



Chapter 2

Core and Settlement Strategy

“The Core Strategy facilitates and promotes a more consolidated compact urban form and ensures that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development, delivering a high quality living and working environment meeting the needs of all residents.”

2 CORE STRATEGY AND SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

2.1 STATUTORY CONTEXT

The *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* requires an evidence based Core Strategy be included in all development plans. Its primary purpose is to ensure local authorities identify and reserve an appropriate amount of land in the right locations to meet projected population and housing targets. This is achieved through the expression of a medium to long term quantitative strategy for the spatial development of the area of the planning authority, which is consistent with the national and regional objectives as outlined in the *National Planning Framework (NPF)* and in the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)* for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The Core Strategy includes a Settlement Hierarchy for the County transposing prescribed regional population targets set at County level to settlements and rural areas identified within the Settlement Hierarchy.

On foot of projected population allocation it identifies the housing demand and land requirement for residential and mixed use development having regard to the capacity of existing zoned land and the phasing of development, taking account of services and emerging transport and mobility trends.

While not expressly required by the Act, the Core Strategy should undertake an appropriate level of analysis of other land uses such as employment uses, to ensure sufficient lands are zoned at suitable locations, taking account of higher level planning policies and the required physical and green infrastructure.

A Core Strategy Map is a specified requirement as per the Act, depicting how the Planning Authority anticipates its area will develop over the plan period in line with the availability of infrastructure, services and amenities.

2.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

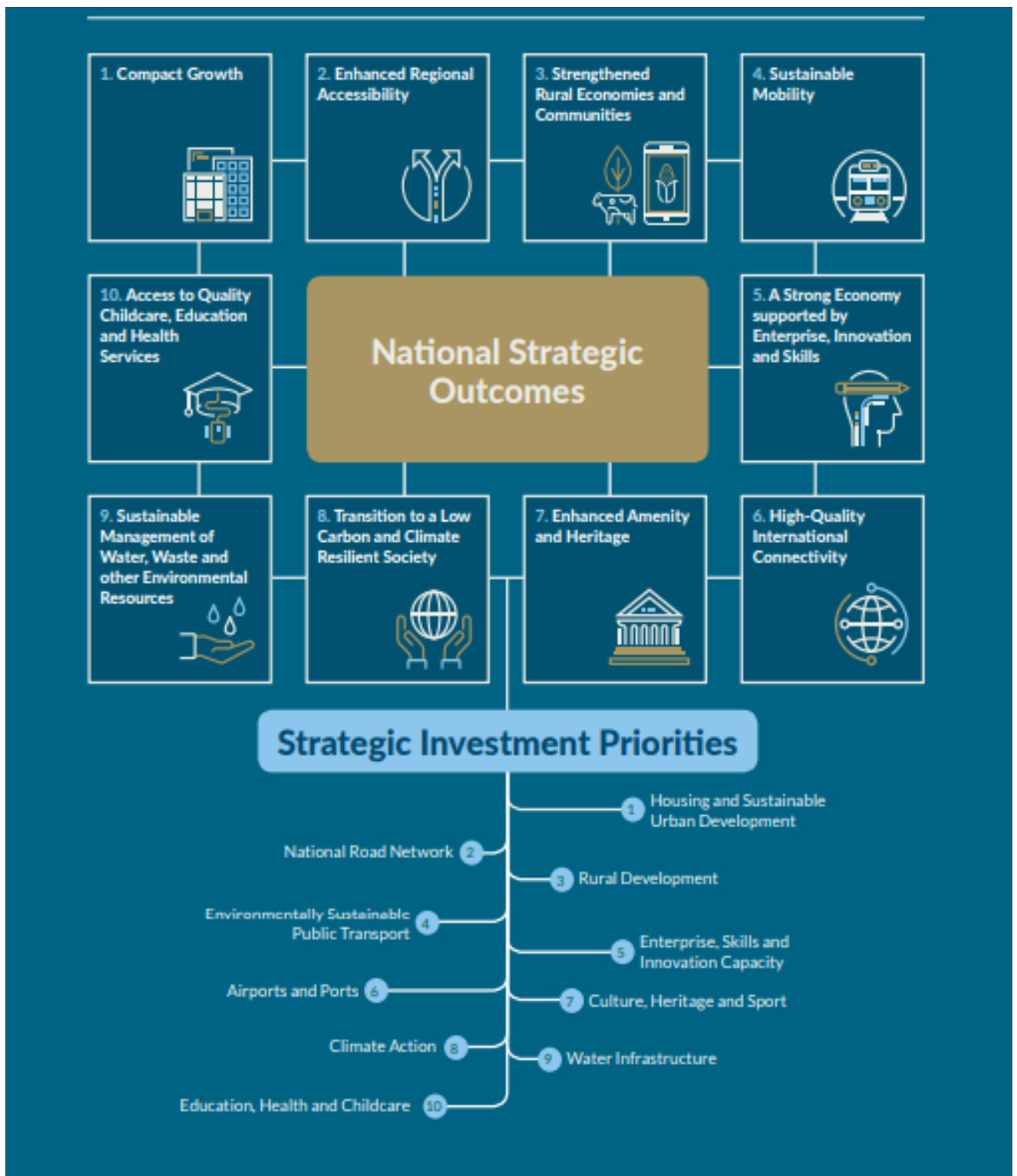
2.2.1 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)

Development Plans sit within a hierarchy of National and Regional spatial plans at the top of which sits the NPF. This replaces the former *National Spatial Strategy (NSS)* and is a high level, 20 year strategic plan for future growth and development of the country to 2040, the objectives of which are outlined hereunder:

- Establish a broad National plan in relation to the strategic planning and sustainable development of urban and rural areas;
- Secure balanced Regional development by maximising the potential of the regions; and
- Secure the co-ordination of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and City and County development plans.

The NPF identifies a set of goals expressed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's), which underpin the overarching vision for the country (see Figure 2.1). These NSO's are significantly aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals outlined in Chapter 12 (Figure 12.1) in areas such as climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities and innovation and infrastructure, as well as education and health.

Figure 2.1 – National Strategic Outcomes



Source: National Planning Framework

One of the underlying principles of the NPF Strategy is to rebalance growth in the country, which historically has disproportionately taken place in the Eastern and Midland Region. It enables all parts of the country whether urban or rural, to successfully accommodate growth and change whilst simultaneously recognising Dublin’s ongoing key role as the principal economic driver of the country. It promotes ‘Regional parity’ rather than the ‘business as usual’ approach, seeking a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland Region with that of the Southern and Northern and Western Regions combined. Of the national projected population growth, 25% is planned for Dublin, 25% for the four cities of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford and the remaining 50% growth for the key regional centres, towns, villages and rural areas as identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

The targeted population growth for the Eastern and Midland Region is for an additional 490,000-540,000 people living in the Region.

The Strategy focuses on building ‘centres of scale’ and addressing peripherality, wherein Dublin will continue to develop as an international city of scale.

In building ‘centres of scale’ outside Dublin, the four cities of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford have ambitious growth targets and, below these cities, the regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands, Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border networks are also identified. The NPF acknowledges significant cross-border interactions focused on key settlement networks, specifically Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry in the context of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor, recognising the growth potential of the network as important for regional development and in strengthening Ireland’s overall urban structure.

An important element of the growth strategy, intrinsic to the NPF, is securing compact and sustainable growth as it offers the best prospects for unlocking Regional potential. The preferred approach for compact development is one which focuses on reusing previously developed ‘brownfield’ lands and development of infill sites and buildings. To this end the NPF requires at least 30% delivery of all new homes in settlements (outside of the 5 cities) to be within the existing built up footprint (NPO 3(c)). The targeted pattern of growth in the Eastern and Midlands Region up to 2040 is detailed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Targeted Pattern of Growth in the Eastern and Midland Region 2040

Eastern and Midland Region		
Growing Our Region	Building Stronger Regions: Accessible Centres of Scale	Compact, Smart, Sustainable Growth
+490,000 - 540,000 people	Dublin City & Suburbs: +235,000 - 290,000 people	30% of all new housing within existing urban footprints
+320,000 in employment	RSES sets a strategic development framework for the Region leading with the key role of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border network.	

Source: National Planning Framework

In relation to place making one of the primary challenges faced by the Eastern and Midland Region is the delivery of future development that both enhances and reinforces the urban and rural structure, with a move to self-sustaining activity and remote working rather than commuter driven activity. This allows the Region’s various city, town, village and rural components to play to their strengths, while moving away from a sprawl-led development model, where rapid growth was driven by housing, rather than employment.

The NPF recognises that the Dublin-Belfast cross-border network is the key driver in the North-East regional area. To achieve leveraged employment and sustainable population growth, development must be supported by enhanced connectivity, quality of life and a focused approach to the compact, sequential and sustainable development of the larger urban areas such as Drogheda and Dundalk.

2.2.2 Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework

The *Implementation Roadmap* highlights the Government’s focus on achieving alignment between National, Regional and Local planning policy and practice. However, translating long-term national projections and targets to the local plan making level requires a step change in both the short to medium transitional term and long term context.

Aligning Plans at all levels in conjunction with a shift to compact growth requires a period of transition, whereby both existing planning permissions and zoned lands must be considered.

The Roadmap provides for the operation of a ‘transition period’ until 2026. Herein, it provides a transitional set of population projections to inform Regional and Local plans to 2026 and 2031. The transitional population projections for Louth are listed in Table 2.2.

For those Counties where population growth is projected to be at or above the national average baseline, which includes County Louth, the Roadmap provides scope for headroom, not exceeding 25% up to 2026. This additional headroom is only applicable in the 2026 projection and not beyond to 2031. The population projections with the additional 25% headroom are illustrated in Table 2.3.

Having regard to the designation of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres and regional drivers, supported by the Self Sustaining Growth Centres of Ardee and Dunleer and the remaining strong urban settlement structure which typifies County Louth, it is appropriate that the additional 25% headroom available to the County is utilised in order to allow flexibility in approach and to help realise the objectives of the NPF and RSES. The years 2026/2027 will see the first full assessment of Development Plans prepared in accordance with the NPF and the RSES and establish the success in implementation of both the National and Regional policy objectives.

Table 2.2: Transitional Population Projections for Louth

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly			
Region and Counties	2016	2026	2031
Mid-East			
Louth	129,000	139,000-144,500	144,000-151,500

Source: Appendix 2 of the Implementation Roadmap

Table 2.3: Transitional Population Projections for Louth with additional 25% Headroom

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly				
Region and Counties	2016	2026	2026 (incl.25% Headroom) ¹	2031
Mid-East				
Louth	129,000	139,000-144,500	141,500-148,375	144,000-151,500

¹ This Plan runs until 2027, which is factored into the population figures later in this Chapter

2.3 REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

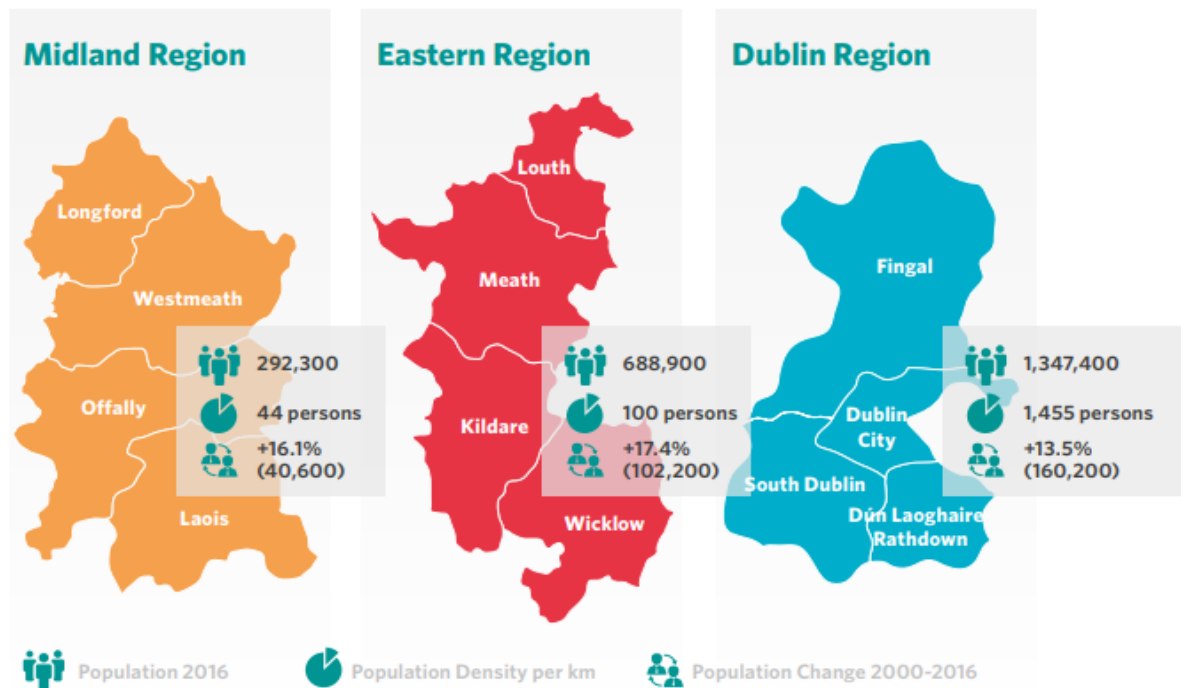
2.3.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

Following on from the enactment of the *Local Government Reform Act 2014*, three new Regional Assemblies came into effect in January 2015, replacing the eight previous Regional Authorities. Louth is now part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) which adopted its first Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) in June 2019.

