



MID ULSTER

Policy Review Paper

Tourism

June 2016

TOURISM POLICY REVIEW

Purpose: To provide the council with an overview of existing Tourism planning policy and how it compares with the objectives of the SPPS, the Sustainability Appraisal and the Councils growth strategy, in preparation for the new Local Development Plan and to inform the council as to whether these policies should be tailored to Mid Ulster's circumstances.

Content: This paper provides:-

- i. An outline of the objectives contained in the Councils growth Strategy which are relevant to tourism development.
- ii. An outline of the objectives contained in the Sustainability Assessment which are relevant to tourism development.
- iii. An overview of existing policy and how it conforms with the SPPS and the objectives
- iv. Options for the future policy direction of the new tourism planning policy and assessment of those options
- v. Potential wording of new tourism planning policy

Recommendation:

The policy options, including the preferred options, contained within this Paper are subjected to Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment, before any final decisions are made on which will go forward for public consultation in the Preferred Options Paper.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to inform the Planning Committee of current planning policies associated with tourism development and assess whether or not they are fit for purpose against the Council's working objectives regarding the development of tourism, through the new Local Development Plan (LDP) 2030 and whether they need to be tailored to the specific needs of this district.
- 1.2 This paper also contains consideration of how existing planning policies relevant to tourism take account of the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS 2035), the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), Sustainability Appraisal themes and the proposed LDP objectives. A specific tourism

workshop was held with members and Council staff on this particular policy topic in September 2015.

Legislative Context

- 1.3** Article 5 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that the creation of planning policy as part of the Plan Strategy must be done with the objective of furthering sustainable development and in so doing, must take account of policies and guidance issued by OFMDFM, DOE and DRD. Examples of such policies and guidance are, the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS). Further detail on the legislative context of Tourism Development in Northern Ireland is set out within the Tourism Position Paper presented to Planning Committee in June 2015.

2.0 The Objectives

(a) Mid Ulster Council

- 2.1** Mid Ulster's Position Paper 8 outlined a number of key policy objectives that will assist the formulation of the new LDP. Of these working objectives, there are a number which relate to the need to ensure the tourism industry is supported and encouraged to grow and these are highlighted below. These objectives are relevant to tourism development because of the jobs which can be created in the industry and also because of the development which is needed in the District to support a vibrant tourism economy.
- a) To promote diversity in the range of jobs recognising the importance of employment in the primary sector (agriculture forestry and mining), secondary sector (industry and manufacturing) and tertiary sector (administration, commerce, retailing, leisure and tourism).
 - b) The need to protect and enhance the natural and built environment to achieve biodiversity, quality design, enhanced leisure and economic opportunity and promote health and welling.
 - c) To facilitate the creation of 8,500 new jobs by 2030 at a variety of locations where they are accessible to all members of the community, including those without a private car.
 - d) The need to improve connectivity between and within settlements and their rural hinterland through accommodating investment in transportation to improve travel times, alleviate congestion and improve safety for both commercial and private vehicles as well as more sustainable modes of transport including buses, walking and cycling.
 - e) To provide for vital and vibrant rural communities whilst protecting the countryside in which they live by accommodating sustainable growth within the countryside proportionate to the extent of existing rural communities.

- f) To accommodate cultural differences in our communities whilst promoting “shared spaces” to bring people together with equality of opportunity.
- g) To recognise and accommodate entrepreneurship, innovation for large, medium and small firms by attracting new firms and accommodating expanding businesses.
- h) The need to recognise the importance of self-employment and home working, particularly in rural locations.

(b) Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)

- 2.2** A sustainability appraisal is a systematic process which must be carried out during the preparation of a Local Development Plan in order to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which an emerging plan will achieve required environmental, economic and social objectives. In June of 2015¹, the Council received a paper outlining what the objectives of this process would be.
- 2.3** With specific reference to **economic growth** the SA/SEA includes objectives which state that current and future planning policies should take account of the need to;
- Encourage sustainable economic growth
 - To encourage and accommodate both indigenous and inward investment
- 2.4** With specific reference to **social improvement** and according to the SA, current and future planning policies should take account of the need to;
- To offer everybody the opportunity for rewarding and satisfying employment
- 2.5** With specific reference to **environmental protection** and according to the SA, current and future planning policies should take account of the need to;
- To conserve and enhance biodiversity.
 - To maintain and enhance the quality and character of landscapes and townscapes
 - To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment and cultural asset

¹ Sustainability Assessment Incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment, Mid Ulster District Council, June 2015.

