



Mid Ulster

Position Paper – Landscape Assessment

September 2015

Prepared by Mid Ulster Environment and Conservation Team.

Landscape Assessment of Mid Ulster Council

Purpose: To provide members with a Landscape Assessment for Mid Ulster Council to highlight those areas most vulnerable to change within the district.

Content: The paper provides information on:-

- (i) The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Ulster District and its key findings;**
- (ii) In addition to identifying the key characteristics of each landscape character area, the report also assesses the principal forces for change and issues influencing landscape condition and sensitivity.**
- (iii) This paper forms part of the Countryside Assessment for Mid Ulster and is to be read in conjunction with Environmental Assets Paper, Strategic Settlement Appraisal Paper and Development Pressure Analysis Paper.**

Recommendation: That the Planning Committee notes the contents of this paper in relation to our districts diverse landscape character and its interaction with the planning function.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Mid Ulster comprises a diverse mix of landscapes including mountains and moorlands, bog lands, drumlins, lowlands and important river valleys. Recognition of landscapes of national importance is given through the designation of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). A significant part of the **Sperrin AONB** (designated 2008) lies within the Mid Ulster District. The purpose of the AONB designation is to protect and conserve the scenic qualities of the area and promote their enjoyment. This is supported by two designated **Areas of High Scenic Value** within Mid Ulster District, namely West Lough Neagh Shores and Slieve Gallion Slopes.
- 1.2 All of the NI landscape has been classified by the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (NILCA 2000), which was compiled by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. This uses accepted systematic methods of landscape character assessment. Within it the NI landscape has been subdivided into 130 different landscape character areas, each with a distinctive character based on geology, ecological features, landform and landuse. This Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Report indicates for each area, the principal forces for change and the key issues influencing landscape sensitivity. It also suggests specific landscape guidelines for each area based either around landscape management or establishing principles for accommodating development.
- 1.3 The information contained in each section is used as a way of identifying and protecting these areas, so that our natural environment can be sustained and enhanced. Mid Ulster contains twenty-two Landscape Character Areas, the majority of which are shared with neighbouring districts. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the main characteristics of each LCA within the District.
- 1.4 A Regional Landscape Character Assessment for Northern Ireland is also currently being prepared by Northern Ireland Environment Agency. It is currently in draft form and, as its title suggests, adopts a more strategic view of landscape assessment. Given the status and nature of the report, it has been given limited weight as part of this Mid Ulster Landscape Assessment.
- 1.5 The NILCA 2000 document also identifies **Areas of Scenic Quality (ASQ)**. They represent a second tier (below AONB) in the hierarchy of landscape classifications. They are characterised by visually pleasing patterns or combinations of landscape elements, and by their generally unspoilt character, free from major intrusion. In addition they may include significant sites or features of nature conservation, historic or cultural importance. Often they are visually prominent landscapes such as ridge tops, scarp slopes above settlements, and Lough Neagh shores, and therefore are particularly

sensitive to change. Within Mid Ulster there are 5 such ASQ's. These are summarised below;

The Slieve Gallion Slopes

This area straddles the old Magherafelt /Cookstown district boundary. It forms a distinctive landscape of scenic farmland and deep wooded glens along the eastern fringes of Slieve Gallion. The farmland shows a varied patchwork of pastures and dense well managed hedgerows with numerous hedgerow trees, while the undulating farmland at the foot of the mountain is deeply dissected by narrow, branching, mixed wooded glens.

The Lough Neagh Fringe.

This distinctive landscape straddles the three Landscape Character Areas of Lower Bann Valley (No. 52), West Lough Neagh Shores (No. 48), and Lough Neagh Peatlands. It extends from the conifer woodlands of Portglenone Forest in the North through the flat pastures, bog and wet woodland on the fringes of Lough Beg and Lough Neagh and Lough including areas such as Traad Point, Ballyronan Nature Reserve and Washing Bay Local Nature Reserves. The open character of the Lough fringe should be retained in order to maintain views across the water from local roads.

The Clogher Valley lowlands;

The Clogher Valley in South Tyrone has its own special landscape character. It is a detailed intricate landscape, rich in minor landscape features and idyllic views. The drumlins and long ridges on the floor of the valley have scattered irregular character, producing a diverse undulating topography and constantly changing enclosed views. The valley landscape is enhanced by views of historic designed landscapes with splendid estate houses such as Castel Grounds and Church Tower, lakes and wooded parkland in attractive riverside setting.