The objective of the RSES is to support implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – which links planning and investment through the NPF and the ten year National Development Plan (NDP) and the economic and climate policies of the government, by providing a long term strategic planning and economic framework for the Region. Reflecting the NPF, the RSES emphasises sustainable development patterns and seeks to focus growth in regional growth centres such as Drogheda and Dundalk and within the footprint of existing urban areas. At a Regional level, the RSES seeks to determine how best to achieve the goals of the NPF as identified in the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).

To this end, the Strategy identifies 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) which are aligned with national policy and which set a framework for delivery of county development plans. Chapter One identifies how this Plan closely aligns with the identified 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes and subsequently with both national and regional policy. Of the three Regions, the Eastern and Midland Region has the largest population, which was in excess of 2.3 million people in 2016. It is a young and diverse growing region where Dublin, its main settlement, is supported by a network of Regional and County towns and an extensive rural hinterland. It is the primary economic engine of the state, being home to the capital city, almost half of the country's population and in excess of one million jobs. It is comprised of three Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) which provide for a sub-regional planning remit, namely; the Dublin Region, the Eastern Region (which Louth is part of) and the Midland Region (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Strategic Planning Areas (SPA) Eastern and Midland Region



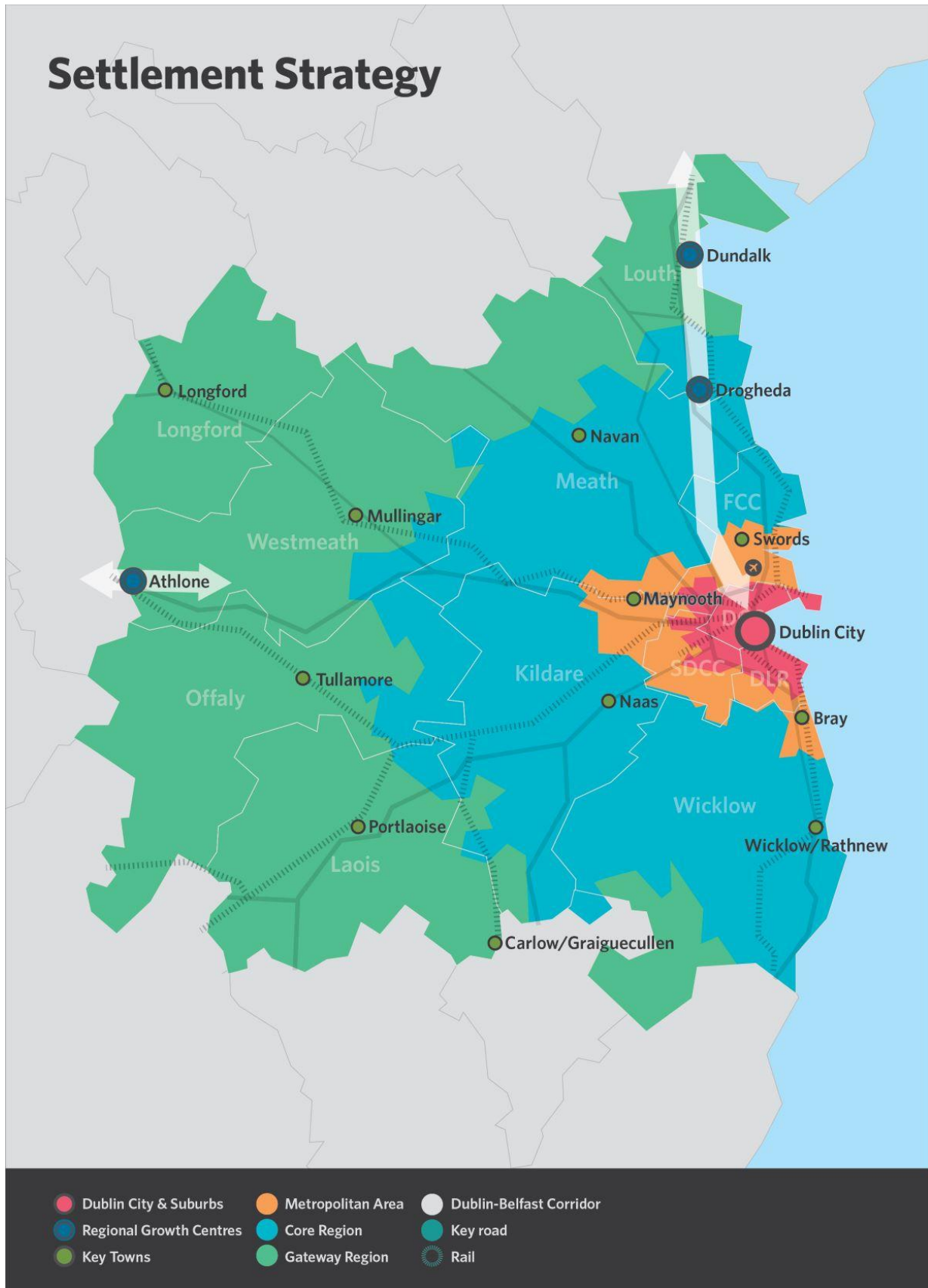
In addition to the spatial development of the Region, the RSES seeks to plan for its economic development, with opportunities for enterprise development based on local strengths, assets and resources, all underpinned by the quality of living offering. Its natural, cultural and green infrastructure assets support the tourism and leisure industry and are essential to creating places that are attractive in which to live, work, visit and invest. The spatial and economic framework set out in the RSES underpins the strategic policy objectives set out in this Plan.

A key priority for the Region is to address long distance commuting and subsequent poor quality of life issues. The RSES utilised ‘Functional Urban Areas’ (FUAs) which consider where people live and work to better plan for the future provision and improved alignment of transport, housing and infrastructure in the Region.

The FUAs augment the Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) by recognising spatial, social and economic similarities and differences within each SPA. The three identified FUAs are:

- Dublin City & Metropolitan Area:
 - Dublin city and suburbs and the metropolitan area which includes major settlements with strong connections to the city (Louth not included).
- Core Region:
 - Peri-urban ‘hinterlands’ within the commuter catchment around Dublin, including south Louth and the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda.
- Gateway Region:
 - Remaining area beyond the Metropolitan and Core Areas and includes North Louth and the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk. The three FUAs are identified in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Map of the Settlement Hierarchy in the Eastern and Midland Region



Source: RSES

2.3.2 RSES and Louth's Settlement Hierarchy

Consistency and alignment between National, Regional and Local plans is a requirement of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*. Louth's framework for growth is therefore guided and directed by both the NPF and the RSES.

The NPF and RSES set policy parameters for the Region, to manage the growth of Dublin as a city of international scale, supported by the growth of the designated Regional Growth Centres and further supported by the development and regeneration of selected Key Towns.

The RSES growth strategy employs a robust evidence based approach, to derive a settlement hierarchy which identifies locations for population and employment growth with matched infrastructure and service investment, to satisfy and accommodate future growth needs. This influences the future growth of Louth in the following manner:

Regional Growth Centres (RGC's) support the direction of significant population and economic growth to ensure these centres reach sufficient scale, to serve as economic drivers for the Region and implement effective regional development. Drogheda and Dundalk are designated as Regional Growth Centres.

Key Towns Louth has no key towns. The remaining settlement typologies identified in the RSES are defined by the development plan using an evidence based approach.

Self-Sustaining Growth Towns are regionally important local drivers serving their resident population and surrounding catchments and with a reasonable level of jobs and services. Ardee and Dunleer are designated as such.

Self-Sustaining Towns require investment in services, employment and infrastructure whilst balancing housing delivery. These include; Carlingford, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Clogherhead, Termonfeckin and Tullyallen.

Small Towns and Villages support local growth across the County and range in size and function. Future growth will focus on localised sustainable growth meeting the needs of the local population.

Rural Nodes and the Wider Rural Area These are characterised by residential development with limited services and facilities with an emphasis on strengthening their fabric and creating sustainable rural communities, suitable to meet rural generated housing needs.

The Settlement Hierarchy in this Plan has been updated to reflect the terminology and settlement categories set out in the RSES. The Settlement Hierarchy for Louth is as outlined in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Settlement Hierarchy for County Louth

Settlement Level	Settlement Category	Description	Settlement
1	Regional Growth Centres	Regional Growth Centres are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.	Drogheda Dundalk
2	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.	Ardee Dunleer
3	Self-Sustaining Towns	Self-sustaining towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted ‘catch up’ investment to become more self-sustaining.	Carlingford, Clogherhead, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Termonfeckin, Tullyallen
4	Small Towns and Villages	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions.	Annagassan, Baltray, Collon, Dromiskin, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Omeath, Tallanstown,
5	Rural Nodes	Rural Nodes.	Ballagan, Ballapousta, Bellurgan, Darver, Dromin, Faughart, Glenmore, Grange, Grangebellew, Greenore, Gyles Quay, Kilcurry, Kilkerry, Lordship, Mountbagnal, Muchgrange, Philipstown (Collon), Ravensdale, Reaghstown, Sandpit, Sheelagh, Stabannon, Tinure, Willville

2.4 CORE STRATEGY APPROACH

This Plan sets out an evidence based Core Strategy for the future development of County Louth, having regard to the NPF population projections, the settlement hierarchy of the RSES and consideration for the phasing of development lands to ensure Towns grow at a sustainable and appropriate level to their position in the hierarchy. The Core Strategy shall also be developed having regard to the infill/brownfield targets provided for in the NPF.

2.4.1 Strategic Objectives of the Core Strategy

The Strategic Objectives of the Louth Core Strategy are to:

- Ensure development and growth in Louth occurs in line with both National and Regional objectives as provided for in the NPF and the RSES and other national guidelines and policies;
- Provide a framework to enable the delivery of the vision and objectives of the Plan;
- Support the population growth of County Louth in accordance with the population projections as specified in the NPF Implementation Roadmap of 148,375 (increased to 149,966 to reflect the life of the Plan) and in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy and Core Strategy Tables;
- Ensure alignment of infrastructural investment with those settlements identified for growth in the Settlement Hierarchy to ensure capacity of services is matched by demand for services and delivered in a timely, cost effective and sustainable manner;

- Ensure the growth of towns is at a sustainable and appropriate level, with a rationale for lands zoned for residential, employment and mixed use development; and
- Provide clarity for developers and others investing in the County.

2.4.2 Content of the Core Strategy

The Core Strategy delivers the following:

- Settlement hierarchy/Population and household distribution;
- Population targets; and
- Future Household targets and land zoning requirements.

2.4.3 Guiding Principles for Core Strategy

The RSES recognises that a disconnect may exist between the quantum of land zoned in current plans and the National and Regional development parameters set out in the NPF. The options available to address issues of surplus residential lands are:

- Prioritisation measures that provide for the sequential release of lands which may be suitable for housing delivery but not likely to be forthcoming during the period of the Plan; and
- De-zoning land.

Where there are sites with long term development potential not being brought forward for development, the RSES acknowledges that local authorities should consider other suitable, alternative sites capable of being delivered in the short term. With regard to any surplus of residential lands, the prioritisation of lands will be considered. This may include the phasing of lands and/or the introduction of a strategic reserve, or the de-zoning of land.

Any lands placed in a strategic reserve will not be available for development during the lifetime of the Plan. This will be dependent on the settlement category in which the lands are located and other localised factors including but not limited to; recent patterns of development, extant permissions and infrastructure constraints.

2.4.4 Louth's Growth Strategy

Louth's growth strategy has been informed by the principle elements of the RSES growth strategy in conjunction with the environmental sensitivities of the County. It is based on strengthening its strong urban settlements, whilst simultaneously protecting and supporting rural areas, which provide valuable natural resources, biodiversity, environmental quality and landscape features. It will seek to respond to the needs of the entire County.

Population and economic growth will be focused primarily in the RGCs of Drogheda and Dundalk with recognition of the potential for the smaller towns and villages to develop at a sustainable rate.