(c) Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

- 2.6** The RDS provides an overarching strategic planning frame work to facilitate and guide development in Northern Ireland. It sets out its objectives in terms of economic, social and environmental aims in order to achieve sustainable development. It has clear overarching objectives for the development of economic land and these have been fully considered when formulating the objectives of the SPPS.
- 2.7** The SPPS is a statement of the Department's policy on planning matters that should be implemented across Northern Ireland and it was formally adopted in September 2015. It has been agreed with the Northern Ireland Executive and its objectives have been judged to be in general conformity with those of the RDS. The regional strategic objectives contained within the SPPS in relation to Tourism development are as follows;
- Facilitate sustainable tourism development in an environmentally sensitive manner;
 - Contribute to the growth of the regional economy by facilitating tourism growth;
 - Safeguard tourism assets from inappropriate development;
 - Utilise and develop the tourism potential of settlements by facilitating tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale;
 - Sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale in rural areas; and
 - Ensure a high standard of quality and design for all tourism development.
 - There is a general presumption in favour of tourism developments within settlements.
- 2.8** The SPPS states that the LDP should bring forward appropriate policies and proposals to facilitate sustainable tourism, tailored to the needs and assets of the plan area and in particular should address the following:
- How future tourism demand is best accommodated;
 - Safeguarding of key tourism assets;
 - Identification of potential tourism growth areas;
 - Environmental considerations; and
 - Contribution of tourism to economic development, conservation and urban regeneration.
- 2.9** The SPPS requires that in the preparation of the Local Development Plan the council shall bring forward a tourism strategy, together with appropriate policies that must reflect the aim, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS, tailored to meet the specific circumstances of Mid Ulster. The strategic policy for tourism is set out within the SPPS. The strategic policy states that there will be a presumption in favour of tourism development within settlements, subject to the normal planning requirements.
- 2.10** Within the countryside however it stresses care must taken in order to manage tourism development, in the interests of rural amenity, wider sustainability objectives and the long term health of the tourism industry. The guiding

principle of the strategy is to facilitate appropriate tourism development in the countryside (such as appropriate farm diversification schemes, the re-use of rural buildings and appropriate redevelopment and expansion proposals for tourism purposes) where this supports rural communities and promotes a healthy rural economy and tourism sector.

- 2.11** For new hotel, guest house and tourist hostels the strategic policy stipulates that where there is no suitable site within a settlement such proposals may be appropriate on the periphery of a settlement subject to meeting normal planning requirements.
- 2.12** The strategy policy highlights other acceptable tourist development in the countryside, such as self-catering accommodation, particularly in areas where tourist amenities and accommodation have become established or likely to be provided as a result of tourism initiatives, such as the Signature Projects, or a new or extended holiday park that must be a high quality and sustainable form of tourism development.
- 2.13** Finally the SPPS stresses the importance of protecting tourism assets. The strategy policy states that planning permission should not be granted for development that would, in itself or in combination with existing and approved development in the locality, have an adverse impact on a tourism asset, such as to significantly compromise its tourism value.

3.0 Existing Policy

- 3.1** Planning Policy Statement 16 – Tourism, currently provides the operational planning policy for tourism development. The concept of accommodating sustainable tourism is a significant element of PPS 16, however it does recognise the importance of balancing any new tourism development against its potential impact on rural character, landscape and natural / built heritage. The existing policy highlights that all of these factors are recognised as important considerations in the assessment of such proposals. PPS 16 largely mirrors the provisions of the recently adopted Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) (considered in detail below) in that it recognizes the need to facilitate tourism development in an environmentally sensitive manner. The main difference is that the SPPS explicitly states that a positive approach should be adopted in determining applications for tourism so long as proposals are sustainable, are in accordance with the LDP and will result in high quality forms of development.
- 3.2** The provisions of each policy and the extent to which they are deemed to be in accordance with the objectives outlined above are discussed in the following paragraphs.

POLICY TSM 1 – Tourism Development in Settlements

- 3.3 Policy TSM 1 states that planning permission will be granted for a proposal for tourism development (including a tourist amenity or tourist accommodation) within a settlement; provided it is of a nature appropriate to the settlement, respects the site context in terms of scale, size and design, and has regard to the specified provisions of a development plan.

Does Policy Meet Objectives?

SPPS

- 3.4 This policy is a permissively worded policy which primarily seeks to facilitate tourism development in settlements whilst ensuring that the development respects the site context, in terms of scale, size and design. The aim of facilitating tourism development is mirrored in the SPPS (para 6.259) but is further simplified to state, *“there will be a general presumption in favour of tourism development within settlements, subject to meeting normal planning requirements”*.

SUSTAINABILITY APPRIASAL (SA)

- 3.5 TSM 1 is found to be in accordance with the aims of the SA. The SA aims to *“to encourage sustainable economic growth”* whilst striving to *“maintain and enhance the quality and character of landscapes and townscapes”*. TSM 1 is positively worded in that tourism development will be granted permission within a settlement provided that it respects the site context. This second element of the existing policy accords with the SA objective to maintain and enhance the quality and character of townscapes”.

COUNCIL GROWTH STRATEGY

- 3.6 One of the aims of the Council's growth strategy is the need to *“promote diversity in the range of jobs recognising the importance of employment in the primary sector, secondary sector and tertiary sector (including tourism)”*. It is felt that TSM 1 goes some way to achieving this, particularly in relation to the positive wording in relation to accommodating tourism development and therefore the subsequent jobs that will be created as a result.

