87%)
Craigavon	823 (67%)	1078 (84%)	1901 (76%)
Derry	208 (58%)	627 (75%)	835 (70%)
Down	848 (63%)	2123 (81%)	2971 (75%)
Dungannon	414 (70%)	1738 (91%)	2152 (86%)
Fermanagh	393 (79%)	2801 (91%)	3194 (89%)
Larne	364 (64%)	522 (76%)	886 (70%)
Limavady	243 (66%)	935 (83%)	1178 (79%)
Lisburn	1771 (56%)	1233 (76%)	3004 (63%)
Magherafelt	235 (80%)	1496 (85%)	1731 (84%)
Moyle	172 (70%)	330 (92%)	502 (83%)
Newry & Mourne	1612 (71%)	2345 (92%)	3957 (82%)
Newtownabbey	617 (69%)	253 (83%)	870 (72%)
North Down	203 (55%)	22 (85%)	225 (57%)
Omagh	297 (76%)	1884 (90%)	2181 (88%)
Strabane	168 (73%)	1038 (89%)	1206 (86%)
Northern Ireland	12796 (65%)	28765 (85%)	41561 (78%)

Definitions: (a) Green Belts, Policy Areas and Areas of Special Control; (b) All of Northern Ireland outside towns, villages and small settlements.

Source: Planning Service records.

Table 7 - Residential Approvals in Areas Subject to Strict Control 1991

Reason for approval

Employment Need	70
%	11.5
Personal Circumstances	32
%	5.3
Replacement	368
%	60.5
Infill	54
%	8.9
Others	84
%	13.8
Total	608

Source: Planning Service records.

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APPENDIX 10 - PHOTOGRAPHS

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