The focus of the growth strategy for County Louth is as outlined hereunder:

- Prioritise targeted population and economic growth to the designated RGCs of Drogheda and Dundalk. Promote their continued sustainable and compact growth as regional drivers to city scale, with a target population of 50,000 by 2031 supported by improvements to sustainable transport links and the requisite infrastructure to enable the towns grow to their full potential by becoming more attractive to live and invest in;
- Capitalise on the strategic location of both Drogheda and Dundalk along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, to drive linkages and synergies between the north and south of Ireland;
- Contribution of urban regeneration lands and development of infill sites to the revitalisation of settlements and sustainable compact urban growth (in Louth a minimum 30% of new homes to be in the built up footprint of the urban area) facilitated by investment in services, transport, infrastructure etc.;
- Support the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer, which are regionally important local drivers providing a moderate level of jobs and services for the resident population and surrounding catchments. Growth will be balanced and at sustainable levels including brownfield and infill development with a focus on the commensurate delivery of employment and services and improving the quality of life for all in these towns;
- Support Self Sustaining Towns requiring contained growth, focusing on investment in services, employment and infrastructure whilst balancing housing delivery;
- Having regard to the viability and vibrancy of small towns and villages, promotion of regeneration and support for local employment whilst offering a viable alternative to single housing in the open countryside; and

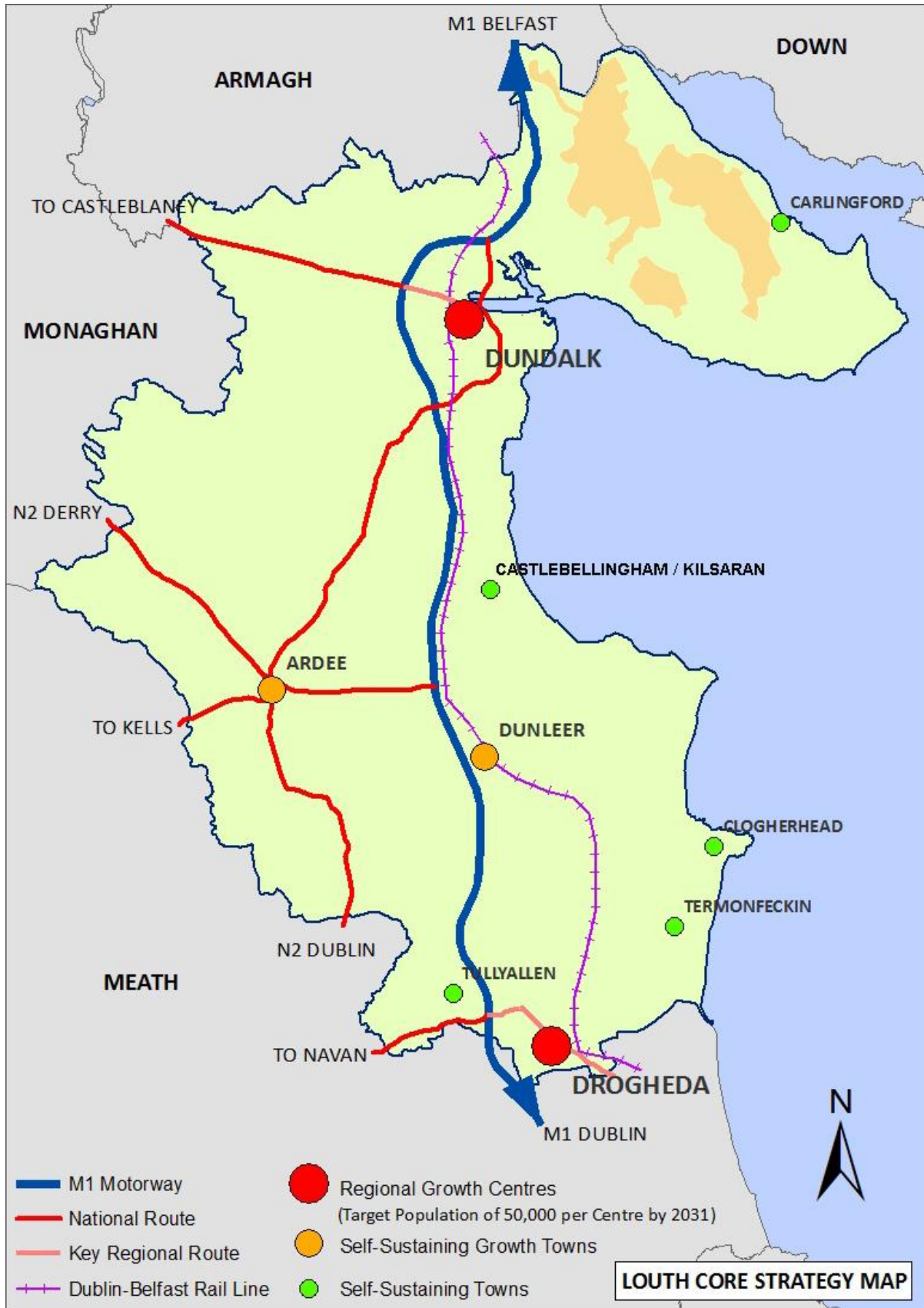
- Management of urban generated growth in Rural Areas under urban influence, by ensuring single houses in the open countryside is based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area in addition to compliance with statutory guidelines, plans and having regard to ensuring the viability of the

aforementioned small towns and villages. The Settlement Strategy for future growth in the County is further detailed in Section 2.12 of this Chapter.

2.4.5 Core Strategy Map

The Core Strategy Map (Map 2.1) is a diagrammatic representation of the spatial planning strategy for County Louth.

Map 2.1 – Core Strategy Map



2.5 POPULATION TRENDS

Census 2016 recorded a population of 4,761,865 in Ireland, representing an increase of 3.8% on Census 2011. Urban settlements in the country, of which there are 200, accounted for 63% of the population. Outside of the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Galway and Limerick, 29% of Ireland’s population lives in towns and villages of at least 1,500 or more people.

Louth’s population in 2016 was 128,884 which was an increase on the 2011 census, albeit, at a slower rate from the levels experienced in previous inter-censal periods. This reduced rate of increase can be attributed to the recession, in the period 2008-2014, which impacted on population trends and the movement of people, with changing migration patterns experienced. This included for high levels of emigration and a decrease in inward migration at a national, regional and county level, which ultimately resulted in a decrease in the rate of population growth.

With this in mind, a 10 year outlook on the level of growth in the County between 2006-2016 provides a more balanced overview of population growth which occurred prior to and during the recession.

During this period the average population increase per annum was 1,762 persons. Table 2.5 provides an overview of population growth in the County between 2002-2016 and indicates the different rates of population growth experienced during this period.

As the economy began to recover from 2014 and employment opportunities in the country improved, migration patterns began to change. 2016 was the first year since 2009 where there was a return to net inward migration at a national level.

This trend continued in 2018 and 2019 where there was a net inward migration of 34,000 and 33,700² respectively which increased the rate of population growth at national level.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown, which occurred in spring 2020, has curtailed the movement of people throughout the world. It is anticipated that will impact on population growth and migration patterns in the immediate term with the medium-long term impacts unclear at the time of writing.

2.5.1 Population Distribution

The population of the County is distributed across a network of urban and rural settlements and the open countryside. The population concentration in Drogheda and Dundalk in combination with its small landmass makes Louth the County with the highest percentage of an urban population outside of Dublin, with 66.1% of the population living in urban areas in 2016. Table 2.6 sets out the County population distribution based on the definition of aggregate urban and rural areas by the CSO.

² [CSO Population and Migration Estimates August 2019](#)

Table 2.5: Population Growth in Louth 2002-2016

Year	Population	Population increase	Inter-censal period	% increase in the inter-censal period	Average annual increase
2002	101,281	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006	111,267	9,986	2002-2006	9.9%	2,497
2011	122,897	11,630	2006-2011	10.5%	2,326
2016	128,884	5,987	2011-2016	4.9%	1,197
2006-2016					
N/A	17,617	2006-2016	15.8%	1,762	

Table 2.6: Population Distribution by Settlement Category CSO 2016, County Louth

CSO Categorisation	Settlement Category	Settlement	% of total population	Overall County %
Aggregate 'Town' Areas	Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda and Dundalk	56.7%	66.1%
	Self-Sustaining Growth Town	Ardee and Dunleer	5.3%	
	Self-Sustaining Town	Clogherhead, Termonfeckin, Tullyallen	4.1%	
Aggregate 'Rural' Areas	Self-Sustaining Town	Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Carlingford	2%	33.9%
	Small Town	Annagassan, Baltray, Collon, Dromiskin, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Omeath, Tallanstown	3.9%	
	Villages and Open Countryside	See Table 2.4 for the list of Villages in the County	28%	

2.5.2 Location of Population Growth

Between 2011-2016, the population of Louth increased by 5,987 persons with the highest recorded population increase of 46.6% (2,792) occurring in the RGC’s of Drogheda and Dundalk.

In contrast the population of Ardee and Dunleer, now identified as Self Sustaining Growth Settlements, was almost stagnant, with a combined population increase of just 37 people (0.6%).

The level of growth in the Self Sustaining Towns and Small Towns was also significantly higher than the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer, with a combined population increase of 1,363 persons, equating to 22.8% of total population increase.

Furthermore, the villages and open countryside experienced high levels of growth, with 30% of total population growth in the County taking place in these locations.

Consequently, almost 53% of population growth in the County took place in lower tier settlements, indicating the pressure for development within these areas.

Figure 2.4 illustrates the distribution of population growth by settlement category in the County between 2011 and 2016. Settlements that experienced a population increase of 100 persons or more between 2011-2016 are detailed in Table 2.7.

This highlights the fact that growth is occurring in the higher tier and lower tier settlements. In percentage terms relative to the size of the settlements, the Self Sustaining Towns such as Carlingford, Tullyallen, Clogherhead, and Termonfeckin, are experiencing the highest levels of growth.

Fig. 2.4: Distribution of Population Increase in the County 2011-2016

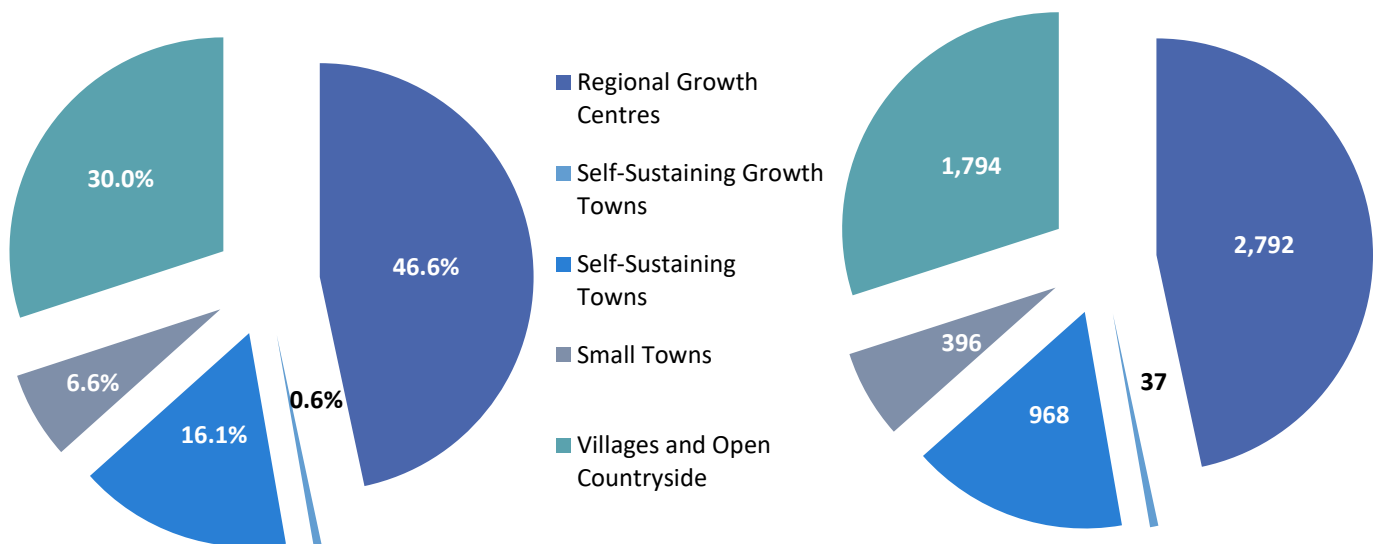


Table 2.7: Settlements with a Population Increase of 100+ persons 2011-2016

Settlement	Population 2011	Population 2016	Actual change	% change
Drogheda	32,595	34,199 ³	1,604	4.9%
Dundalk	37,816	39,004	1,188	3.1%
Carlingford	1,045	1,445	400	38.3%
Omeath	503	603	100	19.9%
Tullyallen	1,358	1,547	189	13.9%
Termonfeckin	1,443	1,579	136	9.4%
Clogherhead	1,993	2,145	152	7.6%

³ This figure is for Drogheda in County Louth only (excludes South Drogheda in County Meath). The population for the entire settlement of Drogheda in 2016 was 40,956 persons (Census 2016).

