

11 AGRICULTURE

11.1 Introduction

This section provides policy on the control, protection and use within the plan area and gives effect to Strategic Objective 6.

SO6

Protect and enhance the natural and built environment as an inherent part of the heritage of the Dundalk & environs plan area. Safeguard the natural environment as a resource in its own right and ensure that future generations can have a quality of life equal to our own.



The natural environment of the plan area plays an intrinsic part in the character and success of the region. It must be protected in its own right as a resource and to maintain a good quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

‘Sustainable agriculture provides high quality food from a high quality environment; maintains the character of the countryside and its landscapes, habitats and species; and secures an acceptable quality of life for the rural community’.

Sustainable Development, A Strategy for Ireland, Government of Ireland 1997

The plan area includes a large area of existing lands currently used for agricultural purposes. As the town expands to the levels of population that are predicted over the coming plan periods, these agricultural lands will increasingly come under pressure to provide for the housing, employment, recreational and other forms of development required for the sustainable expansion of the town.

This planned and co-ordinated loss of agricultural lands in areas identified in this development plan is required, and is in the context of county-wide policies that seek to protect rural farming lands outside of the development plan area. The approach underpinning this development plan is to steer urban development back into compact urban areas, whilst assuming that the rural areas will be protected further from urban development. This protection of the rural farming areas outside of the Plan area will be implemented through the Louth County Plan. This approach will facilitate the steady growth of the urban area of Dundalk whilst at the same time reducing the potential for conflict between urban forms of development in the rural areas and the rural farming community outside of the Plan area.

The Councils also recognise the existing value of the agricultural lands within the Plan area. As well as their agricultural value, being a source of local food production, these lands provide an attractive rural background for the town and, assuming the rights of way are maintained and protected, a source of passive recreation for the community. In essence, the surrounding agricultural lands help bind the community to the rural areas beyond the town and remind us of our common heritage.

11.2 Land Use Management

The proper land use management of these agricultural lands is important for the orderly and sustainable development of the town.

AG1

Strictly control non-agricultural type development in the agricultural zone.

This plan attempts to move away from piecemeal development on the fringes of the town to a more comprehensive approach to planning. This is based on the production of masterplan's for defined areas rather than development being based around individual field boundaries. This approach will help to avoid the conflict that is often experienced between farmers and town's people from isolated pockets of urban type development emerging in an otherwise agricultural area.

11.3 Individual Housing Development

AG2 ***A general presumption against granting planning permission for single dwellings (other than in exceptional circumstances) served by way of private individual effluent treatment systems, drained by private sewage pumping, private communal treatment plants or private communal septic tanks. Exceptional circumstances may apply to persons principally employed in agriculture and who own and farm land that is adjacent to, or in the immediate vicinity of, the application site. This would also include the immediate family member of the farmer, i.e. the son or daughter.***

The Council will promote the use of traditional materials which are in keeping with the built heritage of the rural environment. These materials include stone, brick, wood, cob and straw bale. The Council will also promote the use of alternative building designs and waste management techniques (i.e. reed bed systems) which would reduce the impact of development on the local environment.

There is a need to protect and support local farming traditions through the availability of land for housing. However the rural environment must also be safeguarded from adverse development including the prevalence of one-off housing which is unrelated to its environment or setting.

11.4 Agricultural Business Support

At the same time as implementing the proper management of the urban – rural fringe area, the Council recognise their responsibility to encourage and assist farmers in their daily farming activities. As the ‘guardians of the rural environment’, farmers have an important role to play in maintaining the rural fringe and in allowing access to continue for the urban community. The Council will therefore support the development of the agricultural sector, including the diversification of business interests under the following policies:

AG3

The Council will co-operate and work with the agriculture and food development authority, TEAGASC, in their activities in the Dundalk area.

The Council will therefore assist in the development of the agriculture sector by working with TEAGASC, especially on specific measures such as the Rural Environment Protection Scheme, the aim of which is to protect the rural waterways, pathways and hedges etc.

AG4

Encourage and facilitate farm diversification into related agri-business subject to the retention of the holding in a primarily agricultural use and the proper planning and development of the area.

Proposals for the diversification of farm holdings will therefore be considered on their own merits. The primary consideration is to ensure that the underlying agriculture business remains intact and dominant. Other issues such as traffic, impact of buildings on the landscape and effluent disposal are also important considerations.

11.5 Agricultural Development

All agricultural development within the urban area requires planning permission under existing planning legislation. The legislation will be operated in the context of encouraging the development of the agriculture sector, subject to the proper planning of the area.

All agriculture developments will be required to ensure that effluent and yard run-off is collected and stored within the confines of the development. The disposal of effluent will be undertaken in such a manner as to not cause any pollution to watercourses or be unduly harmful to amenities in general and residential amenities in particular. In this regard, all agricultural developments shall comply with the Department of Agriculture Guidelines and Recommendations on Control of Pollution from Farmyard Wastes.

Agricultural buildings should be designed and positioned so as to integrate into the surrounding landscape. Colour, as well as texture and shape are important in terms of assimilating buildings into the landscape. In general, agriculture buildings should be dark-brown, dark green or grey. Roof areas should be darker in shade than the side panels or walls. Trees and hedgerows are also important components in screening agricultural buildings

in the landscape. Where new developments are proposed it shall be a requirement that the development is well screened using native tree species.

The Council's policies regarding agriculture development are:

AG5

To ensure agricultural activities do not cause pollution or cause harm to the surrounding natural environment and amenities in particular.

AG6

To ensure that farm buildings are assimilated into the landscape through careful siting, use of colours and screening.

11.6 Land Use Zoning

To preserve agricultural land

Colour Code: Dark Green

Agriculture and uses related to agriculture such as open space and playing fields. Dwellings, only in exceptional circumstances.