POLICY TSM 2 – Tourist Amenities in the Countryside

- 3.7 TSM 2 focuses exclusively on tourism amenities in the countryside and these are broken down into ‘new proposals’ and ‘extension of an existing tourist amenity’. Generally the policy is permissively worded to allow for a range of tourist amenities in the countryside. New development will be permitted provided that there is a locational need or the type of tourist activity requires a rural location. In both cases where buildings are required the scheme should utilise existing buildings or make provision of replacement buildings.
- 3.8 Where a proposed development is of regional importance it must demonstrate substantial benefit to regional tourism as well as substantial benefits to the locality and it must be supported by a tourism benefit statement.
- 3.9 The second strand of the Policy TSM 2 refers to an extension to an existing tourist amenity and permits extensions provided their scale and nature do not

harm rural character. Again the policy stipulates that existing buildings and promotes their reuse in the first instance. If it can be demonstrated that this is not a feasible option will new buildings be considered. All new or replacement buildings should be sited and designed so as to integrate with the overall development.

Does Policy Meet Objectives?

SPPS

- 3.10** TSM 2 meets the SPPS requirement that the planning authority should balance the need to facilitate tourist amenities in the countryside whilst balancing against the principle of safeguarding the environment. Every effort should be taken to ensure that the landscape character is protected at all times. This is also directly in conformity with the objective of the SPPS (para.6.260). The SPPS stipulates that all tourism development in the countryside must be carefully managed in the interests of rural amenity however the guiding principle is that appropriate tourism development should be facilitated where it supports rural communities and promotes a healthy rural economy. This principle covers both the creation of new and the expansion of existing tourist development.

POLICY TSM 3 – Hotels, Guest Houses and Tourist Hostels in the Countryside

- 3.11** TSM 3 states that new or replacement Hotels, guest houses and hostels will be permitted in the countryside in two circumstances. The first is in the case of a replacement of an existing rural building and second where the new build is proposed on the periphery of a settlement. TSM 3 sets out numerous criteria for each circumstance. In the instance of a replacement building the existing building must be of permanent construction, be of suitable size and must not be listed. In addition where the building is a vernacular building replacement will only be approved where it has been demonstrated that is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound. As well as providing significant environmental benefit, the overall size and scale must allow it to integrate into the landscape and the design must be of a high quality. Finally the proposal must not compromise road safety.
- 3.12** The second circumstance referred to in TSM 3 when a new build will be permitted is where the proposed site is on the periphery of a settlement. Before a new tourist development is permitted under the existing policy the applicant must demonstrate that there is no suitable site within the settlement or nearby settlement. It must also be demonstrated that there are no existing opportunities in the locality either through the conversion or re-use of a suitable building or replacement of a suitable building. Finally the development must not dominate or adversely affect the landscape setting of the settlement or otherwise contribute to urban sprawl.
- 3.13** Where the principle of a new building on the periphery of a settlement is established under the above criteria the following sequential location test will then apply. Preference will be given firstly to land adjacent the settlement limit, secondly to a site on the periphery of the settlement which currently contains

buildings or where the site is already degraded, and lastly to an undeveloped site close to the settlement where the development could be visually integrated.

- 3.14 TSM 3 also emphasises the importance of protecting existing tourist facilities through resisting the change of use or replacement of hotels, guest houses or hostels. The final element of the policy refers to the criteria for expansion of existing tourist accommodation and stresses the importance of new buildings or extensions should respect the scale, design and materials of the original building.

Does Policy Meet Objectives?

- 3.15 TSM 3 seeks to facilitate the development of hotels, guest houses and tourist hostels within the countryside in certain circumstances. The SPPS contains a similar principle albeit it is delivered in a more concise manner. Paragraph 6.260 stipulates '*where there is no suitable site within a settlement a new build hotel, guest house, or tourist hostel may be appropriate on the periphery of a settlement subject to meeting the normal planning requirements*'. In addition

POLICY TSM 4 – Major Tourism Development in the Countryside – Exceptional Circumstances

- 3.16 TSM 4 states major tourism development will be permitted in the countryside only in exceptional circumstances. The policy goes on to clarify the 3 circumstances when such development will be permitted. Firstly it must be demonstrated that the development is of exceptional benefit to the tourism industry and therefore it is not envisaged that this policy would be used to facilitate single guest houses or small self-catering developments. Secondly the policy requires that the proposal demonstrates a site specific reason for the choice of site, such as its size or functional requirements.

Does Policy Meet Objectives?

- 3.17 This policy accords with the SPPS objectives to facilitate tourism development in an environmentally sensitive manner. The SPPS stresses the importance of major tourism development schemes demonstrating exceptional benefit to the tourism industry and reflects the existing policy's aim of allowing such development where there is a site specific reason. Where the SPPS goes a step further is that it requires that major tourism development must demonstrate a '*sustainable benefit to the locality*'. Any policy contained within the future LDP must factor this sustainable element into its wording.

