NI Planning Permission

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FREE GUIDE · NORTHERN IRELAND

The 11 NI Councils & Their Development Plans

Which plan and which policies decide your application, council by council

Northern Ireland's councils are at very different stages of preparing their Local Development Plans. This guide explains how the system works, sets out each council's Plan Strategy status as of November 2026, and explains what that means for your application.



11 councils · 11 development plans

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INTRODUCTION

How the plan-led system works

Most planning applications in Northern Ireland are decided by one of the 11 councils. Under section 6(4) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, decisions must be made **in accordance with the local development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise**.

The new Local Development Plan

Each council's Local Development Plan has two documents (s.6(2)): a **Plan Strategy**, setting the strategy and the operational planning policies, and a **Local Policies Plan**, with zonings and site-specific designations. Both go through public consultation and independent examination before adoption.

Until a Plan Strategy is adopted

Councils continue to use the existing area plans prepared by the former Department of the Environment, the **SPPS** (Edition 2, December 2025) and the **retained Planning Policy Statements**, such as PPS 21 for the countryside and PPS 7 for housing.

The key rule

DfI's transitional arrangements state that where a council **adopts its Plan Strategy**, the retained regional policy **ceases to have effect in that council's district** and is no longer material, whether the application was received before or after that date. In those districts, the council's own operational policies apply instead. DfI also states that the retained policies will be cancelled once all eleven councils have adopted a Plan Strategy for their whole area.

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Regionally significant and called-in applications are determined by the Department for Infrastructure rather than the council (SPPS).

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COUNCIL BY COUNCIL · ADOPTED

Councils with an adopted Plan Strategy

As of November 2026, six councils have adopted a Plan Strategy. In these districts the retained PPSs no longer apply, and the council's own policies are used.

Council	Status and key dates (as of November 2026)	Avg. local, Apr to Jun 2026	NIPP local line
Antrim and Newtownabbey ADOPTED	LDP 2030 Plan Strategy adopted **3 July 2025**. DfI issued a section 14 Direction on 28 October 2025 requiring new policy for the Abbey Centre; the council is preparing an addendum. Countryside housing: Policy DM 18; extensions: Policy DM 22.	11.4 wks	028 9477 0001
Belfast ADOPTED	Belfast LDP Plan Strategy 2035 adopted **2 May 2023**. Includes Policies HOU10 and HOU11 on HMOs and flats and Policy HOU13 on short-term lets (consultation on draft supplementary guidance to 16 November 2026).	18.8 wks	028 9591 6888
Derry City and Strabane ADOPTED	LDP 2032 Plan Strategy adopted **10 July 2025**, effective that day. Adopted HMO Policies HOU 13 (30% / 10% caps) and HOU 14 apply until a revision of HOU 13, now in preparation, is adopted; work on the Local Policies Plan has started.	17.3 wks	028 7152 0001
Fermanagh and Omagh ADOPTED	LDP 2030 Plan Strategy adopted **16 March 2023**, effective that day. Local Policies Plan in preparation (timetable updated May 2026).	8.4 wks	028 6624 0001 (Fermanagh) 028 8217 0001 (Omagh)
Lisburn and Castlereagh ADOPTED	LDP 2032 Plan Strategy adopted **26 September 2023**, following DfI's Direction of 28 June 2023 to adopt with modifications.	18.3 wks	028 9235 0001
Mid and East Antrim ADOPTED	LDP 2030 Plan Strategy adopted **16 October 2023**.	10.6 wks	028 2521 0001

Average processing time for local applications (DfI's published average, a median), April to June 2026: DfI Northern Ireland planning statistics (published 22 October 2026). Statutory target: 15 weeks on average. Figures are averages, not a forecast for any individual application.

THE LOCAL POLICIES PLAN

Adoption of the Plan Strategy is the first of two stages of the Local Development Plan. Until the council also adopts its Local Policies Plan, the departmental area plans prepared by the former Department of the Environment remain operational. They continue to supply zonings, settlement limits and many designations, and are read together with the adopted Plan Strategy.

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COUNCIL BY COUNCIL · IN PREPARATION

Councils still preparing their Plan Strategy

In these five councils, applications are still decided under the existing area plans, the SPPS and the retained PPSs, including PPS 21 in the countryside. A draft Plan Strategy can be a material consideration, with weight depending on its stage.