The low lying floodplains of Blackwatertown Valley;

Here the Blackwater River is often tightly enclosed by drumlins and there are only limited views to the waters edge. Historic wooded designed landscapes, large estate houses, parkland and lakes enjoy an attractive riverside setting. The Caledon Estate on the border with the Republic is the largest and most improved designed landscape, with stone walls and acres of mature woodland.

Dungannon Drumlins and Hills;

This is a drumlin landscape, but with a usually large scale landform. The drumlins form steep, rounded hills, some of which are linked together to form groups of hills with distinctive, rounded summits. Most fields are enclosed by

dense hedgerows and there are numerous hedgerow trees. The landscape has a sheltered and enclosed character.

- 1.6 Broad, strategic guidance with regard to the sensitivity of Northern Ireland's landscapes is also contained within NIEA Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG); Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes (2010). It contains an assessment of each of the 130 LCAs by referencing the characteristics and values associated with each LCA. Although specifically concerned with impact of wind energy development it is considered to be a useful reference for identifying those landscapes within Mid Ulster that are particularly vulnerable to change.
- 1.7 Within the SPG each LCA is given an overall sensitivity level using a five point scale ranging from high to low. Of the 22 LCA's that fall within the Mid Ulster district (See Map No. 1) a total of 20 have been given either a high or high to medium sensitivity rating. West Lough Neagh Shore LCA is the only LCA categorised as medium sensitivity and Slievemore LCA is categorised as medium to low. It is acknowledged within the guidance that there may be considerable variation in sensitivity level within each LCA, reflecting the fact that the LCAs are broad character or identity areas. The overall sensitivity level given is the level that prevails over most of the LCA's geographic area.

Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPA's)

- 1.8 With regard to the Mid Ulster landscape it is also worthy of note that Local Landscape Policy Area's (LLPAs) have been designated across the district and are identified in the relevant local area plans. LLPA's consist of those features and areas within and adjoining settlements which are considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance and therefore worthy of protection from undesirable or damaging development.
- 1.9 The features or combination of features that contribute to the environmental quality, integrity or character of an LLPA are specific to individual settlements and differ from place to place. Further details of LLPA's, including maps indicating their boundaries is contained in previous position paper Environmental Assets and Settlement Appraisal.

2.0 Key findings

- 2.1 Following careful consideration of the information contained within Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (NILCA) 2000 and SPG on Wind Energy Development in NI Landscapes, and some visual inspection of the area, this paper provides a broad strategic picture of those parts of the district that are considered to be particularly vulnerable to change (see Map No.2 Vulnerable Landscapes within Mid Ulster). It is acknowledged that there may

be considerable variation in the level of vulnerability within identified areas reflecting the strategic picture it provides.

2.2 Areas identified as being vulnerable to change include;

- All of the iconic and widely visible Sperrins AONB whose summits and steep upper slopes. The summits and slopes would be highly sensitive to the introduction of high structures in particular given their dramatic setting and wide visibility.
- All Areas of Scenic Quality identified within NILCA 2000 and summarised above under paragraph 1.5 i.e. the Slieve Gallion Slopes, Dungannon Drumlins and Hills, Clogher Valley lowlands, Blackwatertown River Valley and the Lough Neagh Fringe. The lough Neagh Fringe is considered particularly sensitive to all types of development given its wealth of natural heritage features, as identified in the environmental asset paper, and its high scenic quality.
- The majority of the lough Neagh Peatlands LCA due to its generally open yet often small scale, intricate landscape character and its huge diversity of both natural and cultural landscape features.
- The majority of the Lower Bann Valley LCA which has a wealth of nature conservation interest and parkland landscapes.
- The prominent ridges and escarpments that overlook the Clogher Valley. This this area would be particularly vulnerable to the introduction of high structures, not only because of its wide visibility, but also due its wealth of nature and wetland features.
- All 4 Ramsar sites, as identified within the Environmental Assets Paper; i.e. Lough Neagh and Lough Beag, Slieve Beagh, Ballynahone Bog and Black Bog.
- All European designated sites, as identified within the Environmental Assets Paper; i.e. 2 Special Protection Areas and 10 Special Areas of Conservation.