POLICY TSM 5 – Self Catering Accommodation in the Countryside

- 3.18 TSM 5 states that permission will be granted for self-catering units in certain circumstances. Namely for a number of units on an existing hotel, guest house or holiday park. A cluster of 3 or more new units close to an existing or approved tourist amenity and finally the restoration of an existing clachan. In the first two circumstances the policy requires that the development is subsidiary in scale and ancillary to the primary tourism use. The policy requires that all permissions for self-catering accommodation will have a condition attached necessitating

that the units will be for holiday letting only and not for permanent residential accommodation.

Does Policy Meet Objectives?

- 3.19** This policy attempts to ensure that there is a sufficient provision of self-catering accommodation in the countryside to meet the demands of the tourist industry. The SPPS states the importance of allowing appropriate self-catering accommodation, particularly in areas where tourist amenities and accommodation have become established or likely to be provided as a result of tourism initiatives, such as the Signature Projects, that must be a high quality and sustainable form of tourism development.
- 3.20** This is in accordance also with the economic and social objectives of the SA and the council's growth strategy which specifically relate to the need for economic growth within Mid Ulster.

POLICY TSM 6 – New and Extended Holiday Parks in the Countryside

- 3.21** TSM 6 states that permission will be granted for a new holiday park or an extension to an existing facility where it is demonstrated that the proposal will create a high quality and sustainable form of tourism development. Such development must be accompanied by a layout and landscaping plan and subject to certain criteria.

Does Policy Meet Objectives?

- 3.22** This policy is directly in accordance with the SPPS requirements which states that new or extended holiday parks must be of high quality and a sustainable form of tourism development. Furthermore this is in accordance also with the economic and social objectives of the SA and the council's growth strategy which specifically relate to the need for economic growth within Mid Ulster.

POLICY TSM 7 – Criteria for Tourism Development

- 3.23** Policy TSM 7 sets out Design and General criteria that apply to all forms of tourism development. It requires amongst other things, appropriate design and layout solutions, as well as appropriate boundary treatments. It requires that the development is compatible with the surrounding land uses and does not harm the amenities of nearby residents. It also stipulates that the development must fully consider the necessary infrastructure in terms of sewerage and road networks.

Does Policy Meet Objectives?

- 3.24** TSM 7 is designed as a general policy to cover all types of tourism development. It is broken down into both the design criteria and also the general criteria for all forms of tourist development. Given the strategic nature of the SPPS it does not consider in detail the numerous criteria listed within the existing policy TSM 7. Nonetheless it does however state that all tourism development must be of appropriate nature, scale and design of the specific proposal must be appropriate to the site context. The themes within the existing policy are also covered by the objectives of the SA/SEA and the LD growth strategy.

POLICY TSM 8 – Safeguarding of Tourism Assets

- 3.25** Policy TSM 8 states that permission will not be granted for development that would in itself or in combination with existing and approved development in the locality have an adverse impact on a tourism asset such as to significantly compromise its tourism value.
- 3.26** Policy TSM 8 is in accordance with the sustainability objectives of the SA, the LDP Growth Strategy and in direct conformity with a key aim of the SPPS (Para. 6.266).
- 3.27** Almost all of these individual aspects of tourism policy as set out in the PPS 16 are reflected in the SPPS. Therefore, Mid Ulster's new Tourism Planning Policy which obviously must be mindful of the SPPS will also incorporate most of the policy concerns as laid out above although the format of a new policy might well be considerably different

4.0 Tourism Workshop

- 4.1** In considering and assessing the policy approach to be taken in Mid Ulster in relation to Tourism a workshop was held with members and council officers to explore the current planning policy within Planning Policy Statement 16 (PPS16) Tourism and discuss where it may need to be tailored to meet local circumstances.
- 4.2** There was broad agreement by members and council representatives that a significant number of issues covered by existing policy PPS 16 remain necessary for the management of Tourism development in our district. However there was a consensus that the existing policies were complex, restrictive, and that the policy tests contained within them were unnecessarily onerous for the applicants. As part of the plan LDP preparation work the council's produced a Position Paper on Tourism and these options formed the basis of discussion at the workshop. The three options discussed were:
- 1) Maintain the Status Quo – Retain the existing Tourism Opportunity Zones alongside existing policies contained within PPS 16 – Tourism.*
 - 2) Case by Case – Each case considered based on defined criteria set out within planning policy, regardless of its location.*
 - 3) Sustainable Approach – target areas with most to offer, either by way of assets / activities / strategic location through the protection of existing and designation of new Tourism Opportunity Zones and Tourism Conservation Zones and in conjunction with a set of policies tailored to Mid Ulster for Tourism Opportunity Zones and the wider district.*
- 4.3** There was a general consensus that to retain the status quo would in effect result in a failure by the council to grasp the opportunity to redress the tourism visitor

numbers imbalance between Mid Ulster and Northern Ireland. Given the findings of the Tourism Position Paper, with Mid Ulster having the second lowest number of overnight trips secured and the second lowest expenditure on overnight trips of all local government districts in 2013, it was agreed that option 1 did not present an adequate solution to the issues facing Mid Ulster. To simply carry forward the existing Tourism Opportunity Zones in association with the existing policies, would not progress Mid Ulster's Tourism Strategy.