2.5.3 NPF Population Projections

The NPF's Implementation Roadmap provides that Louth's projected population, in conjunction with the permitted 25% headroom, will be in the range of 141,500-148,404 persons by 2026. Using the higher projected growth rate and factoring into the equation that this Plan runs from 2021 to 2027, the population projection for the County in 2027 is 149,966 persons, representing an increase in population of 21,082 on the 2016 Census figure (see Table 2.8). An annualised average of the projected population increase during the period 2016-2026 was used to calculate the projected population increase between 2026-2027. This figure of 1,562 persons was added on to the 2026 projection of 148,404 to give a projected population of 149,966 in 2027. These figures are set out in greater detail in Table 2.9.

Justification for adopting the higher projected growth rate for the County in conjunction with the additional 25% headroom is considered measured and appropriate. Table 2.10 illustrates how the projected annual average population increase for 2016-2027 only marginally exceeds the recorded annual average population increase experienced during the 2006-2016 period.

This increased growth is considered reasonable given there are two Regional Growth Centres in the County. It will allow the strategically located settlements of Drogheda and Dundalk to continue to grow into centres of scale and create a critical mass of population that will enable them to fulfil their function as regional drivers of economic and population growth with a targeted population of 50,000 by 2031.

Table 2.8: Population Projections for Louth 2016-2027

Population 2016	NPF Projected Population 2026	25% Headroom 2026 Projected Population Increase	Projected Population 2026 including 25% Headroom	Projected Annual Average Population Increase 2016 - 2026 excluding 25% Headroom	Projected Population 2027
128,884	139,000 – 144,500	2,529 – 3,904	141,529 – 148,404	1,562	149,966

Table 2.9: NPF Projected Population Growth, 2027, County Louth

County	2016	2026	2026 incl. 25% Headroom	Projected to 2027	Population Increase 2016-2027	2031
Louth	129,000	139,000 - 144,500	141,500 - 148,404	149,966	21,082	144,000 - 151,500

Table 2.10: Existing and Projected Growth 2006-2027, County Louth

County	Population Increase 2006 -2016	Average Annual Increase 2006 -2016	Projected Population Increase 2016 -2027	Projected Annual Average Population Increase 2016 -2027
Louth	17,617	1,762	21,082	1,916

2.5.4 Population Distribution

The bulk of the projected population and household growth in County Louth is directed to the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk (69%) in accordance with the principle objectives of the NPF, RSES and as provided for in the Settlement Hierarchy. It is consistent with reaching a population of 50,000 in each of the towns by 2031 as set out in the RSES and supports consolidated development in these large centres to facilitate economic growth and broaden the employment base.

The Self Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer are important local drivers, and with continued commensurate growth, will become more self-sustaining into the future.

Strengthening the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as RGCs and the Self Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer is critical to address the more recent pattern of development evident during the 2011-2016 inter-censal period where the majority of the combined population growth occurred in the lower tier towns, villages and open countryside (Figure 2.4). Such a pattern of growth is counter-productive to the stated objectives of the NPF and the RSES and to the development of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres, militating against the two towns reaching their full potential as cities of scale and economic drivers in the Region.

With 69.1% of the projected population targeted to Drogheda and Dundalk and 12.3% to Ardee and Dunleer, the residual 18.6% of the projected population will be allocated to the remaining settlements including Self Sustaining Towns, Towns and Villages and the Rural Area.

In accordance with the NPF and the RSES, future growth will be directed to settlements with capacity and potential for sustainable development. With the need for greater co-ordination between land use zoning and infrastructure provision, the NPF has adopted a 'Tiered Approach to Zoning' identifying lands available for development and those dependent on the provision of additional services and infrastructure (See Volume 3, Appendix 2).

Its success will be dependent on close collaboration between the local authority and other agencies including inter alia; Irish Water, TII, and the NTA.

Louth's projected population growth and percentage growth by Settlement Category is provided for in Table 2.11. Herein, the favoured population growth of the two Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk is highlighted.

Table 2.11: Population Projections & Distribution by Settlement Category, County Louth

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H	Column I
Settlement Category	Settlement	Census Population 2016	Projected Population 2027	Projected increase in Population	Population Increase 2002-2016	Annual Average Population increase p/a 2002-2016	Projected average Population increase per annum 2016-2027	Projected % of Total Growth Rate 2021-2027
County	Louth	128,884	149,966	21,082	27,063	1,933	1,916	100%
Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda	34,199	41,113	6,914	5,866	419	629	32.8%
	Dundalk	39,004	46,664	7,660	6,499	464	696	36.3%
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Ardee	4,928	6,583	1,655	980	70	150	7.9%
	Dunleer	1,822	2,757	935	808	58	85	4.4%
Self-Sustaining Towns	Carlingford	1,445	1,645	200	841	60	18	0.9%
	C’bellingham /Kilsaran	1,126	1,236	110	405	29	10	0.5%
	Clogherhead	2,145	2,445	300	1,239	89	27	1.4%
	Termonfeckin	1,579	1,829	250	1,076	77	23	1.2%
	Tullyallen	1,547	1,767	220	930	66	20	1.1%
Small Towns	Level 4 Settlements	5,103	5,888	785	1,886	135	71	3.7%
Villages	Level 5 Settlements	35,986	38,039	300	6,533	467	186	9.7%
Rural Area	Rural Area			1,753				

2.6 HOUSING

2.6.1 Introduction

The economic collapse of 2008 caused a countrywide decimation of the property market evidenced in the almost complete stagnation of the previous unprecedented growth experienced in house construction. In Louth, during this period, the demand for residential development abruptly ceased with a resultant dramatic reduction in housing stock delivery, in contrast to previous years as illustrated in Table 2.12.

Since approximately 2014, with the beginnings of an economic recovery, house building slowly began to increase in the County but at a much reduced rate of growth. This has subsequently placed pressure on the existing housing stock and it is anticipated this will increase as economic conditions improve.

In response to this nationwide phenomenon, the Government has introduced a range of initiatives, which are outlined below:

- **Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness:** Herein, a commitment was made to increase housing supply to 25,000 units per annum by 2020.
- **Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF):** In 2017, the Government committed €200 million funding to provide critical infrastructure to facilitate the speedy delivery of housing in key development sites experiencing a high demand for housing.
- **National Development Plan (NDP):** Committed capital investment of €4.2 billion to the delivery of 40,000 new social housing units.

- **Rent Pressure Zones (RPZ):** Where Rent Pressure Zones are identified annual rent increases are limited to 4%. All of County Louth with the exception of Clogher electoral area has been identified as a Rent Pressure Zone.
- **Land Development Agency:** With an initial capital budget of €1.25 billion, the Agency has an objective to deliver 150,000 homes over a 20 year period. Of this, it is a requirement that 40% must be social/affordable with 10% to be social and 30% to be affordable.
- **Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF):** This ten year fund with a budget of €2 billion supports compact sustainable development through regeneration of Ireland's towns and cities in line with the objectives of Project Ireland 2040.

2.6.2 Recent Residential Construction

A continuation of the economic recovery and improved consumer confidence is evident in the increase in housing construction in the County. The CSO Report 'New Dwelling Completions' 2011-2020 illustrates a steady, continual increase in residential construction in the County since 2014 (Figure 2.5). This increased activity is set to continue having regard to the level of pre-planning enquiries, permitted SHDs, active construction sites and extant permissions in the County.

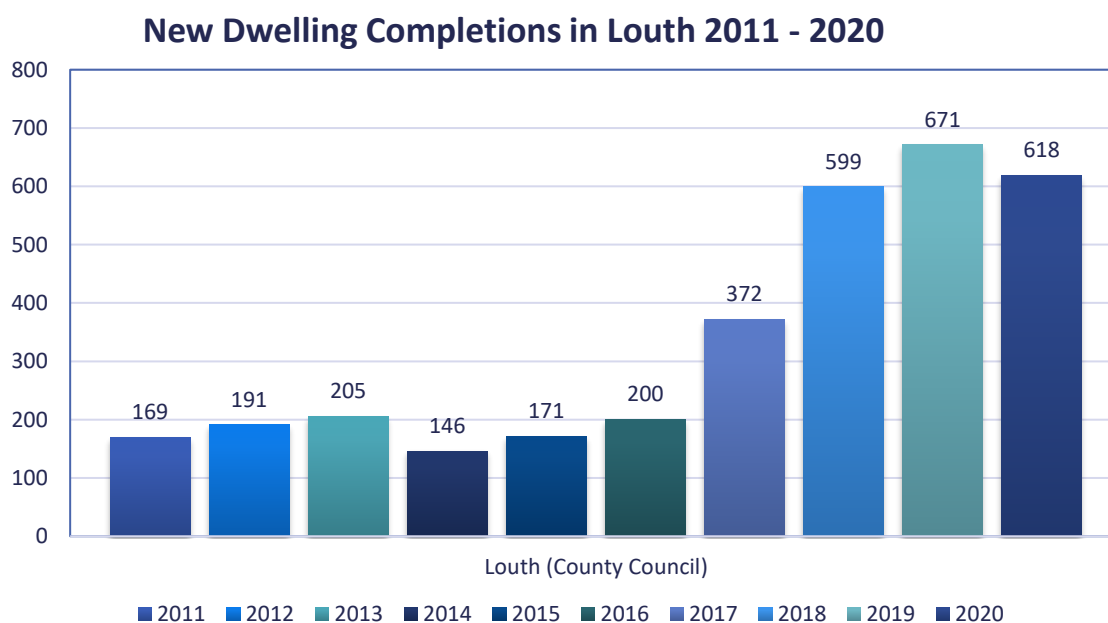
Table 2.12: Housing Stock and Vacancy Rate, County Louth 1991-2016

Housing Stock and Vacancy Rate – County Louth						
Census Year	1991	1996	2002	2006	2011	2016
Total Housing Stock Numbers	28,391	34,635	37,441	45,488	51,186	51,399
Vacant (numbers)	1,983	2,249	3,053	6,107	6,232	4,713 ⁴
Vacancy Rate (%)	7%	6.5%	8.2%	13.4%	12.2%	9.2%
% Increase year on Year		21.99%	8.10%	21.49%	12.53%	0.42%

Source: CSO

⁴ This includes 761 vacant holiday homes

Fig. 2.5 – New Dwelling Completions in Louth



2.6.3 Projecting Housing Demand to 2027

In December 2020 the Department (DHLGH) published Section 28 Guidelines to assist Local Authorities in projecting housing demand as part of the preparation of a Development Plan.

These Guidelines ‘Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning’ include a projected housing demand for each Local Authority between 2017-2031. This projection is derived from research carried out by the ESRI¹, which involved a range of variables being inputted into an econometric and demographic projection model.

As part of the ESRI research four development scenarios were considered as follows:

- **Baseline** – projecting a ‘business as usual’ scenario which is based on current trends and medium-term projections for the Irish economy;
- **NPF 50:50 City** – consistent with the NPF strategy;
- **High Migration** – incorporating assumptions around high international migration flows into Ireland based on higher economic growth than the baseline;
- **Low Migration** – incorporating assumptions around lower international migration flows into Ireland based on lower economic growth than the baseline.

Under each of these scenarios, housing demand levels for each year from 2017-2031 was provided and are available for use by planning authorities in the preparation of a Housing Strategy/Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA). The Guidelines recommend that the NPF 50:50 City Scenario is followed in order to plan for the provision of housing that will meet the projected demand in accordance with the NPF Strategy.

Table 2.13 below provides details of the housing demand in Louth up to the end of 2027 based on the ESRI NPF demand scenario.

The projected housing demand during the plan period (Q3 2021-Q3 2027) is 6,691 residential units.

When accounting for the completion of 167 units in the County in Q4 of 2021 as detailed in the CSO Housing Completions data the demand for the remainder of the plan period i.e. Q12022-Q32027 is 6,524 units.²

¹ ESRI Research Series No.111 ‘Regional Demographics and Structural Housing Demand at a County Level, December 2020

² The County Development Plan came into effect on the 11th November 2021. When preparing Variation 1 of the CDP consideration was given to the number of household completions in Louth in Q4 of 2021, which was 167 units. This figure was subtracted from 6,691 to give a housing target of 6,524 units for the remainder of the plan period i.e. Q12022-Q32027.

This projection is considered to be consistent with national and regional policy and has taken into account the projected population increase in the County between 2016-2027, which is based on the high growth scenario in the NPF Implementation Roadmap, inclusive of the 25% headroom, in addition to the designation of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres in the NPF and RSES, which acknowledges the potential of these settlements to act as a counter

balance to Dublin and become drivers of regional growth and development along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

The distribution of the housing allocation is aligned with the population projection for each settlement and has also taken account of the position of the settlement in the settlement hierarchy for the County.

Full details are set out in the Core Strategy Table (Table 2.15).