2.3 Other areas within the Mid Ulster District have been excluded due to their relatively low landscape/visual sensitivity by comparison, including;

- Lands north and west of Maghera and the A6 traffic route, incorporating part of Garvagh Farmland LCA and western portions of Lower Bann Valley LCA. Between rising land close to the Sperrins and the flat topography next to the

River Bann, the landform becomes more undulating and less sensitive to change.

- Lands west of Tobermore (within Moyola Valley LCA) and surrounding Desertmartin. Surrounding mountains provide a strong sense of enclosure and considerable backdrop at this location. The deeply undulating landscape and strong treed character combine to limit localised views providing a greater capacity to accommodate development without detriment to rural character.
- The eastern and southern and portion of Carrickmore Hills LCA. Although categorised as having a high to medium sensitivity rating to wind development, the landscape is already affected by gravel extraction and industrial development. This, in addition to its poor quality agricultural land, diminishes its overall landscape quality leaving it less vulnerable to development.
- The majority of Slievemore LCA which has a medium to low sensitivity classification as per the SPG. The limited visibility and prominence of the hill tops combined with the presence of localised enclosure by forestry and of various man-made influences have resulted in a reduced sensitivity.
- The majority of the West lough Neagh Shore LCA which has a medium sensitivity classification as per the SPG. Man-made influences such as the disused airfield, industrial uses, and linear forms of residential development combine with the limited inward views to reduce its overall sensitivity.
- The majority of Dungannon Drumlins and Hills LCA. Many of the districts settlements, including Dungannon and Coalisland, are accommodated within this LCA. Broadly speaking, landscape views are inward looking and short, interrupted by topography and vegetation. It is considered that the character of the landscape combined with the existing pattern of development is such that similar trends of development in these areas would not pose a significant threat to its overall landscape quality.
- Parts of the Clogher Valley lowlands and lower slopes of Brougher Mountain LCA. It considered this area can be distinguished from surrounding lands due to its location away from distinctive hill tops, escarpment edges and skylines. Although overlooked by views from adjacent lands, its sensitivity is lessened due to the existence of forest plantations and the strong enclosure provided by trees and hedgerow.

3.0 Conclusion:

- 3.1** This paper has described the range of varying landscape characters within the Mid Ulster District. It has also set out the statutory obligations which a local

authority must meet when preparing a local development plan. The Mid Ulster Local Development Plan will need to balance development with the protection of the districts most vulnerable landscapes.

- 3.2** This paper was written to reflect the current position within the Mid Ulster District Council area as of September 2015. It is recommended that;
- i. Policy options for greater policy control than existing should be explored for the following areas;
 - The Lough Neagh Fringes – for all types of development.
 - The High Sperrins – in respect of high structures only e.g. wind turbines, and telecommunication masts.
 - The escarpments and prominent ridges overlooking Clogher Valley – in respect of high structures only e.g. wind turbines, and telecommunication masts.
 - ii. The paper be sent to NIEA to establish whether there have been changes to the sensitivities of the districts LCA's in light of the ongoing work in relation to the preparation of the Regional Landscape Character Assessment;
 - iii. The Landscape Assessment forms part of the Countryside Assessment and as such is part of the Sustainability Appraisal and should be used to inform the SEA;
 - iv. The Landscape Assessment should be taken into account when formulating the LDP.

APPENDIX 1

Below is a summary of the characteristics of each Landscape Character Area that fall within Mid Ulster. The sensitivity rating attributed to each LCA as per the SPG Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes (2010) is also highlighted. Please also refer to Map No.1, Landscape Character Areas and Map No.03, LCAs and Vulnerable Landscapes.

Brougher Mountain - High to Medium Sensitivity

The eastern portion of this LCA lies within the plan area. Brougher Mountain is an upland area of broad ridges which extends in a south westerly to north easterly direction. To the south the ridge becomes more broken and subdivided to form a crumpled plateau and rounded summits. To the north, the ridge is lower, with a well-defined escarpment to the south east. Pastoral side valleys lead up into these hills, giving way to upland landcover only on the highest ground. The escarpment has steep plummeting slopes and long views out over the Clogher Valley to the south and east. The escarpment slopes and summits are particularly prominent and therefore sensitive to change. New development is best accommodated on lower slopes with development on skylines best avoided.

