

1 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

1.1 Plan Title

This Development Plan shall be titled The Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003-2008 and shall operate in the period 2003 to 2008. It will be valid for five years from the date of adoption by Louth County Council and Dundalk Town Council subject to any review, variations, extensions or alterations made in the future.

1.2 Legal Status

This Development Plan is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Upon adoption, the Development Plan will supersede the existing, Dundalk Urban District Development Plan 1996, the Blackrock Development Plan 2000 and the Mount Avenue Action Plan.

1.3 The Need for a Development Plan

Under Section 9(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), every Planning Authority is required to produce a Development Plan every 6 years.

The need for a Development Plan has also arisen because of the unprecedented demand for development within the plan area over the last decade. The 1996 Plan covered only the urban district area and there was no strategic framework for the lands outside of this area. The 1996 Plan is now out of date and there is a need to review, control and co-ordinate activities within the wider plan area to achieve future sustainable development.

To meet demand within the Dundalk area, an area to the south of Dundalk was the subject of a Plan, which was adopted in 2000, namely The Blackrock/Haynestown Development Plan. The total area of this plan comprises 1320 ha, which represents a major growth area for future development.

There is a clear need for the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan to guide the future patterns of land use and development. In particular there is a need to ensure that such development can be adequately provided for in an economic and environmentally sustainable manner.

The Dundalk and Environs Development Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Louth County Development Plan 1997 and the Housing Strategy for County Louth July 2001.

Under Section 19(4a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), every Development Plan must 'contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan'. In this

respect a sustainability appraisal will be carried out to examine the possible environmental, economic and social impacts associated with policy implementation.

1.4 Previous Plans

This Development Plan provides the replacement for the existing 1996 Dundalk Urban District Council Development Plan, which covered the plan period to 2001, and the adopted Mount Avenue Action Area Plan and the 2000 Blackrock/Haynestown Plan. The 1996 Dundalk Plan took the form of a replacement plan rather than a Review Plan covering the administrative area of Dundalk.

The Blackrock/Haynestown Plan was adopted by both the Urban District and the County Council in 2000 and was made in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Planning and Development Acts 1963 and 1999. The area covered by this plan includes all the lands, which are bounded to the north by Dundalk Town Council boundary, to the east by the coastline, to the south by the River Fane and to the west by the Dunleer/Dundalk motorway.

The Mount Avenue Action Plan was adopted by the Council in November 1998 and comprises some 260ha's of currently undeveloped land, 170 ha's of which falls within the town council area. The area is defined to the east by the built up area; to the west by the Motorway and by the Grey Acre Road, to the north by the Castleblaney Road (N53) and to the south by the Carrickmacross Road (R178).

1.5 Planning Area

The area of the Development Plan 2003 -2008 includes the Dundalk Town Council area, the Mount Avenue Area and the townlands of Haggardstown, Haynestown, Mullaharlin, Crumlin and Killally. It covers the District Electoral Divisions of;

- Dundalk Urban area;
- Ballymascanlon;
- Castletown, (part);
- Dundalk Rural (part); and
- Haggardstown (part).

This Development Plan area represents an expansion of the plan area from that set out in the 1996 Dundalk Urban District Plan and the adopted Blackrock/Haynestown Plan 2000. It also includes additional lands to the west of Dundalk bounded by the Dundalk to Dunleer motorway and the proposed line of the motorway to the north (lands inside the Ballymascanlon roundabout).

1.6 Plan Period

The Development Plan covers the five-year period from 2003 to 2008 in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). It will be valid for five years from the date of adoption by Louth County Council and Dundalk Town Council subject to any review, variations, extensions or alterations made in the future.

1.7 Purpose of the Development Plan

The purpose of the Development Plan is;

- to provide a detailed framework for the control and regulation of development and use of land that will guide day to day planning decisions; and
- through the statutory process governing its preparation, to give local communities the opportunity to participate in planning choices about where development should be accommodated within the area.

In providing the detailed framework for the control of development and use of land, the Development Plan aims to:

- Set out the Council's policies for the control of development; and
- Make proposals for the development and use of land and to zone land for specific purposes.

1.8 Monitoring, Review and Implementation

The Town and County Councils will jointly ensure that the Development Plan is regularly monitored and reviewed as necessary. The Development Plan cannot foresee all future issues and needs, and as such regular monitoring and review will help to cater for issues arising in the context of the Development Plan. This issue is elaborated upon in Chapter 12.

The Plan will be implemented by both Councils' development control powers, and a combination of pro-active public and private sector investment. Mechanisms for the implementation of the policies are set out further in Chapter 12.