Council	Status and key dates (as of November 2026)	Avg. local, Apr to Jun 2026	NIPP local line
Ards and North Down DRAFT	LDP 2032 draft Plan Strategy published September 2025. Consultation re-run 16 January to 16 March 2026; counter-representations 8 May to 7 July 2026, published 25 September 2026. Not adopted.	18.0 wks	028 9132 0001
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon DRAFT	LDP 2035 draft Plan Strategy published **29 September 2026**; public consultation **13 October to 5pm on 8 December 2026**. Not adopted.	21.8 wks	028 4088 0001
Causeway Coast and Glens PRE-DRAFT	Current plan: Northern Area Plan 2016 (adopted 22 September 2015). The council's revised LDP 2038 timetable indicates publication of the draft Plan Strategy in autumn/winter 2026; we had not seen it published when this guide was checked. **Check with the council.**	20.8 wks	028 7039 0001
Mid Ulster DRAFT	LDP 2030 draft Plan Strategy published 22 February 2019 and submitted to DfI on 28 May 2021. On **27 August 2026** DfI issued a Section 15 Direction requiring modifications, including to housing growth and countryside housing policies. Not adopted.	18.0 wks	028 7912 0001
Newry, Mourne and Down DRAFT	Draft Plan Strategy published **27 June 2025**; consultation to 22 September 2025; counter-representations 30 January to 20 April 2026. Consultation on **focused changes** runs **26 October to 21 December 2026**. Not adopted.	45.8 wks	028 3045 0001

Commenting on a draft Plan Strategy

If a draft Plan Strategy could affect land you own or a project you are planning, it may be worth making a representation during the consultation period. Representations should engage with the tests of soundness that the independent examination will apply.

AREA PLANS IN THE FORMER BMAP AREA

The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 was adopted in September 2014, but that adoption was quashed following a Court of Appeal judgment in May 2017. In the former BMAP area the statutory plan is the earlier adopted plan (in practice the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 in Belfast, Metropolitan Newtownabbey, metropolitan Castlereagh and related urban areas), with draft BMAP a material consideration. BMAP 2015 is not the adopted statutory plan.

Mid Ulster District Council runs its own online planning portal; the other councils use the NI Planning Portal.

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WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

What this means for your application

Topic	Councils with an adopted Plan Strategy	Councils without one
Houses in the countryside	The council's own countryside policies (for example Antrim and Newtownabbey Policy DM 18)	PPS 21, Policies CTY 1 to CTY 16
Extensions	The council's own residential extensions policy (for example Antrim and Newtownabbey Policy DM 22)	PPS 7 (Addendum), Policy EXT 1
HMOs	The council's own housing policy (for example Belfast Policies HOU10 and HOU11)	The SPPS and retained policy; permission is needed for an HMO in every council area
Zonings and settlement limits	From the departmental area plans, which remain operational until the Local Policies Plan is adopted	
Regional policy	The SPPS (Edition 2) applies everywhere and is material to all decisions.	

Practical checklist

- ☐ Council area confirmed (boundaries do not always follow postal towns)
- ☐ Plan Strategy status checked on the council's LDP page
- ☐ The correct policy wording identified for your proposal
- ☐ Area plan zoning, settlement limit and designations checked
- ☐ Any draft Plan Strategy policy that may carry weight noted
- ☐ Council's current processing times factored into your programme

Common pitfalls

- ✕ **Quoting PPS 21 in an adopted-plan district.** It no longer applies there; use the council's own policy.
- ✕ **Ignoring a draft plan.** A draft Plan Strategy is not yet the plan, but it can be material, especially as it nears adoption.
- ✕ **Relying on out-of-date summaries.** Plan Strategy stages and DfI directions change; check the council's own page.
- ✕ **Assuming neighbouring councils match.** Two sites a mile apart can fall under quite different policies.

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HOW WE HELP

Local knowledge in all 11 councils

We work across every council area in Northern Ireland from our Belfast base, and keep track of each council's plan and policies so you do not have to.

1. **Policy check.** We confirm which plan and which policies apply to your site today.
2. **Strategy.** We advise how a draft or newly adopted plan affects your proposal and its timing.
3. **Representations.** We can prepare representations on a draft Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan for landowners and businesses.
4. **Applications.** We prepare and manage applications with each council's planning team.

PO

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Not sure which rules apply to your site?

Tell us the address or townland and what you plan to do, and we will confirm the council, the plan and the policies that apply.