Clogher Valley Lowlands - High Sensitivity

The eastern portion of this LCA falls within the plan area. This low lying area is confined between the ridges of Brogher Mountain to the north and Slieve Beagh to the south. It is a broad distinctive corridor of undulating lowland. The lowland is mainly covered with drumlins, whilst between these are areas of flatter land, linked by streams and rivers. The landscape is in good condition with intact field boundaries and a high degree of unity and enclosure. The lowlands are overlooked in views from the adjacent uplands and landscapes within these views are particularly sensitive. The wider corridor, with its associated meadows is also vulnerable to change. Development has been generally well integrated into the existing pattern of small hills, ridges and mature vegetation. The skylines and the characteristically flat open bog areas are best kept open and free of development.

Slieve Beagh – High to Medium Sensitivity

Only the northern tip of this LCA falls within the plan area. This area comprises Slieve Beagh and a surrounding area of rolling sandstone uplands. The massive rounded summit of Slieve Beagh is dominant. Forestry is a major landuse and accounts for two fifths of the area and in most cases is considered a positive landscape feature. There are no villages within the area; housing is dispersed on farms, along the valleys and on lower slopes. Its open exposed character, with panoramic views, makes it quite sensitive to change.

South Sperrin - High Sensitivity

Only the eastern tip falls within the plan area. The broad upland ridges of the Sperrins in this area form a backdrop to the valley landscapes. The mountain skyline is open, with upland grasses and rocky screes on the slopes leading to the summits. The valley slopes are deeply undulating and dissected by tributary burns. The character and pattern of the landscape changes gradually from the valley floor to the upper moorland slopes. The river valleys are overlooked by viewpoints from roads on the surrounding ridgetops and therefore the whole area is extremely sensitive to changes that would affect its unspoilt character. This landscape would be sensitive to expansion of commercial forestry, mineral extraction or wind farm development.

Beaghmore Moors and Marsh - High Sensitivity

The plan boundary splits this LCA in half with the eastern portion falling within. This is a relatively elevated, rolling plateau of wide shallow valleys and broad, rounded ridges to the south and east of the Sperrin Mountains. Slopes typically have shallow, smooth profiles, although some quarried outcrops have an irregular skyline. There are no large settlements within the area however scattered built development has a strong visual influence. The most significant pressure for change is from the large, modern sand and gravel quarries, most of which are close to the A505.

Sperrin Mountains - High Sensitivity

Only the very eastern tip falls within the plan area. The Sperrin Mountains form a spine across the North West and a backdrop to views. The Sperrins have a dramatic appearance and as such are a visually prominent feature. This open mountain landscape is extremely sensitive to change, as even relatively small elements in the landscape are visible over long distances. The most significant pressures for change are from mineral extraction and windfarms on the upper slopes, and built development on the valley slopes.

Binevenagh – High to Medium Sensitivity

Only the southernmost tip falls within the plan area. The escarpment of Binevenagh is a dominant feature of the landscape to the east of the Roe Basin. It is a high cliff, with a sequence of steep summits which form striking local landmarks with distinctive slope profiles. This is an expansive moorland landscape, dominated by a large scale mosaic of rough pasture, bog and conifer plantations, together with rocky contribute to a wild, unstructured landscape character. The distinctive slope profiles of the escarpment summits are landmarks for miles and any development in these areas would detract from their scenic quality.

Glenshane Slopes - High Sensitivity

The majority of this LCA falls within the plan area. The Glenshane Slopes are a relatively small upland area on the eastern fringes of the Sperrins. The highest summit of Carntogher (464m) towers over the Glenshane Pass, forming a dramatic gateway to

the Sperrins from the east. There is no escarpment and the summits are surrounded by steep ridges and scree slopes. The steep, open slopes leading to the summits are carpeted with moorland grasses, closely-cropped by sheep. The lower slopes support a more diverse, patchy mosaic of moorland grasses, heather and rushes and there are rich, verdant pastures at the foot of many ridges. This open moorland landscape is extremely sensitive to change since even relatively small elements in the landscape, such as electricity pylons or a single building are visible over long distances. The only built development in this area is on the lower fringes of the uplands; any buildings or infrastructure (such as wind farm developments) on the upper slopes would be extremely visually intrusive and would threaten its intrinsic qualities of wild remoteness and isolation.