- 4.4** There was a significant level of support expressed for option 2, which provides for the consideration of tourism development on a case by case basis. This option would essentially be driven by entrepreneurial activity. Whilst this option would undoubtedly present an opportunity for Mid Ulster to improve tourism facilities and increase tourism numbers it also has the potential to be abused as a means of obtaining planning approval for housing development in the rural area. In addition it could fail to highlight the opportunities for tourism development in relation to important assets of Mid Ulster.
- 4.5** There was mixed response to option 3 to bring forward additional Tourism Opportunity Zones in conjunction with revised tourism policies. There was some debate regarding the potential of option 3 to stifle tourism development that lies outside of Tourism Opportunity Zones. However the concerns raised were allayed by the reassurance given by the Planning Manager that simply because a tourism proposal may lie outside a Tourism Opportunity Zones does not preclude consideration of it's merits on a case by case basis under a revised set of Tourism policies. These revised policies would be more tailored to the needs of Mid Ulster.

5.0 Tourism Strategy and Options for Policy Approach

- 5.1** The promotion and marketing of tourism in Mid Ulster is now the responsibility of Mid Ulster Council. The amalgamation of the three areas of Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt now presents a new opportunity to pool together the key resources enjoyed by all three and move forward with a wider based, more collaborative approach. As of 2013 Mid Ulster had the second lowest number of overnight trips secured and the second lowest expenditure on overnight trips of all the government districts. It is noteworthy that tourism characteristic forms of employment in the Mid Ulster area rate well below the Northern Ireland average. Going forward Mid Ulster's Tourism Strategy in conjunction with appropriately tailored tourism policies must address these shortcomings. The chosen policy direction for Mid Ulster must seek to increase the overall tourism visitor numbers and in addition increase the bed spaces available.
- 5.2** There exists significant potential to develop Mid Ulster's tourism base through the following three core 'products';

- Seamus Heaney Experiences
- Outdoor Activities
- History and Heritage

The 'Seamus Heaney Experiences' could centre around exhibitions, events, literary trails and itineraries. Outdoor activities could cover a range of spheres from "active" holidays involving canoeing, climbing, horse-riding and mountaineering. Finally the theme of history and heritage would encompass local culture, heritage trails and build upon the notion of 'archaeo-astronomy' such as the Dark Skies project within the Sperrins. Furthermore the potential of the key natural assets of Lough Neagh and its associated wetlands and the Sperrin Mountains could be further explored. These latter assets are two of the nine 'key destinations' identified in the Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland 2020.

- 5.3** To ensure that Mid Ulster increases overall tourism numbers and availability of bed spaces any Tourism Strategy for the area, in line with the SPPS, has to be bedded in what is realistic to achieve through the Local Development Plan. A key decision to be taken is the overall policy direction which must be made at the outset of the LDP process based upon the three options suggested within the Tourism Position Paper 8 (2nd June 2015).

Policy Direction - Options

- 5.4** Option 1 is not considered to be a viable policy direction for Mid Ulster given the findings of the Councils Tourism position paper, with Mid Ulster having the second lowest number of overnight trips secured and the second lowest expenditure on overnight trips of all local government districts in 2013, it is clear that maintaining the status quo is not desirable. By maintaining the status quo and having no interaction by way of the local development plan we would potentially lose the opportunity for growth in the region.
- 5.5** The adoption of option 2 to allow a more flexible approach would help redress the tourist visitor numbers imbalance experienced by Mid Ulster to date. This policy approach would allow for a more entrepreneur led provision of tourism amenities within Mid Ulster. This option would mean that the onus would be on the developer to put forward cases for their tourism development based on defined criteria set out within planning policy. There are obvious risks involved with allowing this case-by-case scenario, particularly where it relates to tourist accommodation. There is the potential for this policy approach to be abused as a means of obtaining planning approval housing development in the rural area. In addition, this option may also fail to highlight the opportunities for tourism development in the region in relation to the important assets of the area.
- 5.6** The existing tourism policies have, to a certain degree, failed to develop Mid Ulster's tourism base. The existing tourism policies are an attempt by central government to apply a 'one size fits all' set of policies for the whole of Northern Ireland. Mid Ulster has historically not had the key tourism attractors that other regions have benefited from. It is considered that the third policy option is to adopt a more sustainable approach which seeks to target those areas with most to offer either by way of assets and activities or due to their strategic location,

through the designation of Tourism Opportunity Zones (TOZ's) whilst ensuring adequate protection for natural and built environment through the following measures:

- Built / Natural Heritage policies;
- Special Countryside Policy Area – Lough Neagh Shore;
- High Structures policy at Beaghmore, Sperrins and Clogher Valley Escarpments;
- Policy to protect river corridors
- The retention of Tourism Conservation Zones;

- 5.7** This option would protect the existing Tourism Opportunity Zones already identified within the existing LDP's and also allow for the consideration and adoption of further TOZ's within the Mid Ulster District. This option would also introduce Tourism Opportunity Zones at key road interchanges to allow for the development of motel development. It is considered that this option would allow Mid Ulster tourism to encourage tourism entrepreneurship and allow the tourism base to expand in a sustainable manner. This third option would also be supported by a revised set of accompanying tourism policies which would allow for the consideration of individual tourism proposals outside of designated TOZ's, against a set criteria.