Request a site-specific assessment → niplanningpermission.co.uk/contact-us

Or call 028 9591 6888 · info@niplanningpermission.co.uk · Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

CONTACT NI PLANNING PERMISSION

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Important: This guide is general guidance on the planning system in Northern Ireland. It is not legal advice and does not replace advice on your own site. Planning law, policy and fees change; the content is believed correct at the date of publication (November 2026), and you should check the current position with the relevant council before relying on it. No outcome can be guaranteed: every application is decided by the council on its own merits.

SOURCES

Official sources used

All council pages were checked on 13 November 2026. Plan Strategy stages change: always check the council's own LDP page.

- **Planning Act (NI) 2011, s.6 (local development plan)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/section/6
- **Planning Act (NI) 2011, s.45 (determination of applications)**
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/section/45
- **DfI: Planning Policy (SPPS transitional arrangements)**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-policy
- **DfI: Retained Planning Policy (PPSs retained under the SPPS)**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/retained-planning-policy
- **DfI: Strategic Planning Policy Statement, Edition 2 (December 2025)**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/strategic-planning-policy-statement
- **Antrim and Newtownabbey BC: LDP 2030 Plan Strategy (adopted 3 July 2025)**
  https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-development-plans/plan-strategy-2030/
- **Belfast City Council: Local Development Plan**
  https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/LDP
- **Belfast LDP Plan Strategy 2035 (Adopted May 2023)**
  https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/getContentAsset/bba4bd89-157d-4209-8d5e-8a6eb58dd760/dfc3d011-8f63-43f6-9ed8-4b444333a1d0/Belfast-LDP-Plan-Strategy-2035-(Adopted-May-2023)?language=en-GB
- **Derry City and Strabane DC: LDP 2032 Plan Strategy Adoption Statement (July 2025)**
  https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/4c8cc3a2-11e1-4c1c-b12a-f02f545fa2e8/0b-LDP-PS-Adoption-Statement,-July-2025.pdf
- **Derry City and Strabane DC: Local Development Plan (incl. HMO policy revision)**
  https://www.derrystrabane.com/subsites/ldp
- **DfI: Departmental Development Plans (remain operational until councils adopt new LDPs)**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/departmental-development-plans
- **Antrim and Newtownabbey BC: Legacy development plans (BUAP 2001; BMAP quashed May 2017)**
  https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-development-plans/legacy-development-plans/
- **Fermanagh and Omagh DC: Local Development Plan (Plan Strategy adopted 16 March 2023)**
  https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/services/planning/local-development-plan/
- **Lisburn & Castlereagh CC: Adopted Plan Strategy (26 September 2023)**
  https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/w/adopted-plan-strategy
- **Mid and East Antrim BC: Local Development Plan (Plan Strategy adopted 16 October 2023)**
  https://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/resident/planning-building-control/planning/local-development-plan
- **Ards and North Down BC: Draft Plan Strategy**
  https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/2650/Draft-Plan-Strategy
- **Ards and North Down BC: Draft Plan Strategy counter representations**
  https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/2926/Draft-Plan-Strategy-Counter-Representations
- **Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon BC: LDP 2035 Draft Plan Strategy published (news, 1 October 2026)**
  https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/council-seeks-public-views-on-its-local-development-plan-2035-draft-plan-strategy/
- **ABC BC: Draft Plan Strategy consultation (13 October to 8 December 2026)**
  https://armaghbanbridgecraigavon.citizenspace.com/planning/abc-draft-plan/
- **Causeway Coast and Glens BC: Development Plan (LDP 2038 timetable)**
  https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/live/planning/development-plan
- **Mid Ulster DC: Mid Ulster Development Plan (Draft Plan Strategy, s.15 Direction 27 August 2026)**
  https://www.midulstercouncil.org/planning/mid-ulster-development-plan
- **Newry, Mourne and Down DC: Local Development Plan**
  https://www.newrymournedown.org/local-development-plan
- **Newry, Mourne and Down DC: Draft Plan Strategy focused changes (26 October to 21 December 2026)**
  https://www.newrymournedown.org/draft-plan-strategy-focused-changes
- **DfI: Northern Ireland planning statistics, April to June 2026 (published 22 October 2026)**
  https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-june-2026
- **NI Planning Portal: public planning register**
  https://planningregister.planningsystemni.gov.uk/
- **Mid Ulster District Council: Planning (own online portal, property certificates)**
  https://www.midulstercouncil.org/planning

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