

Belfast Local Development Plan  
Draft Plan Strategy 2035  
INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION PUBLIC HEARING SESSIONS  
CLOSING NOTES

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That brings us to the end of the topics and issues that Commissioner Daly and I wanted to raise with participants and the public hearing sessions of the independent examination will shortly be brought to a close.

The independent examination process is on-going whilst we are writing our report. If, upon review of the evidence before us, we consider that a fundamental soundness issue has not been resolved, we reserve the right to correspond with any of the parties. This option will only be exercised if considered absolutely necessary. If this were the case, details would be provided in the Examination Library on the Commission's web-site. We would only request additional information or seek further clarification that is essential to enable a decision regarding soundness to be made. Any unsolicited material that we have not requested will be returned to the sender by our Programme Officer without being passed to either Commissioner.

The report when complete will be forwarded to the Department for Infrastructure. In writing our report, we will aim for brevity and concentrate on:

- Reaching clear, reasoned conclusions on the plan's compliance with the statutory requirements and its soundness; and
- Presenting recommendations on any necessary modifications to the plan which are required to overcome any correctable shortcomings in regard to statutory requirements or soundness.

For further information you are referred to the Commission's "[Procedures for Independent Examination of Local Development Plans](#)" version 2 December 2019, which is available on our web-site, and specifically paragraphs 37 – 41.

The Department for Infrastructure will be required to consider our recommendations but is not obliged to accept them. If this were the case, they would set out their reasoning for so doing.

The Commission is mindful that delivery of the report has resource implications for both the Department and Belfast City Council so our planned date for doing so aims to provide as much certainty as possible for both organisations whilst enabling us to effectively discharge our responsibilities. There are many matters to be considered and, with this in mind, it is

our intention that we will deliver the report to the Department before the end of September 2021. If the report is ready before that, it will be forwarded earlier. When we have done so, the Commission's Examination Library will be updated accordingly and a news item published on its home page. Release of the report will be a matter for the Department.

The Programme Officer, James Bickerstaff, will remain available to deal with any queries arising. Commissioner Daly and I want to take this opportunity to thank both him and our Administrator, Barry Fegan, for their sterling efforts in getting this first independent examination of the first of the LDPs up and running let alone facing the additional challenge of doing so by remote means.

We would also like to thank all participants for their valuable contributions to the discussion and also for their co-operation and goodwill in helping us navigate this new procedure and new medium. What seemed a truly daunting prospect last summer has, we believe, worked very well in the current circumstances; this has been a joint effort made possible by all participating parties.

A copy of these notes will be placed in the Examination Library on the Commission's website.

The public hearing sessions are now closed.

**08.03.21**

**Commissioner Rosemary Daly BSc DipTP MSc MRTPI**  
**Commissioner Julie de-Courcey BSc MSc LLB MRTPI**