Upper Moyola Valley – High to Medium Sensitivity

The entire LCA lies within the plan area. The Upper Moyola Valley is the broad basin of the Moyola River on the eastern fringes of the Sperrin Mountains. It is dominated by the peak of Slieve Gallion to the south. The valley is deeply undulating, with steep, rounded slopes dissected by numerous small branching streams. The slopes become steeper and smaller in scale towards the centre of the valley. The surrounding mountains provide a strong sense of enclosure. The landscape becomes larger in scale towards the outer margins of the valley, where many of the fields are enclosed by stone walls. This regular field patchwork extends high up onto the slopes of the surrounding mountains, often with a striking division between the farmland and the moorland above. The landscape is more intensively farmed on the more elevated parts of the vale, where hedgerows are in relatively good condition. However, the farmland on the lower slopes of the upland moors is of poorer quality, with gappy hedgerows, dominated by gorse and bracken. The undulating landform and dense woodland towards the valley centre tends to screen any buildings and development. However, there is more evidence of pressure for development in the more accessible areas, close to the straight roads and larger settlements on the higher land. Here development is more prominent and the landscape generally, more sensitive.

Slieve Gallion – High Medium Sensitivity

This entire LCA lies within the plan area. Slieve Gallion is a prominent peak on the far eastern fringe of the Sperrins. It has a distinctive profile, with a steep sided, flatter summit than the surrounding mountains and an uneven slope profile. Slieve Gallion is a major presence overlooking the drumlin farmland to the south. The lower slopes of Slieve Gallion have a diverse landscape pattern, with an irregular patchwork of fields, punctuated by small blocks of woodland. There are no large settlements and the many scattered farms are connected by narrow twisting lanes. The summit and steep slopes of Slieve Gallion are extremely sensitive to change as they are prominent in views throughout the lowlands on the western shores of Lough Neagh. The scenic quality of landscape elements at Lough Fea are threatened by active sand and gravel quarries.

Cookstown Farmlands – High to Medium Sensitivity

The entire LCA lies within the plan area. Defined as the gently rising lowlands to the west of Lough Neagh by the draft NIRLCA. This is a settled landscape which contains the plantation town of Cookstown. This is mainly a lowland drumlin landscape, with the landform becoming steeper and the drumlins more pronounced to the west and towards Slieve Gallion to the northwest. To the east the landform flattens towards the floodplains of the Ballymullan, Ballinderry and Killymoon Rivers. These river corridors, with their associated trees and woodlands, represent the most sensitive parts of the landscape.

Carrickmore Hills – High to Medium Sensitivity

The eastern half of this LCA falls within the plan area. The Carrickmore Hills are a distinctive upland landscape to the south of the Sperrins. The area is fringed by higher hills on its northern sides. To the west and east the hills slope down to lowland farmland, towards Omagh and Cookstown respectively. The landform of the plateau is undulating however the summits have a more irregular, rocky landform and irregular silhouettes which are landmarks for miles around. This is a landscape of marginal farmland, which has a rough character and is relatively poor condition. The most obvious pressures are from sand and gravel quarries and also wind farms.

Slievemore - Medium to low Sensitivity

The eastern half of this LCA falls within the plan area. Slievemore is the summit of the sandstone ridges which dominate the landscape of south east Tyrone. These hills form a relatively continuous block between Pomeroy and Ballygawley. The summits have a broad and rounded landform. There are long views from the ridge top summits over the surrounding lowlands. Large scale forestry and mineral extraction are significant features. The open rounded summits are sensitive to change, but the more complex, undulating topography of the lower slopes could accommodate development.

Dungannon Drumlin and Hills - High to Medium Sensitivity

This is the largest LCA within the plan area. This is a drumlin landscape, but with an usually large scale landform. The drumlins form steep, rounded hills, some of which are linked together to form groups of hills with distinctive, rounded summits. Most fields are enclosed by dense hedgerows and there are numerous hedgerow trees. The landscape has a sheltered and enclosed character. To the south the River Blackwater cuts through the Drumlins from the Clogher valley and the limited road network follows the course of the river. The land to the south and west is more low-lying and here the drumlins are separated by a gently rolling lowland plain. Areas with a shallow landform are most vulnerable. To the north most development pressure is located around the edges of the loughs and near the motorway.