Preferred Approach – Option 3

- 5.8** In light of the above consideration it is recommended that Option 3 be adopted as the preferred option. The Plan will maintain the Tourism Opportunity Zones already identified and considers that some of these areas should be extended and further such zones introduced at the Sperrins at Sixtowns Road. Also within the Clogher Valley, at Parkanaur Forest, Favour Royal Forest and at Lough Neagh e.g. at TRAAD and Ballyronan, while recognising the environmental sensitivities of this area.
- 5.9** Whilst the council recognises the importance of promoting Lough Neagh and the Sperrins as a tourism assets, it is important that development is carried out in a way that does not impact on their environmental sensitivities and therefore any Tourism Opportunity Zones must be limited and focused on particular nodes outside of settlements. In addition this option would introduce opportunities at key transport corridor interchanges to allow for the development of motel development and in doing so further encourage entrepreneurship within the district.
- 5.10** In developing the Local Development Plan it is imperative that Mid Ulster Council has the appropriate policies in order to achieve the strategy contained within policy option 3. Having undertaken the evidence gathering contained within the Tourism Position Paper and associated workshop and having considered the SPPS and PPS 16 it is felt that the approach to tourism planning policy in the new LDP should be more concise and less prescriptive than the current prevailing policy. Mid Ulster should utilise the strategic policies contained within the SPPS as a baseline for its tourism policy.

- 5.11** To this end instead of adopting 8 separate policies as contained with PPS 16, it is considered that these policies can be combined to form 4 more concisely worded policies for the following aspects of tourism development;
- i. tourism accommodation;*
 - ii. protection of tourism assets and tourist accommodation;*
 - iii. major tourism development;*
 - iv. development of other tourism facilities, amenities and attractions.*
- 5.12** These four strands will combine all the existing policy requirements which are laid out in the SPPS and which are also included in PPS 16. The wording of such policies is considered below.

6.0 Preferred Option Policy Wording

- 6.1** It is considered that the policy approach of Option 2 could be worded along the following lines:

POLICY TOU 1 - PROTECTION OF TOURISM ASSETS AND TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

Tourism development shall conflict with the plan where it would in itself or in combination with existing and approved development in the locality have a significant adverse impact on a tourism asset.²

Proposals for new tourism development (facilities and / or accommodation) within Tourism Conservation Zones will conflict with the plan, except where;

- a) The proposal includes minor improvements to infrastructure such as walking and cycle-ways, fishing and canoe stands; or*
- b) The proposal includes the provision of tourism accommodation or facilities through the re-use of existing vernacular buildings.*

Special care should be given to ensure that any proposal should respect and be sensitive to the character of the local landscape, wildlife and heritage interests.

Important tourism accommodation will be protected from re-development and changes to other uses. These sites comprise of;

- 1. The Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown.*
- 2. The Greenvale Hotel, Cookstown.*
- 3. The Tullylagan Hotel, Cookstown.*
- 4. Corrick House Hotel, Clogher*

and any other sites identified in the Local Development Plan.

² For the purposes of this policy, a tourism asset is defined as any feature associated with the built or natural environment which is of intrinsic interest to tourists.

POLICY TOU 2 – MAJOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Outside of Tourism Conservation Zones and Special Countryside Areas a proposal for a major tourism development that acts as a resort destination providing both accommodation and major leisure facilities, such as a waterpark, theme park and other similar leisure facilities will accord with the plan where it has been demonstrated that it will be of exceptional benefit to the regional tourist industry and the economy and is on a site that is sustainable in terms of any benefits derived for the local economy and in relation to adverse impacts on the wider environment.

POLICY TOU 3 –TOURISM ACCOMMODATION

Development of tourist accommodation on unzoned land within settlements and within Tourism Opportunity Zones (see Map A) will accord with the plan subject to the normal planning considerations.

Outside of settlements, Tourism Conservation Areas and Special Countryside Areas, tourism accommodation will also accord with the plan where it comprises;

- a) a hotel, guest house or hostel located at or near to the edge of the settlement and is clearly visually associated with the settlement, where there are no suitable opportunities within the settlement; or*
- b) the re-use and / or conversion of suitable buildings, of permanent construction excluding 'steel frame' buildings, in the rural locality; or*
- c) the sensitive replacement of an existing suitable building with a new building of proportionate size and scale; or*
- d) part of a Farm Diversification scheme which is visually linked to a cluster of existing farm buildings; or*
- e) tourism accommodation run in conjunction with and visually linked to an existing tourism facility, such as; golf course, fishing lake, or outdoor activity centre; or*
- f) self-catering accommodation located within the grounds of a hotel, guesthouse or holiday park;*
- g) in the case of hotels, holiday parks, camping or touring caravan parks that are located within easy access of tourism amenities and where it is demonstrated that the proposal will create a high quality and sustainable form of development. Demonstrated within the site layout, design and landscaping and a viable business case;*
- h) a motel situated at or easily accessible to a key transport corridor, link corridor or trunk roads and at the key interchanges (see Map A) but avoiding direct access onto the key transport corridors;*
 - Castledawson*
 - Dungannon*
 - Ballygawley*

Proposals for the expansion of all tourism development shall be considered on their planning merits.