1.9 Format of the Development Plan

The Development Plan comprises this written statement with supporting land use zoning and objective maps. The written statement includes Dundalk Town Council and Louth County Councils' objectives where applicable and policies for the development and use of land. The zoning plans illustrate the policies within the written statement.

Policies are distinguished from the rest of the text by use of *Italics* and **bold print**.

In the event of any conflict or ambiguity between what is contained within the written statement and the supporting maps, the written statement will take precedence.

1.10 Background to the Plan Preparation

Under Section 11(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), a planning authority shall take whatever additional measures it considers necessary to consult with the general public and other interested bodies.

In part fulfilment of this requirement, a community consultation event was held over a two-day period on the 26th and 27th January 2001. The event was held to gain a greater insight into the views of the local residents and business people on how they felt about their town and what the major issues are likely to be for the future development of the town.

The majority of issues concerned the speed and level of development witnessed within the town and environs over the past few years. There was a great deal of optimism regarding the potential for Dundalk's future, many believing that Dundalk possesses all the necessary attributes for it to become a city. There was a strong concern expressed over the need to provide more recreational areas and facilities to cater for the town's growing population and indeed to enhance the local built and natural environment.

The consultation process also consisted of meetings with stakeholders, elected representatives and the general public. The process has at all stages sought to be inclusive, impartial and transparent.

A Draft Proposals document was then produced to set out the issues for the Plan and to ascertain feedback on the proposed direction for the Plan.

1.11 Formal Notification of Intention to prepare a Draft Plan

In accordance with Section 11 (1) of the Act, a Notice was published in the Argus and the Dundalk Democrat on the 8th and 11th of February 2002 respectively. The Notice outlined the Councils intention to review the Development Plan and invited comments in writing from the general public to be made within a specified period of 8 weeks to the 12th April (final receipt of submissions by 16th April).

The background documents were made available for inspection at the Council offices from 13th February. The documents made available for inspection included;

- Volumes I,II, and III of the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003 – 2008 Draft Proposals.
- The County Louth Retail Study.
- The Draft Retail Strategy.
- Mount Avenue Action Plan.

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- Blackrock/Haynestown Development Plan 2000.
- Northern Area Action Plan.
- Details regarding proposed PPP Schemes in the South West and South East Sector of Dundalk.

Allowing a period of six weeks from the documents being made available to the consultation event (which was held 27th March) enabled people to have an opportunity to peruse the plans and the draft proposals and make submissions in advance of the final date for receipt of submissions on 16th April 2002.

1.12 The Statutory Objectives

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), under Section 10, sets out the contents of the Development Plan and lists the objectives, which should be included. The Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003 - 2008 includes overall strategic objectives, policy priority areas and policy objectives to achieve the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The Dundalk and Environs Draft Development Plan 2003 - 2008, is consistent with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act and includes objectives under Section 10 (2) for;

- a) the zoning of land for the use solely or primarily of particular areas for particular purposes, (whether residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, as open space or otherwise, or a mixture of those uses), where and to such extent as the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in the opinion of the local planning authority, requires the uses to be indicated;*
- b) the provision or facilitation of the provision of infrastructure including transport, energy and communication facilities, water supplies, waste recovery and disposal facilities, (regard having been had to the waste management plan for the area made in accordance with the Waste Management Act, 1996), waste water services and ancillary facilities;*
- c) the conservation and protection of the environment including in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and the conservation and protection of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed for the purposes of this paragraph;*
- d) the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population;*
- e) the preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the planning authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest;*

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- f) *the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;*
- g) *the preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas;*
- h) *the development and renewal of areas in need of regeneration;*
- i) *the provision of accommodation for travellers, and the use of particular areas for that purpose;*
- j) *the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities;*
- k) *the control, having regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive and any other regulations under any enactment, giving effect to that Directive, of-*
 - I. *the siting of new establishments,*
 - II. *modification of existing establishments, and*
 - III. *development in the vicinity of such establishments,**for the purposes of reducing the risk, or limiting the consequences, of a major accident;*
- l) *the provision, or facilitation of the provision, of services for the community including, in particular, schools, crèches, and other education and childcare facilities, and*
- m) *the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht including the promotion of Irish as the community language, where there is a Gaeltacht in the area of the Development Plan.*

The strategic objectives provide an overall framework for the development of Dundalk and environs over the plan period and each of the sections include specific policy objectives in line with the requirements of Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

1.13 National Framework

1.13.1 National Development Plan 2000-2006

The Development Plan is written in the context of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2000 – 2006, the objectives of which are;

- continuing sustainable national economic and employment growth;
- consolidating and improving Ireland's international competitiveness;
- fostering balanced regional development; and
- promoting social inclusion.