Table 2.13: Housing Demand in Louth 2017 - Q3 2027

	Louth	Total Households	Number of Relevant Years	Annual Average Households
A	ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2017 to end Q3 2027	9,214	10.75	857
B	Actual new housing supply 2017 to end Q3 2021	2,756	4.75	580
C	Homeless households (latest data), and unmet demand as at most recent Census	233	-	-
D	Plan Housing Demand = Total (A-B+C), (Projected ESRI NPF demand - new completions) = Unmet demand	6,691²	6	1,115

2.6.4 Compact Growth

An overriding objective of both the NPF and the RSES is the need to achieve ambitious targets for compact growth in urban areas. Louth is required to deliver at least 30% of all new homes within existing built up footprints (NPO 3c). Achieving this target can be realised through urban regeneration and infill/brownfield site development, which will contribute to sequential, sustainable and compact growth, revitalisation of existing settlements of all scales and transition to a low carbon, climate resilient society.

In satisfying this target for compact growth, an analysis of appropriate brownfield and infill sites with potential capacity to deliver new homes was completed for Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Dunleer and the remaining Level 3 settlements.

This compact growth will be delivered in central locations of these settlements and along key transport corridors on lands zoned for town centre, residential, or mixed uses. Details of the potential capacity of infill and brownfield lands are set out in Table 2.17. Included within the figures of infill and brownfield development are the potential residential capacity of lands zoned for town centre and mixed use development. These are set out in Table 2.14.

Table 2.14: Potential Residential Capacity of Lands Zoned for Town Centre and Mixed Use Development in the Higher Tier Settlements

Settlement Category	Settlement	Potential number of units that can be delivered on lands zoned for Town Centre and Mixed Use development
Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda	500
	Dundalk	570
Self-Sustaining Growth Town	Ardee	30
	Dunleer	40

Table 2.15: Core Strategy Table

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H	Column I	Column J
Settlement Category	Settlement	Population 2016	Projected Population Increase to 2027	Projected Population 2027	Housing Allocation 2021-2027	Lands with potential to deliver Infill or Brownfield Development (ha)	Potential units to be delivered on Infill/ Brownfield Lands	Total Lands Zoned New Residential Phase 1 (ha)	Total lands zoned New Residential (Phase 1 and Phase 2) (ha)
County	Louth	128,884	21,082	149,966	6,524	110.4	4,302	506.1	597.1
Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda	34,199	6,914	41,113	2,447	34.8	1,725	270	270
	Dundalk	39,004	7,660	46,664	2,447	30	1,743	151.03	228.71
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Ardee	4,928	1,655	6,583	440	8.5	298	35.9	51.5
	Dunleer	1,822	935	2,757	146	3.1	109	8.4	8.4
Self-Sustaining Towns	Carlingford	1,445	200	1,645	50	2.6	31	2.0	2.0
	Castlebellingham / Kilsaran	1,126	110	1,236	65	1.1	27	10.9	10.9
	Clogherhead	2,145	300	2,445	75	1.6	39	3.2	3.2
	Termonfeckin	1,579	250	1,829	70	3.4	40	4.5	4.5
	Tullyallen	1,547	220	1,767	65	1.2	29	0	0
Small Towns & Villages	Level 4 Settlements	5,103	785	5,888	230	24.1	260	20.8	20.8
Rural Nodes	Level 5 Settlements	35,986	300	38,039	489	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rural Area	Rural Area		1,753						

2.7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Louth is unrivalled in terms of its strategic and central location on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, wherein are located the two RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk, both of which are underpinned by strong transport infrastructure connecting the two main cities of scale on the Island. In line with the growth and settlement strategies, the Plan seeks to ensure that there is a convergence of where people live and work, improve the job ratio, reduce commuting patterns thereby improving the quality of life for people and promoting a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.

In accordance with the principles of the NPF and the RSES, and in recognition of the critical importance of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, this Plan promotes economic growth in those locations identified in the RSES capable of accommodating significant economic growth, primarily the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk. RGC's will serve as focal points to gain critical mass and deliver positive impacts to the surrounding area whilst enhancing overall Regional and National growth. A coordinated approach to infrastructure investment for the sustainable development and growth of the urban settlements and interconnections will be necessary to build greater levels of critical mass and facilitate the effective movement of people and goods.

The Joint LAP to be prepared for Drogheda with Meath County Council and the LAP to be prepared for Dundalk will provide greater detail on the policy framework for these settlements that will assist in co-ordinating infrastructure investment.

Whilst the majority of economic growth will be directed to Drogheda and Dundalk, there is recognition that economic opportunities exist elsewhere in the County particularly in the Self Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer but also in some of the smaller settlements dispersed throughout the County.

2.8 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

The Council aims to ensure that all retail development permitted within the County is in accordance with the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012 (DECLG)*, the *Retail Design Manual – A Good Practice Guide, 2012 (DECLG)* and the *Louth Retail Strategy*, which has been prepared as part of this Plan. The Retail Strategy sets out the indicative potential for additional convenience, comparison and bulky household goods floorspace in Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee. The potential floorspace capacity for these settlements has been informed by the settlement and retail hierarchy and projected population growth. Full details of the Retail Strategy are available in Appendix 4, Volume 3.

2.9 CLIMATE ACTION

Louth County Council prepared a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy as part of the requirements of the National Adaptation Framework (NAF), which was published in response to the provisions of the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015*. The role of this strategy is to ensure an understanding of the risks of climate change, advance planned climate resilient actions and ensure climate adaptation considerations inform all Plan policies.

The *National Climate Action Plan 2019* is designed to enable Ireland to meet its EU climate change commitments through carbon proofing government policies and establishing carbon budgets.

It provides 183 individual policy actions over 12 sectors to tackle climate change along with timelines for delivery to reduce carbon emissions by 30% between 2021 and 2030 and towards achieving zero emissions by 2050.

This key document also places Ireland at the forefront of international efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 13 – the need to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Several key measures identified in the National Climate Action Plan have already been delivered including the signing up of all 31 Local Authorities in Ireland to the *Climate Action Charter*. The *Climate Action Charter* for Louth was signed in 2019.

The Charter acknowledges that climate change is happening and that actions must be taken to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate.

Climate action is intrinsic in all of the chapters of this Plan and is specifically addressed in Chapter 12.

2.10 CORE STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

The Plan is informed and guided by robust policies and objectives in relation to Flood Risk Management, designed to ensure that future development, in areas at risk of flooding shall conform to *‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities’* (2009).

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been prepared as part of this Plan and is available in Volume 5. Its baseline data has been derived from the Office of Public Works (OPW) catchment and *Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM)* data, the *Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Management (PFRAM)* data and the *Areas of Further Assessment (AFAs)*.

2.11 CORE STRATEGY AND SEA/AA

The Core Strategy has been prepared in tandem with a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment and has had regard to both assessments with any changes/recommendations incorporated into the strategy.

2.11.1 Overarching Strategic Policy Objectives for the County

Policy Objective	
CS 1	To secure the implementation of the Core Strategy and the Settlement Strategy in so far as practicable, by directing sustainable growth towards the designated settlements, subject to the availability of infrastructure and services.

Policy Objective	
CS 2	To achieve compact growth through the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes in urban areas within the existing built up footprint of settlements, by developing infill, brownfield and regeneration sites and redeveloping underutilised land in preference to greenfield sites.

Policy Objective

CS 3 To support and manage the self-sufficient sustainable development of all settlements in a planned manner, with population growth occurring in tandem with the provision of economic, physical and social infrastructure.

Policy Objective

CS 4 To apply phasing to the delivery of new residential development as indicated on the zoning maps for the applicable settlements, whereby residential development, other than infill, brownfield or mixed use development will generally only be permitted on Phase 1 lands. Where lands zoned ‘New Residential Phase 1’ are not being brought forward for development in particular areas and this is impeding the achievement of Core Strategy projections and restricting the growth of the settlement as envisaged in national and regional policy, consideration may be given to releasing during the lifetime of this Plan appropriately located ‘New Residential Phase 2’ lands, subject to the lands contributing to compact and consolidated patterns of development.

Policy Objective

CS 5 To support the progression and delivery of projects that would facilitate the creation of vibrant, sustainable communities and the rejuvenation of towns and villages, including any project to be funded by the Urban or Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

Policy Objective

CS 6 To support the implementation of the EU Green Deal, National Climate Action Plan 2019, Programme for Government 2020, Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and the Climate Action Charter through the Plan and to consider, if appropriate, a variation of the development plan to ensure the consistency with the approach to climate action recommended in any revised Development Plan Guidelines as adopted.

Policy Objective

CS 7 To ensure a plan-led and evidence based approach is taken to the preparation of the Local Area Plans for Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee and Dunleer whereby the respective Plans are informed by the Local Transport Plans (for Drogheda and Dundalk), the Infrastructure Assessment and Land Use Evaluation for the respective settlement, and any other relevant information available from statutory bodies, government agencies, or infrastructure providers.

Policy Objective

CS 8 In order to ensure consistency with the Core Strategy housing allocation as set out in the County Development Plan, as part of the preparation of the Joint Local Area Plan for Drogheda a review of lands zoned A2 New Residential in the Northern Environs area will be carried out and a phasing strategy will be set out. This will take account of the designation of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre in national and regional policy, the housing allocation for Drogheda in the Core Strategy, the availability of transport infrastructure and water services, and ensuring the Northern Environs retains its potential to function as a counter balance to the Southern Environs of the town.

Policy Objective

CS 9 To review the Infrastructure Assessment and Land Use Evaluation for Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee, and Dunleer as part of the preparation of the Local Area Plans for these settlements and to ensure that any land use zoning is aligned to infrastructure availability.

In line with the population and economic strategy of this Plan of targeting population and economic growth to key urban centres, in particular the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk, the Core Strategy policy objectives are set out in accordance with the core and settlement hierarchy as follows:

2.11.2 Regional Growth Centres

Policy Objective

CS 10 Direct and consolidate the majority of the County's future population growth into the strong and dynamic Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk in line with the objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and in accordance with the Core and Settlement Strategies of the Development Plan.

Policy Objective

CS 11 Support the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk as regional economic drivers targeted to grow to city scale with a population of 50,000 by 2031 and capitalise on their strategic location on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

Policy Objective

CS 12 To promote and support the sustainable development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, safeguarding and improving accessibility and service by road, rail and communication and enhancing cross border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross-border network for regional development.

Policy Objective

CS 13 To prioritise the preparation of a Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP/LAP) for Drogheda in partnership with Meath County Council, which will incorporate the existing local area plan areas affecting the wider town environs into one overall planning framework for the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda. The preparation of the UAP/LAP will be informed by a local transport plan, in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.11 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Policy Objective

CS 14 To prioritise the preparation of an Urban Area Plan (UAP/LAP) for Dundalk, which will incorporate the existing local area plan and framework plan areas affecting the wider town environs into one overall planning framework for the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk. The preparation of the UAP/LAP will be informed by a local transport plan, in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.19 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

2.11.3 Self-Sustaining Growth Towns

Policy Objective

CS 15 To prepare a new Local Area Plan for Ardee in line with the Core Strategy and in recognition of Ardee’s role as a regionally important local driver and Self Sustaining Growth Town in the Settlement Strategy.

Policy Objective

CS 16 To prepare a new Local Area Plan for Dunleer in line with the Core Strategy and in recognition of Dunleer’s role as a regionally important local driver and Self Sustaining Growth Town in the Settlement Strategy.

Policy Objective

CS 17 To ensure proportionate, contained and compact growth within the Self Sustaining Towns identified in the Settlement Hierarchy, with focused investment in green industry, services, infrastructure and employment whilst balancing housing delivery.

2.11.4 Small Towns and Villages

Policy Objective

CS 18 To ensure localised sustainable growth within the small towns and villages identified in the Settlement Strategy, is proportionate to the size of the settlement, prioritised on infill/brownfield sites and that economic related development is supported.

Policy Objective

CS 19 To strengthen and rejuvenate the fabric of rural villages and create sustainable rural communities to meet rural generated housing needs and alleviate the need for one off rural housing in the open countryside.

Policy Objective

CS 20 To direct rural generated housing demand to rural villages and rural nodes in the first instance and ensure that one off housing in the open countryside is only permitted where there is demonstrable compliance with the criteria for rural housing as provided for in the Development Plan.

Policy Objective

CS 21 To facilitate rural generated housing demand in identified Rural Nodes commensurate with the prevailing scale, pattern of development and services available.

Policy Objective

CS 22 To promote, support and facilitate the re-use of under-utilised or vacant lands, or lands identified for regeneration, through a co-ordinated approach to active land management between the Council and stakeholders.

2.12 SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY AND GROWTH STRATEGY

The Settlement Hierarchy of this Plan has been developed to take account of the function and role of each of the identified settlements in accordance and close alignment with the identified settlement hierarchy in the RSES. It has been informed by a range of factors including population, employment base, facilities and service provision, recent growth levels and capacity to accommodate future growth. The Louth Settlement Hierarchy is set out in Table 2.4.