Conditions to retain tourism use are likely to be required where this has formed the justification for development in the countryside.

Where a caravan park is located in the rural area, re-development for another use will not normally be permitted other than a reversion to agricultural use.

Special attention should be given to the character of the local landscape, wildlife and heritage interests and in all cases the development must be sensitive to it's setting and achieve a high degree of integration. Special attention should also be given to the provision of amenity, space, landscaping and planting and should be proportional to the size and scale of the development.

POLICY TOU 4 – OTHER TOURISM FACILITIES / AMENITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

Proposals for outdoor tourism facilities, amenities or attractions, such as golf courses, fishing lakes, outdoor activity centres and picnic sites, interpretation and visitor centres, will accord with the plan where they are located within a settlement or a Tourist Opportunity Zone or in the open countryside outside of a Tourism Conservation Zone

Proposals for indoor tourism facilities will also accord with the plan where they are located in the countryside, outside of a Tourism Conservation Zone, where it can be demonstrated that;

- a) it is in association with and requires a site at or close to a tourism asset;*
or
- b) the type of tourism activity in itself requires a countryside location.*

All proposals for tourism facilities, amenities and attractions will be of a scale, design and sited in order to have significant detrimental effect on the amenity of the area or it's landscape character. Such proposals should use existing buildings wherever possible. These buildings should be of permanent construction and not 'steel framed' buildings.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 In light of the evidence gathering and the discussions which have taken place as part of the Tourism Workshop it is felt that planning policy as contained within PPS 16 is too restrictive and will not facilitate significant tourist development in Mid Ulster. It is therefore necessary to adjust the policy in order to more accurately promote tourism development whilst ensuring that our key tourism assets are protected.

7.2 It is for this reason that Policy TOU 1 recognises the importance of protecting our existing tourism assets. This will be achieved through the continued use of

existing Tourism Conservation Zones and also the potential expansion and introduction of further zones throughout the district (see Map A). This policy also seeks to protect existing important tourism accommodation from re-development or change of use.

- 7.3** Policy TOU 2 facilitates the development of a major tourism development that acts as a resort destination, where it will be of exceptional benefit to the regional tourist industry and the economy and is located on a site that is sustainable. Policy TOU 3 has been relaxed to provide additional facilitation for development linked to existing tourism facilities and for motels in strategic locations within the district. It will also provide tourism development opportunities as part of a Farm Diversification Scheme.
- 7.4** Finally policy TOU 4 provides for additional opportunities for outdoor tourism facilities, amenities and attractions within settlements, Tourism Opportunity Zones and in the open countryside. The policy will also facilitate indoor tourism development in the open countryside where it is in association with a tourism asset or where the type of tourism activity in itself requires a countryside location. In addition policy TOU 4 provides for exceptions for indoor tourism development within the countryside where it is in association with a tourism asset or it is a type of tourism activity that in itself requires a countryside location.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1** The policy options, including the preferred options, contained within this Paper are subjected to Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment, before any final decisions are made on which will go forward for public consultation in the Preferred Options Paper.