Blackwater Valley - High Sensitivity

The northern portion falls within the plan area with the Blackwater River defining the district boundary at this location. The Blackwater forms the political border with the Republic of Ireland for some of its stretch and this area is particularly secluded with limited settlement. This allows for particularly picturesque, unspoilt setting with pleasant vistas along the river from many locations. The secretive character of the area is reinforced by overgrown hedges and trees as well as the lack of overt man-made development in the area. The small scale, enclosed character of the valley means that large scale development could not be easily accommodated into the landscape.

Loughgall Orchard Belt - High to Medium Sensitivity

Only a small western portion falls within the plan area. This LCA is characterised by low rolling drumlins which fall towards Lough Neagh to the north and to the slopes of the Blackwater valley to the west. This is a varied landscape, with a mix of scales and landscape patterns. In some areas there are pleasant long views across the across mixed farmland but elsewhere views are more contained by narrow tree lined roads or regenerating scrub. The majority of the landform has good tree cover and is therefore not particularly sensitive to change. The more open land on the lower slopes and low lying areas is the most sensitive.

West lough Neagh shores - Medium Sensitivity

The entire LCA lies within the plan area. The landscape of the West Lough Neagh Shores is found to the east of Cookstown, on the extensive floodplain of the Ballinderry River and its tributaries. The land is relatively low lying, with a transition from shallow drumlins on the edges of the floodplains, to extensive flat farmland on the fringes of Lough Neagh. Traditionally, larger properties and settlement clusters were sited on higher land, with cottages dispersed in a linear pattern along embanked floodplain roads however in recent years this pattern has become increasingly overwhelmed by ribbon development. The relatively flat and open nature of the landscape means that new development would be prominent. The open character of the Lough fringe should be retained in order to maintain views across the water from local roads.

Magherafelt Farmland – High to Medium Sensitivity

The entire LCA lies within the plan area. Magherafelt Farmland is a relatively elevated area adjacent to the West Lough Neagh Shores. The drumlin landform is generally not as well-defined as in the surrounding lowlands, but individual small drumlins are important landscape features which are often up-standing from the farmland plateau. The landscape often seems open, with long views. Most roads are extremely straight and some are un-enclosed. The most sensitive landscapes are often relatively small in scale. For instance, the narrow stream corridors, small drumlins (such as Killowen Hill) and local ridgetops (such as Mullaghby Hill) are all important local features which would be extremely vulnerable to the impact of any form of development.

Moyola Floodplain – High to Medium Sensitivity

The entire LCA lies within the plan area. Moyola Floodplain is dominated by the low-lying floodplain landscape of the Moyola River to the south of Maghera. The landform is almost flat beside the river, and the very shallow slopes are generally the flattened remnants of drumlins. There are numerous meandering rivers and branching tributary streams. The land rises to the east, where drumlins predominate and the landscape is more settled, with clustered villages and belts of woodland. Roads are dead straight, with sharp angular bends, and are built on embankments. The remote character of the floodplain landscape is vulnerable to the impact of inappropriate development, particularly if it forms a continuous ribbon along the edge of the floodplain.

Garvagh Farmland - High to Medium Sensitivity

The southern portion falls within the plan area. The area is dominated by rounded drumlins, with the characteristic smooth, elliptical form. Most are consistently aligned along a NW-SE axis. There are often patches of marsh in low-lying areas between the drumlins. All fields are enclosed by hedgerows and there are numerous hedgerow trees. The dense tree cover, together with the undulating drumlin landform, gives this landscape an enclosed character. The area is generally under pressure for new built development, particularly close to Maghera.