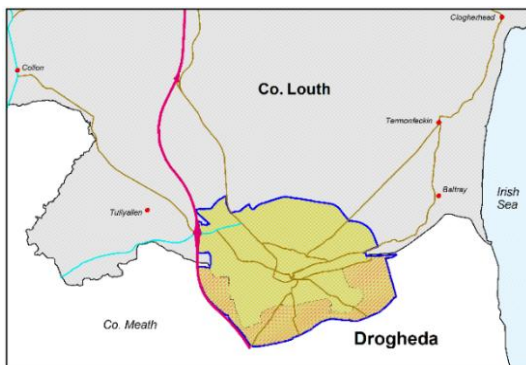
In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, growth will be prioritised in the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk, close to employment, services, and local amenities. The potential for smaller towns and villages to develop at a sustainable rate is also recognised.

2.12.1 Regional Growth Centres: Drogheda and Dundalk

This Section will provide an overview of the growth strategy for Drogheda and Dundalk during the lifetime of this Plan. Land use zoning maps have been prepared for these settlements and can be viewed in Volume 1A of this Plan.

2.13 DROGHEDA

With a total population of almost 41,000, Drogheda was the largest town in Ireland in 2016.



Supporting this population, is a wide range of services and amenities including an extensive convenience and comparison retail portfolio in town centre and edge of centre locations, a regional hospital at Our Lady of Lourdes, primary and secondary schools, an adult education facility, community centres, play parks, and open spaces, as well as a range of local and international businesses, production, and manufacturing facilities located in the business and enterprise parks in the town. Drogheda is located within the administrative areas of Louth and Meath County Council.

The town centre and urban core is located in Louth with the southern fringes extending into Meath. In 2016 approximately 84% of the population (34,199 people) lived within the administrative area of Louth.

2.13.1 Joint Urban Area Plan

In order for Drogheda to fulfil its economic potential it is acknowledged that a coordinated approach needs to be taken with regard to the future growth strategy and infrastructure investment. The Council therefore welcomes the requirement in the RSES to prepare a Joint Urban Area Plan for Drogheda between Louth and Meath County Councils.

The UAP/LAP will be informed by the strategic objectives set out in this Plan and will provide for specific objectives and key actions to unlock the full potential of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre.

2.13.2 Growth Strategy

The growth strategy for Drogheda will focus on building on the competitive advantage of the town and in particular its location along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and accessibility to Dublin Airport and City Centre.

It will support significant population and economic growth that will ensure the town continues to function as a regional driver for economic growth and to strengthen the economic base of the town.

The trajectory of population growth is based on the population increasing to 50,000 in 2031 as set out in the RSES.

There will be a significant focus on promoting the regeneration of the town centre through the identification of specific areas and land for regeneration uses and the progression of regeneration projects such as the Westgate Vision.

The development of the employment and residential lands in the Northern Environs and the delivery of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) are also a fundamental element of the immediate and long-term growth strategy for the town. The delivery of the PANCR is critical to the removal of port related traffic from the town centre and the facilitation of the regeneration of town centre lands.

2.13.3 Regeneration Areas

There is significant potential for the town to deliver compact growth, with a number of vacant and under-utilised buildings and land situated within its core. This includes the Westgate area, where a development strategy, the ‘Westgate Vision’ has been published, and funding to commence its implementation provided through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

The Westgate area has the capacity to accommodate commercial, office, and residential uses in a part of the town that has experienced high levels of vacancy and dereliction.



The Docklands area of the town is another location with regeneration potential. This includes lands on the North and South Inner Quays. *The Docklands Area Plan 2007*, provides a framework for the redevelopment of this part of the town. This includes for the creation of a new urban quarter on both sides of the River Boyne. Port activities have ceased on the South Inner Quays with docking still taking place on the North Inner Quays.

In the immediate term the South Inner Quays have therefore more potential for redevelopment however with proposals to consolidate Drogheda Port at the deep water facility at Tom Roe’s Point the North Inner Quays may also become available in the future. The regeneration of the Docklands area would act as a stimulus for further redevelopment in the town centre and support the creation of an attractive, compact, and vibrant living space in the centre of the town.

Table 2.16: Overview of Key Statistics for Drogheda

DROGHEDA	
Population 2016	34,199
Projected Population 2027	41,113
Projected population increase	6,914
Housing Stock	13,741
Projected Housing Stock increase 2021-2027	2,447
Residents Workers 2016	16,108
Total Jobs 2016	12,361
Job: Workforce Ratio 2016 ⁵	0.76
Resident workforce working in Dublin City and suburbs 2016	2,662 (16.5%)

⁵ The Total Jobs, Resident Workers, and Job:Workforce ratio for Drogheda includes the Southern Environs of the town which is in the administrative area of Meath. In 2016 the population of Drogheda within the administrative area of Louth was 34,199. There were 12,408 resident workers in the Louth area of the town and 11,145 jobs resulting in a Job:Workforce ratio of 0.90.

2.13.4 Buildings of Increased Height

As part of the compact growth strategy the Local Authority will actively promote and support proposals to develop buildings of increased height on suitably located and configured lands.

These lands will normally be centrally located, in proximity to public transport or in strategic locations in the town where such buildings could function as a landmark or focal point for development. A more detailed analysis of the preferred location for taller buildings will be carried out as part of the Joint UAP/LAP for Drogheda. In the interim the development of taller buildings, which are supported by appropriate design briefs and which are consistent with the provisions of the Specific Planning Policy Requirements set out in the *Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2018*, will be considered.



2.13.5 Urban Design Framework Plan for the Heritage Quarter

In 2013 an *Urban Design Framework Plan for The Heritage Quarter*, was published with the vision of building on the unique qualities of the Heritage Quarter of the town and its medieval walls and make it a focal point for cultural and business activities in the town.

One of the main challenges facing the area is addressing the high levels of vacancy.

The Framework Plan provides a strategy that aims to enhance and protect the qualities of the Heritage Quarter and guiding and enabling development in a changed and managed way.

This Plan will continue to support the principles and implementation of this Urban Design Framework Plan.

2.13.6 Northern Environs of Drogheda

In addition to the regeneration of the town centre area there is an extensive land bank of employment, residential, and community zoned lands in the Northern Environs of the Town. This land bank will form part of the UAP/LAP and will ensure the town has the capacity to deliver the population and economic growth envisaged in the NPF and RSES and will act as a counter balance to the level of growth that has taken place in the Southern Environs of the town. The Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) is a critical piece of infrastructure in the Northern Environs that will ensure the comprehensive and cohesive development of this area while also facilitating the regeneration of key sites within the town centre.

It is important that the build out of these lands is coordinated so that the necessary social, community, and recreational infrastructure is provided in tandem with residential development.

In this regard there will be a requirement for a phased approach to be taken to the development of the Northern Environs. This shall be informed by the phasing arrangements set out in the 2006 Masterplan (which can be viewed by clicking on this [link](#)) or any subsequent Masterplan prepared for the area. In addition an emphasis shall also be placed on consolidation between areas developed or under construction and the existing built up area of Drogheda rather than a continuation of a dispersed pattern of development in the Northern Environs area.

Whilst it is acknowledged there is an extensive quantum of lands in the Northern Environs zoned for residential use these lands are a fundamental part of the long term growth strategy of the town that will be developed over a number of development plans.

The development of these lands is closely linked to the provision of roads, new streetscapes, pedestrian and cycle networks and water services infrastructure which will allow the Council to manage the phased release of the lands.

2.13.7 Economy and Employment

There are a range of local and international businesses located in the business and enterprise parks in the town. This Plan will continue to support the provision of a wide range of employment uses in Drogheda to assist in improving employment opportunities in the town and to reduce commuting for work elsewhere.

The Council will continue to work closely with businesses and stakeholders including the Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland in promoting and attracting further economic investment and employment generating development to the town.

Further details on the economic profile and retail opportunity sites for Drogheda are set out in Chapter 5 'Economy and Employment'.

2.13.8 Movement

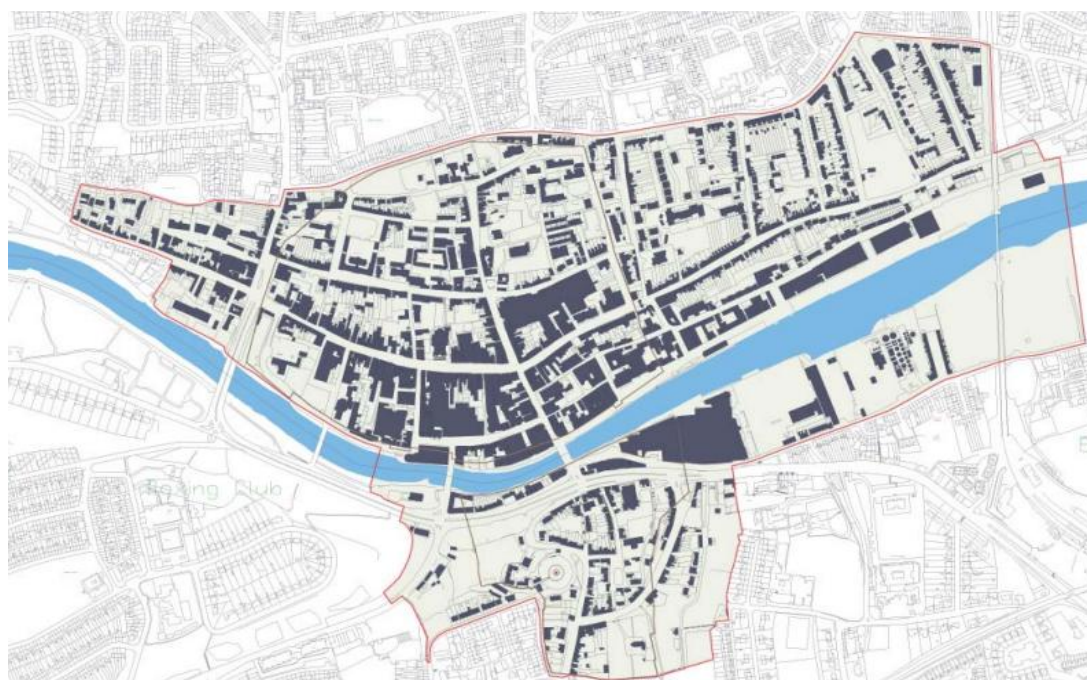
The PANCR is a critical piece of enabling infrastructure for Drogheda that would provide a direct link from the Motorway to the Port. This enabling infrastructural project is important to both the Local and Regional economy as it would improve connectivity between Drogheda Port and the wider Region whilst also removing port related traffic from the town centre, providing opportunities for investment in the public realm that would give greater priority to more sustainable modes of transport in the town centre area.

The importance of the project is recognised in Regional Policy Objective 4.12 of the RSES, which supports the delivery of the road.

The DART Expansion Programme proposes to expand DART Services on the northern line to Drogheda. This is an important growth enabler for Drogheda as it would improve the connectivity to Dublin due to the increased frequency of services, making the town more accessible and attractive for economic investment and employment generating development.

The regeneration of McBride Rail Station and the integration of bus and rail services in the Town through the creation of an Integrated Public Transport Hub would significantly improve public transport provision and accessibility in the town, making public transport a viable alternative to the private car.

Figure 2.6: Extent of Heritage Area Identified in Framework Plan



2.13.9 Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Drogheda

Policy Objective

SS 1 To support the role of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre and a driver of growth along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to facilitate the continued expansion and growth of the town based on the principles of balanced, sustainable development that enables the creation of employment, supports economic investment, and creates an attractive living and working environment.

Policy Objective

SS 2 To continue to support and promote the economic role of Drogheda as a regional centre of employment along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to facilitate any infrastructural investment or employment generating sustainable development that will strengthen the role of the town and maintain its competitiveness.

Policy Objective

SS 3 To support the preparation of a Joint Urban Area Plan for Drogheda in conjunction with Meath County Council in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.11 in the RSES.

Policy Objective

SS 4 To support high density sustainable development, particularly in centrally located areas and along public transport corridors and require a minimum density of 50 units/ha in these locations.

Policy Objective

SS 5 To support increased building heights at appropriate locations in Drogheda, subject to the design and scale of any building making a positive contribution to its surrounding environment and streetscape.

Policy Objective

SS 6 To support the sustainable development of the regeneration sites identified on the land use zoning map for appropriate uses compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood.

Policy Objective

SS 7 To support the progression and implementation of any projects in Drogheda funded by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund including the Westgate Vision.

Policy Objective

SS 8 To support the implementation of the Urban Design Framework Plan for the Heritage Quarter in Drogheda.

Policy Objective

SS 9 To support and protect the role of Drogheda Port as a Port of regional significance and to facilitate any investment, upgrade, or maintenance works to the Port, subject to appropriate environmental considerations.

Policy Objective

SS 10 To manage the growth of Drogheda in a manner that will achieve the creation of a compact settlement with attractive and inclusive sustainable neighbourhoods where there is a choice of affordable homes for all.

Policy Objective

SS 11 To support the coordinated development of the Northern Environs of Drogheda with the provision and delivery of sustainable social and community facilities and infrastructure in tandem with residential development.