The *National Development Plan*, whilst primarily focussed on building and maintaining regional economies, also identifies the need for Planning

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Authorities to take a more strategic view of settlement patterns, development needs and major infrastructure services.

Two regions within the Country were designated for Structural Fund purposes, one being the Southern and Eastern, the other being the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) Region which has retained Objective 1 Status for structural Funds for the full period to 2006.

In terms of regional development, the National Development Plan has identified key challenges for future regional development;

- increase the potential of the region to act as a counterbalance to the South and East Region, especially Dublin, and pursue more balanced growth within the region;
- increase the presence in the region of the key drivers of sustainable economic growth, notably in the productive sector;
- improve the quality of the region's economic and social infrastructure and human resources; and
- build on the regions natural resource base especially in the areas of agriculture, tourism, the seafood sector and rural enterprise and promote social inclusion.

The Plan discusses Dublin's function as a national gateway and outlines that there are other emerging urban centres throughout the country which may not yet have all the attributes of regional gateways - in terms of population size, strategic location, range of skills and services, industrial and manufacturing base.

Gateways are described as centres having a strategic location relative to the surrounding territory, being in possession of good social and economic infrastructure and support services and having the potential to expand and drive physical and economic growth.

Recently Dundalk has become one of Irelands future gateways. It has many of the necessary attributes, which are required for achieving a regional gateway and this plan aims to further the potential through the implementation of policy and zoning of land to help develop Dundalk as a major regional growth centre.

Dundalk can play a significant role in helping to implement the NDP's objective of achieving more balanced regional development. The Government is dedicated to achieving more balanced regional growth by further developing Gateways as counter-balances to Dublin.

In recognition of this context, the Development Plan Policies are set out within the national context of the need to strive for Gateway status. Policy will require that proposed development is sustainable in terms of the quality of life while ensuring social cohesion, the conservation of the environment and the natural and cultural heritage.

1.13.2. National Spatial Strategy

A public consultation paper has been produced to seek views on the emerging indications as to how Ireland could be developed in a more balanced spatial way. The guiding vision for the NSS is as follows;

- consolidating peace on the island of Ireland and on this stable basis, developing political, economic and social interaction within the island;
- continuing national economic and employment growth;
- continuing improvement in Ireland's international competitiveness;
- fostering balanced regional development;
- improving the quality of life for all sections of society; and
- maintaining and enhancing the quality and diversity of the natural environment and cultural heritage.

One of the guiding principles of the NSS is to seek to create new development opportunities in the BMW region and within the structurally weaker areas of the S&E region. The Strategy recognises that dynamic development is occurring along the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor, under the stimulus of cease-fires in Northern Ireland and the stability brought about by the Good Friday Agreement.

The NSS has identified the vital factors linked to an area's economic success including:

- entrepreneurial spirit/enthusiasm of key economic, political and social interest groups to act together in moving forward;
- presence of a certain level of population and resources - economic, social & environmental;
- ease and cost of access to domestic and foreign markets;
- a modern telecommunications network at a level which has the capacity to support the area's likely development and high quality physical infrastructure;
- backup of research and technology infrastructure accessible to enterprises in all sectors; and
- a high quality environment combined with a highly qualified and skilled workforce with adequate supply of housing and good overall quality of life.

The NSS outlines that it will promote a limited number of strategically placed centres, that already display the capacity to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth driven by the interplay of market forces, location and accessibility, to act as additional gateways. It will also outline spatial policy issues to address the need to facilitate and promote dynamic cross border development which will promote an Island of Ireland economy and thus the size of home market needed as a springboard for a range of indigenous industry sectors.

It was recognised and promoted at an early stage that Dundalk has the potential to become a regional gateway, facilitating and promoting cross border development and helping to achieve sustainable balanced regional development. Dundalk, in order to fulfil its potential as a regional growth centre, should, in the near future achieve City Status, to acknowledge its

present role and to enable its future growth as a regional gateway.¹ See *Addendum One*.

¹ **Addendum One**

In November 2002, the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland was published, identifying Dundalk as one of the key Gateways. Dundalk has an estimated population of 32,300 persons in 2002 and has considerable additional potential for growth; Dundalk will function as a driver of development in the region and National economy. In essence the new gateways over the years to 2020 and beyond need to grow to the current population levels of cities such as Waterford or Galway.