Lower Bann Valley - High Sensitivity

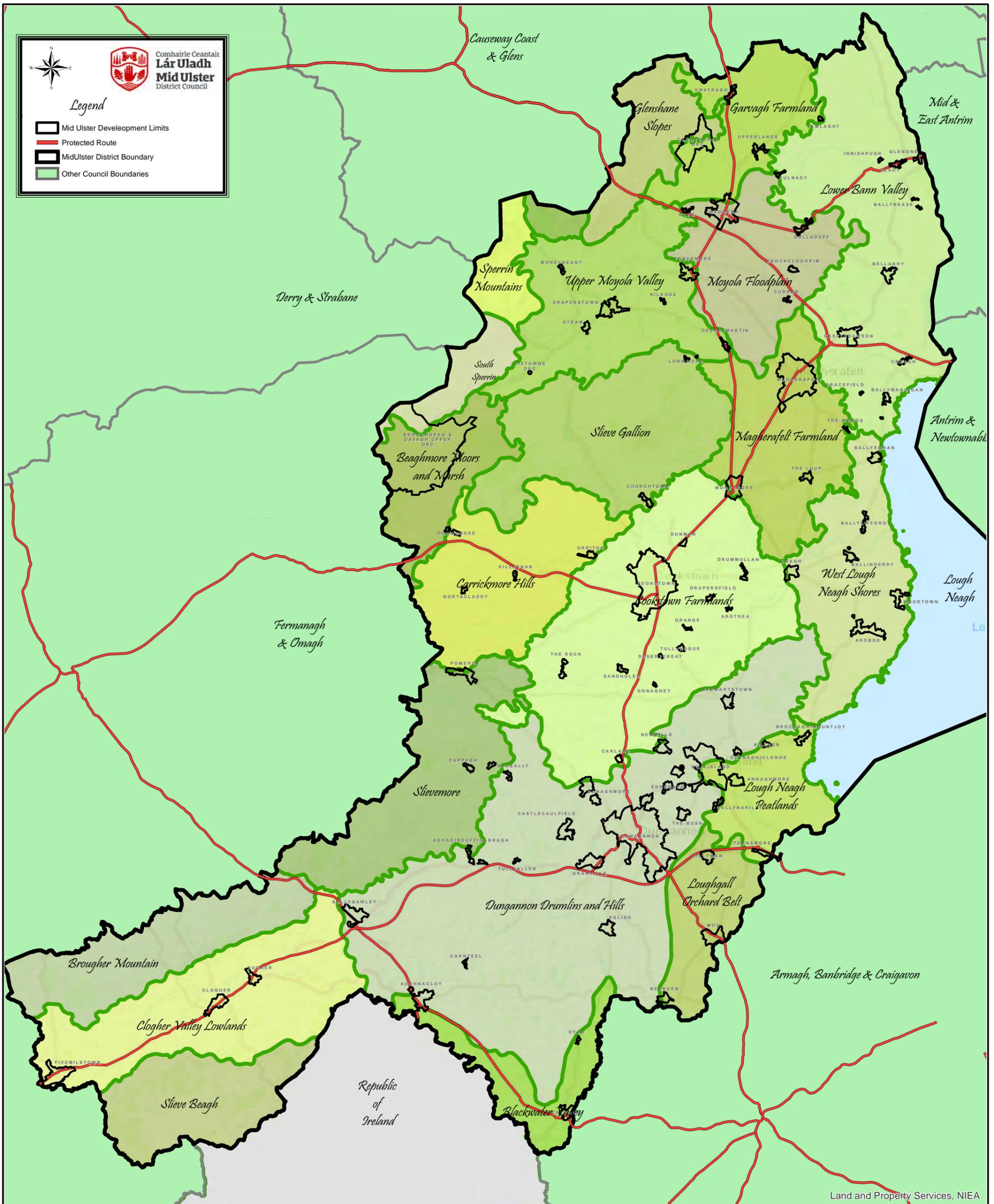
A significant portion of this LCA falls within the plan area. The land is relatively low-lying, with a transition from shallow drumlins on the edges of the floodplains, to extensive flat pastures, bog and wet woodlands on the fringes of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg. Stretches of the rivers are enclosed by embankments and are often hidden from view by extensive woodlands on wet, low-lying land. The landscape is generally secluded, with a prominent network of hedgerows containing numerous hedgerow trees. The fringes of Lough Beg are particularly remote, with extensive woodland and reedbeds hiding the shores from view. Lough Neagh and Lough Beg are designated as ASSIs and as an SPA. Lough Neagh is also a Ramsar site in recognition of its importance for birds. The extensive wetland fringes of both loughs are particularly sensitive to change.

Lough Neagh Peatlands - High Sensitivity

Only the western tip falls within the plan boundary. The Lough Neagh Peatlands landscape is found on the southern shores of Lough Neagh. Much of the area has been previously worked for peat and has been extensively modified through extraction. The landscape is strongly influenced by the traditional road pattern, which mirrors that of the peat workings. The wetland and shoreline landscapes on the edge of Lough Neagh are extremely sensitive and highly valued for their scenic quality and wildlife interest. Open, flat areas are particularly sensitive to the visual impact of vertical elements. New development can be sustained in small groupings when contained within existing planted areas.

Map 1

Mid Ulster Landscape Character Areas



Land and Property Services, NIEA



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

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