Policy Objective

SS 12 To recognise the importance of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) as a critical piece of enabling infrastructure in the strategic growth of Drogheda and to seek to secure funding to progress the delivery of this project as a priority during the life of the Plan.

Policy Objective

SS 13 To support investment in public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services in Drogheda including the progression of the DART Expansion Programme which includes the electrification of the rail line and the extension of DART services to Drogheda.

Policy Objective

SS 14 To enhance the established role of Drogheda town centre and position it as a destination of choice for both visitors and residents alike with a special emphasis on the role played by the town walls.

Policy Objective

SS 15 To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area.

Policy Objective

SS 16 To promote and facilitate the sustainable development of key opportunity sites within the town centre.

Policy Objective

SS 17 To work with the NTA, local landowners, and developers to implement an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Drogheda, recognising the highest priority to be given to cycling and walking over other modes of transport.

Policy Objective

SS 18 To develop a network of green areas throughout the town including the delivery of a greenway along the north and southern banks of the River Boyne stretching from Townley Hall to Baltray and Oldbridge to Mornington in County Meath while maintaining the integrity of the Boyne Natura 2000 sites.

2.14 DUNDALK

Dundalk is the County town and administrative centre for Louth. It is a multi-modal settlement that benefits from its strategic location along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and excellent connectivity with Dublin and Belfast.

With over 14,000 jobs in the town, it is the primary employment centre in the County. A more detailed Urban Area Plan will be prepared for Dundalk during the life of this Plan.

2.14.1 Development Strategy

The development strategy for Dundalk will be based on the town reaching a population of 50,000 by 2031, as set out in the RSES. It will seek to continue to broaden and strengthen the employment base of the town and facilitate population and economic growth that would allow the town to fulfil its function as a Regional Growth Centre. The creation of a vibrant town centre where people want to live and visit is also a priority.

2.14.2 Town Centre Area

The Dundalk Local Area Plan 2025-2031 provides a strategy for the future growth and development of Dundalk and identifies five distinctive character areas which are within or in the vicinity of the urban core of the town and are based on their own unique and distinct character.

Potential opportunities for small scale

Table 2.17: Overview of Key Statistics for Dundalk

DUNDALK	
Population	39,004
Projected population 2027	46,664
Projected population increase	7,660
Housing Stock	16,351
Projected Housing Stock increase 2021-2027	2,447
Residents Workers	14,178
Total Jobs	14,163
Job: Workforce Ratio	0.99
Resident workforce working in Dublin City and suburbs 2016	1,004 (7.1%)

redevelopment or infill projects, public realm improvements and active travel measures are provided for in each of the character areas.

The character areas are listed below, and further information on the Character Areas can be found at Appendix 18 and can also be viewed in the Dundalk Local Area Plan 2025-2031 by clicking [here](#).

1. St. Nicholas Quarter;
2. Park Street/Francis Street and St. Patrick's Church;
3. Seatown;
4. The Station Quarter; and
5. The Marshes.

Recent investments in the public realm around Clanbrassil Street and St. Nicholas' Quarter by the Council have created an attractive and vibrant space for businesses to operate and people to shop and socialise.

The Longwalk Quarter Project, which received funding through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and which will create a new living and working quarter in the town centre, is also being progressed. Continued support will be provided for this project and any public realm and regeneration projects that will revitalise the town centre area and support the implementation of the policy of compact growth.

2.14.3 Regeneration Areas

In order to promote regeneration in the town, specific areas and lands have been identified with a regeneration zoning. This zoning has been directed to specific locations in the town where it is considered a regeneration project or development would act as a stimulus for further redevelopment activities.

The sites/locations identified are:

- Carroll Village;
- Longwalk Shopping Centre;
- St. Nicholas Quarter; and
- Port/Harbour Area.

The former Carroll Village Shopping Centre includes the footprint of the existing building and a large surface car park. The site is strategically located on a corner site along The Long Walk and is suitable for a mixed use development including commercial, retail, and residential uses.

The existing Longwalk Shopping Centre is located immediately south of the former Carroll Village Shopping Centre. Whilst Tesco is the anchor tenant, the centre is experiencing high levels of vacancy with an occupancy rate of approximately 50%. The former Toymaster building to the north-east of the centre is included in this regeneration area. The aim of this designation is to assist in stimulating the redevelopment of this centre where there is an opportunity for retail and an associated mix of uses.

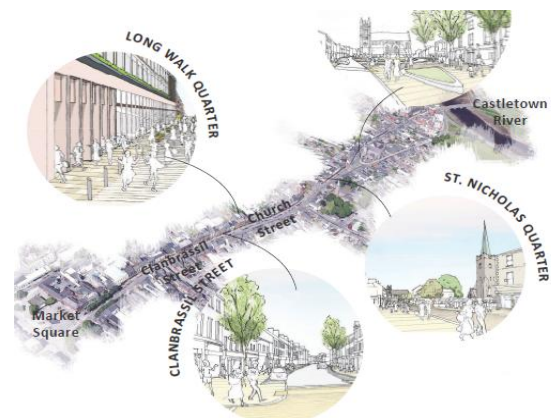
St. Nicholas' Quarter is an area of the town that has experienced high levels of vacancy, ad-hoc development, and dereliction.

The area has the potential to create a rejuvenated urban quarter along Bridge Street, Northgate Street, and Linenhall Street with opportunities for backland and infill development.

The existing harbour area of the town is another area of Dundalk that is presently under-utilised. Whilst part of the lands are used for port related activities, there is a large area of land currently vacant (c.1.6 hectares). Taking account of the proximity of these lands to the town centre there is potential for these lands to be developed for a range of uses that would complement the town centre and revitalise this part of the town.

RPO 4.23 of the RSES supports the regeneration of the harbour/port area in the town and recognises its potential as a location for economic development.

The strategic location of the lands means the lands may be suitable to accommodate taller buildings that would maximise its riverside location and proximity to the town centre whilst also providing a landmark/gateway to the Port. This Plan has also identified Retail Opportunity Sites, details of which can be found in the Retail Strategy in Volume 3, Appendix 4.



2.14.4 Buildings of Increased Height

As part of the compact growth strategy the Council will actively promote and support proposals to develop buildings of height on suitably located and configured lands. These lands will normally be centrally located, in proximity to public transport or in strategic locations in the town where such buildings could function as a landmark or focal point for development.

A building of height is considered to be a building that is 4 storeys or higher. An analysis of areas considered to be suitable for buildings of height in Dundalk was carried out as part of the Dundalk Local Area Plan and are set out below:

Table 2.18: Buildings of Increased Height

Location	Reasoning
Along the Ramparts and in the Marshes area	Lands are in proximity to existing services and facilities which will support the consolidation of the urban core of the town thereby assisting in the delivery of a more compact settlement pattern.
Lands along the waterfront	There are existing higher buildings in the vicinity of Dundalk Port. These contribute to Dundalk's wider setting and provide a sense of place. Opportunity exists to provide well designed landmark buildings which enhance the appearance of the waterfront.
Public Transport Hubs, Transport corridors including existing and future bus corridors	Opportunity exists to improve the visual appearance of the main arterial transport routes into and through the town, thus assisting in the creation of attractive entrance nodes and encouraging higher densities where there is access to sustainable transport.
Mullagharlin Employment Generating Area	Potential to provide landmark gateway buildings for employment generating uses. It is essential that any new building makes a positive contribution to the built form of the area.
Town Centre and Regeneration Zoned Lands	Opportunity exists to provide buildings of height on town centre and regeneration zoned lands to support the consolidation of the urban core and to realise the potential of compact growth. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis and building height design should have regard to the prevailing context of the surrounding area.

2.14.5 Residential Development

Residential development will focus on the delivery of high quality designed buildings and spaces that can meet the housing needs of all members of the community, regardless of age or ability, and provide connectivity and permeability between existing and future neighbourhood areas.

In order to achieve compact growth higher density developments will be required, particularly on centrally located lands or lands well connected to the town centre.

Recent household construction has been concentrated primarily in the southern

parts of the town in the Blackrock area and on the residential lands to the west of the R132. There is also development ongoing in the western and northern areas of the town.

With the quantum of residentially zoned lands available in excess of that required for the anticipated population growth during the life of this Plan, an analysis of the undeveloped residentially zoned lands was carried out.

Based on this analysis, which took account of the location of the land relative to the town centre, public transport, and local facilities, and the availability of services and infrastructure required to service the lands, the lands were prioritised and ranked accordingly.

Any excess lands have been placed in a strategic reserve and will not be available for development during the life of this Plan. One of the primary locations for residential growth during this Plan will be in the Mount Avenue area to the west of the town centre.

Whilst part of these lands will be released by the construction of the LIHAF funded Mount Avenue Link Road, there is c.35 hectares of land that are subject to a Masterplan with the capacity to deliver c.1,000 residential units in addition to a park and neighbourhood facilities.

The town centre area will be the focus for infill and brownfield development with a number of significant development opportunities available.

In the southern area of the town development in the Blackrock area will be carefully managed with the focus on consolidation, the build out of extant permissions and developments currently under construction.

The Plan supports the delivery of affordable homes including a mix of house types and tenure suitable for all life stages.

2.14.6 Economy

Whilst the location of the town along the border makes Dundalk particularly susceptible to the uncertainties and potential economic instabilities surrounding the UK withdrawal from the EU, this Plan will continue to support and facilitate infrastructural investments and improvements to connectivity that will enable businesses and enterprises to respond to these challenges. It will also support the strengthening of cross-border links and the continued collaboration between government agencies and businesses on both sides of the border that will encourage and facilitate economic growth and enterprise development.

The continued expansion of the business and enterprise parks in the town will be supported with the Council continuing to work closely with businesses and stakeholders including the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA in promoting and attracting further economic investment and employment generating development to the Town.

The existing land bank of undeveloped employment zoned lands is strategically located in various parts of the town and is suitable for a range of enterprise and employment uses.

DkIT is an important education facility in the town and north-east region that provides opportunities for education and skills development of the local labour force in addition to opportunities for collaboration between local businesses and industry.

The continued development of this partnership approach will be supported and facilitated in this Plan. The Plan also supports DkIT as a centre of excellence for education.

Further details on the economic and retail profile of Dundalk are set out in Chapter 5 ‘Economy and Employment’.

2.14.7 Movement

The Local Authority will work closely with the NTA to develop a travel plan for the town which focuses on the provision of an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Dundalk. Whilst sustainable modes of transport will be prioritised, if Dundalk is to increase its population at the rate anticipated in the RSES investment in roads infrastructure will be required to ensure the efficient movement of people and goods around the town.

Taking account of the quantum of lands zoned for residential use in the Mount Avenue area, the roads infrastructure will be required to be upgraded to facilitate additional traffic flows and movements.

There is a requirement for link roads connecting neighbourhoods and industrial/business areas to the main access roads in and out of the town. Further details on this project are set out in Chapter 7 ‘Movement’.

2.14.8 Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Dundalk

Policy Objective

SS 19	To support the role of Dundalk as a Regional Growth Centre and a driver of growth along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and in the border area and to facilitate the continued expansion and growth of the town based on the principles of balanced, sustainable development that enables the creation of employment, supports economic investment, and creates an attractive living and working environment.
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Policy Objective

SS 20	To continue to support and promote the economic role of Dundalk as a regional centre of employment in the border area and to facilitate any infrastructural investment or employment generating development that will strengthen the role of the town and maintain its competitiveness.
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Policy Objective

SS 21	To support sustainable high density development, particularly in centrally located areas and along public transport corridors and require a minimum density of 50 units/ha in these locations.
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Policy Objective

SS 22	To support increased building heights at appropriate locations in Dundalk, subject to the design and scale of any building making a positive contribution to its surrounding environment and streetscape.
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Policy Objective

SS 23	To enhance the established role of Dundalk town centre and position it as a destination of choice for shopping with a special emphasis on revitalising and reducing vacancy in the retail core area.
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Policy Objective

SS 24 To promote and facilitate the development of key opportunity or regeneration sites within or proximate to the town centre.

Policy Objective

SS 25 To manage the growth of Dundalk in a manner that will achieve the creation of a compact settlement with attractive and inclusive neighbourhoods where there is a choice of affordable homes for all.

Policy Objective

SS 26 To support the progression and implementation of any projects in Dundalk funded by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund including the Longwalk Quarter Project.

Policy Objective

SS 27 To support the sustainable development of the regeneration sites identified on the land use zoning map for appropriate uses compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood.

Policy Objective

SS 28 To support the role of Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) as a centre for excellence for education and to facilitate any proposals that would strengthen the role and raise the profile of DkIT as a research and education facility.

Policy Objective

SS 29 To secure the provision of the proposed Link Roads including the LIHAF funded Mount Avenue Link Road, and other road improvements, in co-operation with stakeholders and government agencies.

Policy Objective

SS 30 To work with the NTA, local landowners, and developers to implement an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Dundalk.