Key considerations include the need to support the development of an all island economic and spatial context by;

- *Improved north south interaction, with towns such as Dundalk, Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo and Letterkenny performing enhanced spatial roles to deliver this.*
- *Capitalising on the emerging role of central parts of the border area as a crossroads between centres of strength north and south of the border*
- *Shared environmental and cultural heritage, such as landscape and inland waterways, with potential to support economic development in sectors such as tourism.*
- *Achieving spatial balance by developing the potential of areas will depend on enhancing capacity for the movement of people goods energy and information between different places.*
- *Other economic infrastructure such as water services and waste, and social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, relate to particular locations and are also needed to support balanced regional development*
- *A feature of the most mature and successful economies is that they possess highly developed, well-integrated infrastructure that supports movement, i.e. public and private transport, and energy and communications networks. This infrastructure converges at strategic points to drive dynamic and sustainable development.*

There are significant opportunities for Dundalk to grow and develop further as a regional gateway. Maintaining and enhancing the current level of services and infrastructure is key to future success. Dundalk cannot achieve growth on a scale of Galway or Waterford without the basic level of services and infrastructure and this includes ensuring that the rail and roads are upgraded, schools, third level facilities, social and community facilities are maintained and enhanced. Maintaining the full services of a regional hospital would be a key basic requirement to enable future growth as a regional gateway.

All relevant stakeholders will need to work together to achieve an enhanced role for the gateway, to establish consensus on integrated spatial frameworks for land use, planning urban design, transport and public service delivery. The local authority has the prime responsibility for preparation of these frameworks and translating their provisions into statutory development plans that will guide the development process through the planning system.

1.14 The County Context

1.14.1 Louth County Development Plan

The Louth County Development Plan was adopted in 2003 and covers the period from December 2003 to 2009. The Plan sets out the framework for land use development within County Louth over this period.

The Plan area along with the Drogheda area is identified as being under high development pressure. To counter development pressure in more sensitive areas and to direct development to those areas, which would be most suitable, the Council adopted a locational strategy for housing and development based on consolidating the existing settlements. This will help to assist in the retention of existent services within existing settlements. The Council also recognised that redevelopment of vacant and derelict sites within the urban areas would significantly help to regenerate areas.

The hinterlands of Dundalk and Drogheda were also outlined as areas requiring additional policy control. The Planning Authority was particularly concerned about the demand for what is sometimes referred to as urban generated housing in the countryside. Concern was raised over the unsightly haphazard nature of this development and the risks posed to ground water supply from septic tank effluent. Policy set out the need protect these areas from urban generated and unsightly ribbon development. In January 2000 a housing policy amendment was added to further strengthen this policy and protect the open countryside from urban generated housing.

This Development Plan is consistent with the guidance and policies set out within the Louth County Development Plan, establishing a development strategy and outlining a framework for directing and controlling development within the plan period and beyond.

1.14.2 The Louth County Housing Strategy

Under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, Local Authorities are required to produce a County Housing Strategy. The objective of this Strategy is to determine the projected demand for housing (including the social and affordable demand) over the next six years. The Strategy has been produced in consultation with all Local Authorities across the County. The Housing Section provides a fuller breakdown of the requirements and recommendations of the Strategy in relation to the plan area.

1.15 Dundalk and Environs Population Forecast Projections

One of the primary factors affecting the growth and development within the plan area is the level of population growth anticipated.

In order to more accurately assess anticipated future population levels within the plan area and therefore derive the broad level of future housing and employment needs, future population has been forecast to 2008. This population-forecast projection is based on:

- previous population growth trends (including fertility and net migration trends) in the periods 1986-1991 and 1991-1996;
- residential dwelling completions in the past five years since 1996; and
- background discussion papers for the National Spatial Strategy.

Between 1996 and 2007, it is estimated that the entire plan area will increase in population from 33,474 to 44,392 representing an estimated overall growth of 31% in 11 years.

Within the plan period the population is projected to rise from an estimated 39,137 in 2002 to 45,542 in 2008. This represents an additional 6,405 population and approximately 2,287² new households. A more detailed breakdown of population projections and household formation projections is provided within the Chapter 7 Housing.

For the most recent preliminary census results please refer to the ³ Addendum Two.

² Based on 2.8 persons per household

³ **Addendum Two**

*The Preliminary Census Report published end July 2002 has indicated that the Dundalk and environs population has not increased as significantly as was predicted. The preliminary census results show that the Dundalk and Environs area has grown by **7.14% to 36,151 in 2002** instead of the anticipated 11.2 % increase (which predicted that the population would rise to an estimated 39,137). However, this slow down in the rate of increase is not expected to impact on the Plan's overall strategy, and strategic objectives. Sufficient land has been zoned to accommodate future anticipated population during the plan period and beyond.*