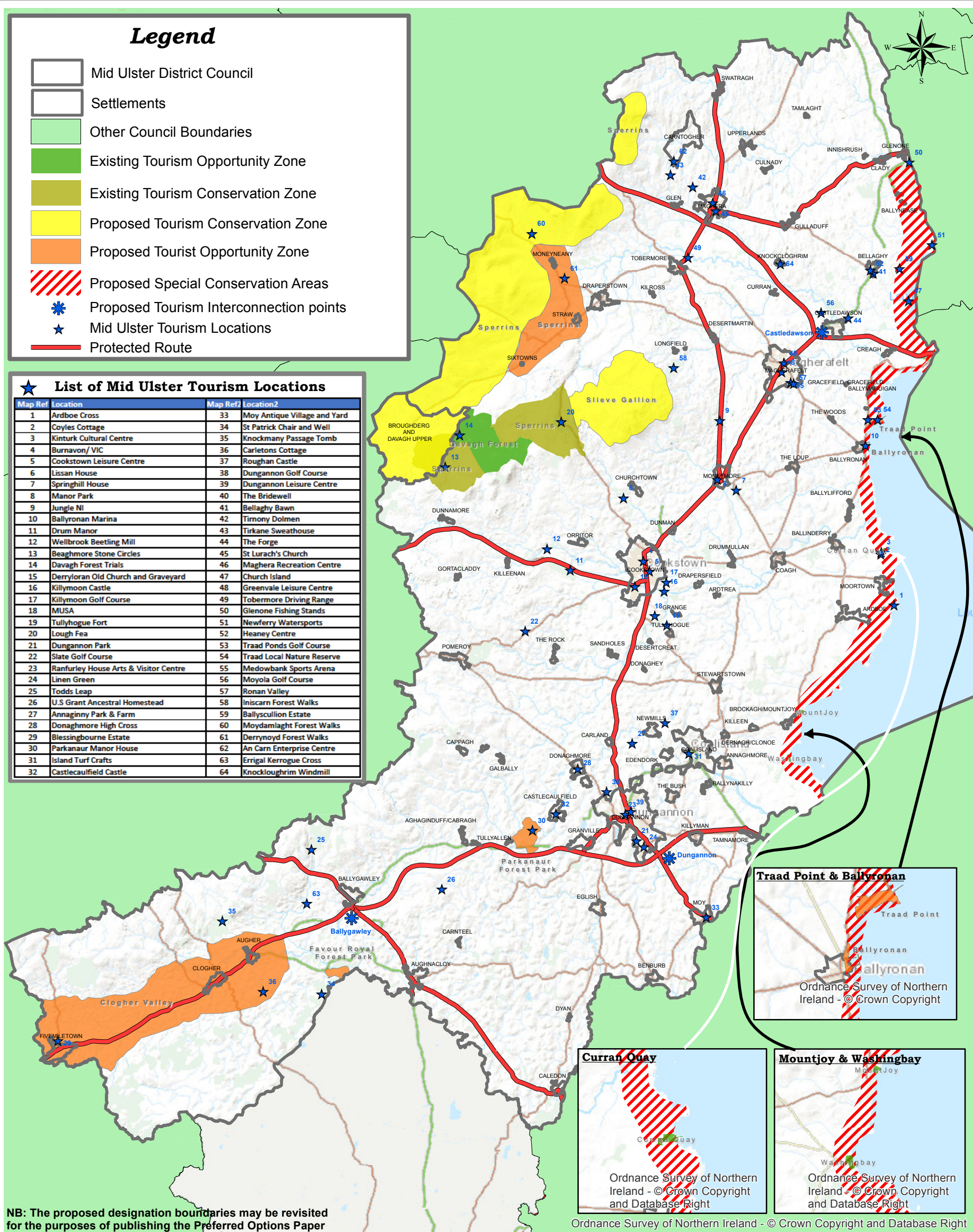
Mid Ulster Tourism Opportunity

Legend

- Mid Ulster District Council
- Settlements
- Other Council Boundaries
- Existing Tourism Opportunity Zone
- Existing Tourism Conservation Zone
- Proposed Tourism Conservation Zone
- Proposed Tourist Opportunity Zone
- Proposed Special Conservation Areas
- Proposed Tourism Interconnection points
- Mid Ulster Tourism Locations
- Protected Route

List of Mid Ulster Tourism Locations

Map Ref	Location	Map Ref2	Location2
1	Ardboe Cross	33	Moy Antique Village and Yard
2	Coyles Cottage	34	St Patrick Chair and Well
3	Kinturk Cultural Centre	35	Knockmany Passage Tomb
4	Burnavon/ VIC	36	Carletons Cottage
5	Cookstown Leisure Centre	37	Roughan Castle
6	Lissan House	38	Dungannon Golf Course
7	Springhill House	39	Dungannon Leisure Centre
8	Manor Park	40	The Bridewell
9	Jungle NI	41	Bellaghy Bawn
10	Ballyronan Marina	42	Timony Dolmen
11	Drum Manor	43	Tirkane Sweathouse
12	Wellbrook Beetling Mill	44	The Forge
13	Beaghmore Stone Circles	45	St Lurach's Church
14	Davagh Forest Trials	46	Maghera Recreation Centre
15	Derryloran Old Church and Graveyard	47	Church Island
16	Killymoon Castle	48	Greenvale Leisure Centre
17	Killymoon Golf Course	49	Tobermore Driving Range
18	MUSA	50	Glenone Fishing Stands
19	Tullyhogue Fort	51	Newferry Watersports
20	Lough Fea	52	Heaney Centre
21	Dungannon Park	53	Traad Ponds Golf Course
22	Slate Golf Course	54	Traad Local Nature Reserve
23	Ranfurley House Arts & Visitor Centre	55	Meadowbank Sports Arena
24	Linen Green	56	Moyola Golf Course
25	Todds Leap	57	Ronan Valley
26	U.S Grant Ancestral Homestead	58	Iniscarn Forest Walks
27	Annaglinny Park & Farm	59	Ballyscullion Estate
28	Donaghmore High Cross	60	Moydamlaght Forest Walks
29	Blessingbourne Estate	61	Derrynoyd Forest Walks
30	Parkanaur Manor House	62	An Carn Enterprise Centre
31	Island Turf Crafts	63	Errigal Kerroque Cross
32	Castlecaulfield Castle	64	Knockloughrim Windmill



NB: The proposed designation boundaries may be revisited for the purposes of publishing the Preferred Options Paper

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Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

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