Policy Objective

SS 31 To develop a network of green areas throughout the town, building on existing green infrastructure, and advancing the delivery of the Great Eastern Greenway along the coast incorporating the delivery of greenway and pedestrian infrastructure on both sides of the Castletown River, while maintaining the integrity of the Dundalk Bay Natura 2000 sites.

Policy Objective

SS 32 To recognise the strategic piece of infrastructure that is the former Dundalk Landfill Site to be developed for playing pitches and for recreation purposes.

2.15 SELF-SUSTAINING GROWTH TOWNS

2.15.1 ARDEE

Ardee is an important local service centre in mid-Louth providing a range of services and employment to an extensive catchment that extends into parts of Meath and Monaghan. In 2016 there were over 1,700 jobs in the town.



The total jobs in the town, in combination with its high Job:Workforce ratio, which was 0.93 in 2016, is an indication of the strong employment base in the town. It also demonstrates the town is well balanced in its Population:Employment ratio.

Table 2.19: Overview of Key Statistics for Ardee

ARDEE	
Population	4,928
Projected population 2027	6,583
Projected population increase	1,655
Housing Stock	2,002
Projected Housing Stock increase 2021-2027	440
Residents Workers	1,819
Total Jobs	1,716
Job: Workforce Ratio	0.93

The connectivity and accessibility that the town provides due to its location along the national road network makes it an attractive location for growth and investment.

This connectivity includes access to the Dublin-Belfast Corridor via the M1, the north-west of the country via the N2, and access to local centres of employment in the Eastern and Midland Region via the N52.

The growth strategy for Ardee, during this Plan, will be to consolidate its designation as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' and continue to expand its employment base and facilitate sustainable residential growth that would meet the needs of a localised demand.



Any expansion of the town shall be complementary to the development of the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

There is an existing land bank of undeveloped lands zoned for residential and employment uses in Ardee which will meet the residential and employment/economic needs of the town during this Plan period. A sequential approach to the development of residential lands will be encouraged, with priority given to lands in proximity to the town centre.

The development of these lands shall facilitate the creation of attractive, sustainable communities.

Any excess residential lands have been placed in a strategic reserve and shall not be available for development until after the expiration of the Plan.

As part of the strategy of promoting town centre renewal this Plan will support and facilitate high quality development that results in the development of vacant or under-utilised lands which will improve the vibrancy of the town centre and create a more compact settlement.

Part of the regeneration strategy for the town is the redevelopment of Ardee Castle, which is located on the Main Street in the town. Funding was received to redevelop the Castle under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

This is an important tourism project for both the County and Ardee, as it has the potential to significantly increase visitor numbers to the area.

As part of the policy of improving connectivity at a National and Regional level there are proposals to upgrade the N2 and N52. These proposals will involve a by-pass of Ardee along both of these routes. When delivered these projects would transform Ardee town centre as it would remove through traffic from the urban core of the town and provide opportunities for investment in the public realm that would give greater priority to walking and cycling. These environmental improvements would make town centre living much more appealing.

A Land Use Zoning Map has been prepared for Ardee and can be viewed in Volume 1A of this Plan.

Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Ardee

Policy Objective

SS 33 To support the role of Ardee as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town, which shall be complementary to the Regional Growth Centres, and to facilitate balanced population and economic growth that will meet the needs of the residents of Ardee and its hinterland.

Policy Objective

SS 34 To continue to support the economic growth of Ardee by facilitating and supporting a range of employment generating uses in the town.

Policy Objective

SS 35 To support the creation of a sustainable compact settlement in Ardee that provides opportunities for walking and cycling and to encourage a minimum density of 25 units/ha for new residential developments.

Policy Objective

SS 36 To support the creation of sustainable attractive and inclusive communities where the residential needs of the entire population can be met.

Policy Objective

SS 37 To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area of Ardee and to support and facilitate the re-use of existing buildings within the town centre or edge of centre.

Policy Objective

SS 38 To support the progression and implementation of any projects in Ardee funded by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund including the Restoration of Ardee Castle and the Regeneration Plan for Ardee.

Policy Objective

SS 39 To secure the construction, pending approval by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, of the N2 bypass and N52 bypass and preserve free of development their proposed routes.

Policy Objective

SS 40 To facilitate the provision of a new link road from Rathgory and Mulladrillen to Black Road.

Policy Objective

SS 41 To upgrade footpaths and provide a cycle lane along Sean O’Carroll Street.

Policy Objective

SS 42 To facilitate the provision of a north-south link road to the west of the town.

Policy Objective

SS 43 To examine the feasibility of a running track for Ardee during the lifetime of this Plan.

2.15.2 DUNLEER

Dunleer is a small settlement to the east of the M1 situated between Drogheda and Dundalk. The R169 links Dunleer to the motorway at Junction 12, providing excellent connectivity via the National and Regional road network.

Whilst the population and service provision in the town is lower than that of Ardee, it has a strong employment sector, with over 800 jobs in the town in 2016. In fact in 2016 there were more jobs than resident workers, resulting in a Jobs:Workforce ratio of 1.10. This was the highest rate recorded in the County and is confirmation of the strength of the employment base.

Table 2.20: Overview of Key Statistics for Dunleer

DUNLEER	
Population	1,822
Projected population 2027	2,757
Projected population increase	935
Housing Stock	719
Projected Housing Stock increase 2021-2027	146
Residents Workers	751
Total Jobs	822
Job: Workforce Ratio	1.10

The development strategy for Dunleer during this Plan will be to continue to support economic and employment related development in the town in addition to residential growth that meets the housing requirements of the local population.

This growth shall be complementary to the development of the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

This Plan will promote the consolidation of the urban core of Dunleer and support the development of vacant or under-utilised infill and brownfield lands. Economic and employment related development shall be concentrated in the established employment areas in the town.

A Masterplan for the undeveloped lands zoned for employment related uses to the south west of the town centre will be required to be prepared and agreed with



the Planning Authority prior to any planning application being lodged.

Recent residential activity in the town includes the construction of 80 social housing units at Ravel Grange. Any future residential developments shall be of a high quality that promote connectivity and permeability and meets the residential needs of all members of the community.

A Land Use Zoning Map has been prepared for Dunleer and can be viewed in Volume 1A of this Plan.

2.15.3 Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Dunleer

Policy Objective	
SS 44	To support the role of Dunleer as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town, which shall be complementary to the Regional Growth Centres, and to facilitate balanced population and economic growth that will meet the needs of the residents of Dunleer and its hinterland.

Policy Objective	
SS 45	To continue to support the sustainable economic growth of Dunleer by facilitating and supporting a range of employment generating uses in the town.

Policy Objective	
SS 46	To support the creation of a sustainable compact settlement in Dunleer that provides opportunities for walking and cycling and to encourage a minimum density of 25 units/ha for new residential developments.

Policy Objective	
SS 47	To support the creation of sustainable attractive and inclusive communities where the residential needs of the entire population are met with the commensurate provision of community and social infrastructure.

Policy Objective	
SS 48	To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area of Dunleer and to provide for town centre living.

Policy Objective	
SS 49	To require the preparation of a Masterplan on the lands to the south-west of the town centre zoned for Industry, Enterprise, and Innovation. No planning application shall be submitted prior to the agreement of this Masterplan.

Policy Objective	
SS 50	To work with local landowners and businesses in facilitating and carrying out public realm works in Dunleer including works to roads and footpaths and existing lane-ways / cycle ways.

Policy Objective	
SS 51	To examine the feasibility of providing additional off-street car parking locations in Dunleer.

2.16 SELF-SUSTAINING TOWNS



There are 5 settlements in the County which are identified as Self-Sustaining Towns:-

- Carlingford;
- Clogherhead;
- Castlebellingham/Kilsaran;
- Termonfeckin; and
- Tullyallen.

They have experienced residential expansion with varying levels of growth and investment in employment generating development and service provision.

Carlingford, which is an important tourist destination in the County, recorded the highest number of jobs in this settlement category, with 370 jobs and a Job:Workforce ratio of 0.81. Castlebellingham/Kilsaran is another settlement with a strong employment base, with a jobs ratio of 0.65.

However Clogherhead, with the highest population of 2,145 in 2016, has the lowest Job:Workforce ratio of 0.17.

This is an indication that a high proportion of the residents in the town are required to travel outside the settlement for employment.

The growth strategy for these Self-Sustaining Towns will focus on driving investment in services, employment growth and infrastructure while balancing housing delivery, including consolidation of the core areas and delivery of compact growth.

Volume 2 of this Plan provides a Written Statement and associated Land Use Zoning and Composite Maps for each of the Self-Sustaining Towns.

Table 2.21: Overview of Key Statistics for Self-Sustaining Towns

Settlement	Population 2016	Projected Population 2021-2027	Housing Stock 2016	Housing Allocation 2021-2027	Resident Workforce 2016	Total Jobs 2016	Job:Workforce ratio 2016
Carlingford	1,445	1,645	840	50	459	370	0.81
Castlebellingham /Kilsaran	1,126	1,236	510	65	451	295	0.65
Clogherhead	2,145	2,445	895	75	860	150	0.17
Termonfeckin	1,579	1,829	582	70	629	204	0.32
Tullyallen	1,547	1,767	500	65	675	138	0.20

2.17 SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES



There are 8 settlements in the category Small Towns and Villages. These settlements have an important function in supporting local growth. They range in size with Baltray being the smallest settlement, with a population of 132 in 2016, while Dromiskin is the largest settlement with a population of 1,195 persons. Annagassan is another small settlement with a population of 201 in the last census, while the remaining settlements in this category had a population between 600-900 persons.

Depending on the size, function, and location of the settlement, the employment provision varies. All settlements in this category had a jobs ratio of less than 0.4, which is an indication of a weak employment base and a dependence on outbound commuting for employment.

Omeath, with a jobs ratio of 0.38, and Collon, with a jobs ratio of 0.31, had the highest Job:Workforce ratio in this category of settlements.

The growth strategy for the Small Towns and Villages in this Plan will focus on localised sustainable growth that meets the needs of the local population.

Any new residential development shall be proportionate to the size of the settlement in which it is located with priority given to infill and brownfield development. New development in settlements that have experienced high levels of growth in recent years will be carefully managed to avoid the creation of commuter settlements.

Economic and employment related development that would strengthen the local employment base and reduce the dependence on commuting will be supported.

Volume 2 of this Plan provides a Written Statement and associated Land Use Zoning and Composite Maps for each of the Small Towns and Villages.

2.18 RURAL NODES

There are 24 Rural Nodes identified in Level 5 of the settlement hierarchy. These nodes are characterised by clusters of residential properties with limited local services and facilities. As part of the strategy of strengthening the fabric of rural nodes and creating sustainable rural communities this Plan has identified lands within nodes that are suitable to meet rural generated housing needs. This Plan supports the development of a ‘*New Homes in Small Towns and Villages*’ initiative advocated in Regional Policy

Objective 4.78 of the RSES. This initiative will involve a coordinated approach between Local Authorities, Irish Water and local communities in the provision of serviced sites in rural nodes to meet local housing demand. This policy initiative will assist in strengthening and rejuvenating rural towns and villages throughout the County. Section 3.17.6 of the Housing Chapter provides further guidance on development in Rural Nodes.

A map of each of the Rural Nodes can be viewed in Volume 2 of this Plan.

2.18.1 Strategic Policy Objectives for Self-Sustaining Towns, Small Towns and Villages and Rural Nodes

Policy Objective	
SS 52	To support and facilitate balanced and proportionate population and economic growth in the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Small Towns and Villages, and Rural Nodes that will meet the needs of the residents of the settlements identified in each of the settlement categories.

Policy Objective	
SS 53	To support the creation of vibrant rural communities by promoting and targeting sustainable growth in rural towns and managing the growth of rural areas under pressure for development.

Policy Objective	
SS 54	To support the development of a ‘ <i>New Homes in Small Towns and Villages</i> ’ initiative between the Local Authority, Irish Water, communities, and other stakeholders that would identify opportunities for providing serviced sites to meet rural housing requirements in Towns and Villages in the County.

Policy Objective	
SS 55	To support the rejuvenation of the central areas of settlements by facilitating sustainable development that would assist in reducing the level of vacancy and/or create locally based employment opportunities.

Policy Objective	
SS 56	To require the design, scale, and layout of residential development to be proportionate to and respect the character of the settlement in which it is located and to avoid any layout that would result in a suburban style development alien to the local environment.

Policy Objective

SS 57 To support the creation of sustainable attractive and inclusive communities where the residential needs of the entire population can be met.

Policy Objective

SS 58 To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise town and village centres and reduce the level of vacancy and to encourage town and village centre living.

Policy Objective

SS 59 To work with local landowners and businesses and community groups in facilitating and carrying out public realm works including works to roads and footpaths.

Policy Objective

SS 60 To encourage the re-use and rejuvenation of vacant and under-utilised lands in rural towns, villages and rural nodes for appropriate uses.