

8. COMMUNITY FACILITIES, SPORT AND RECREATION

8.1 Introduction and Context

This chapter sets out the Councils policies and proposals for the provision of community facilities, sport and leisure within the plan area. This chapter gives effect to Strategic Objective 4.

S04

Encourage integrated community developments through state, local authority and voluntary sector partnerships, thus enabling the provision of co-ordinated community facilities and services - (education, recreation and social facilities.)

Community facilities play a very important role in helping to foster a sense of community. There is a recognised lack of community facilities in certain communities within the plan area, which needs to be addressed. It is through such partnerships that needs can be assessed and met.

In the context of this plan, “Community Facilities” are defined as non-residential uses with the principle purpose of providing a service and facility to a local community. Such uses may include, but not be limited to: childcare facilities, education, further education and training, arts and culture, sports and recreation facilities including community halls, health and social facilities and in connection with public worship or religious instruction.

8.2 Background

There is a wide range of community facilities available to the people of the plan area. However, the public consultation meetings concluded that there are still more required to help achieve a balanced sustainable development. There should be equal access to community facilities, for all, which will help to enhance education, health and personal development. Community facilities are required by everyone as they encourage cohesive, healthy and equal lifestyles, hence an overall better quality of life.

8.2.1 Childcare and Schools

Within the study area there are approximately 32 pre-school facilities which are located in private homes, schools, and community centres. There are approximately 21 primary schools in the Plan area, which cater for the local pupils. At secondary level there are 7 schools located in the Plan area, which accommodates post-primary local students. At tertiary level, the Dundalk Institute of Technology is situated just



on the southern fringe of the Town. It was established in 1970 as the Dundalk Regional Technical College but has since been upgraded to an Institute of Technology.

8.2.2 Further Education and Training

Further education and training facilities are very important to an area and can help provide a skilled workforce for local businesses. These facilities will provide basic education for all ages, higher education, basic skills and training, apprenticeships and other facilities for personal development. There are already many further education and training facilities available in the plan area. The majority of these were established by community groups and are supported by different bodies. Some examples would include Áit na nDaoine, Muirhevnamor Community Youth Project, the Avenue Road Community Development project, Cox's Demesne Youth Project, the Pilots and One parent Family.



FÁS

Fóras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) is the National Authority for the provision of employment training. The FÁS northeast Region covers the counties of Louth, Cavan, Monaghan and Meath. The regional office and Training Centre are based in Dundalk. The total FÁS Budget in the Region during 2001 was £34 million and it is expected that 6,200 persons will complete training and employment programmes by this year. The programme and schemes provide opportunities for all levels with special emphasis on first time jobseekers, older and long-term unemployed, as well as women wishing to return to work. The main programme, which provided Community employment, will be scaled back during the life of the NDP and where appropriate will be replaced by a new Social Economy Programme. This seeks to support sustainable enterprises in the community sector. FÁS resources have been redirected to cater the expansion in apprenticeship training and it is envisaged that the FÁS budget will be broadly consistent over the life of the NDP.

The Proposed Cross-Border Centre for Community Development

The Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs launched the Cross Border Centre for Community Development in Dundalk IT in May 2002. The centre is to provide an all Ireland dimension to community development. The centre will be developed in association with Dundalk IT and is another example of successful co-ordination between the relevant bodies. The new Centre aims to provide an island wide range of experience and expertise in

community development while developing and delivering distance education materials and programmes for community development. The objectives for the centre include promoting community arts, community based Sport initiatives and distance learning. Funding of €640,000 has been provided by the Department of Social and Family Affairs for the establishment and operation of the Centre.

8.2.3 Arts & Culture

The plan area is fortunate to be well equipped with arts and culture venues. In the Plan area there are many local art groups, drama groups, musical societies and choral groups that can avail of these venues enabling the community to attend and participate in high quality events. In addition to these facilities there is the County Library and the Museum, which were successfully located in the Old Distillery complex as part of the 1989 Development Plan.



8.2.4 Health & Social Services

There are 7 services in the plan area available at different locations provided by the North Eastern Health Board. In accordance with these, there are additional health and social services available in the planned area. These are provided by the private, public and voluntary sector. The range of uses covered is great, including homes for the elderly and day care centres. The health and social organisations within the Holy Family Parish and with the assistance of Le Cheile are providing highly useful and additional services to the community also. Some of these include the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Meals on Wheels, Muirhevnamor Women's Group, Springboard, and St. Vincent de Paul. The recently opened Youth and Adolescent Centre in the Counseling Centre will provide an invaluable service to the local community also.

8.2.5 Sport & Recreation Facilities

Sport and physical recreation are important components of life and surround many activities with major land use implications. In the plan area there are 29 pitches/playing fields but only 3 are for public use. The remaining pitches are all privately owned and are generally for club and school use only. In addition to the pitches there is Dundalk Sports Centre,



which includes a main hall, changing/shower facilities and tennis courts. There are other clubs in the area but not all are open to the public. The Dundalk Public Swimming Pool is currently under construction and will provide a valuable amenity to the local community. At present development is underway at Dundalk IT for the creation of five pitches catering for Gaelic, soccer and rugby and includes a multipurpose training ground capable of staging matches. It is anticipated that the Gaelic and soccer pitches will also serve Louth Vocational Education Committee schools. The development is to facilitate the new sports management course starting in Dundalk IT in September 2002. As part of Phase Two of the project a feasibility study will be carried out on a proposed Regional Sports Centre for the Institute and is envisaged to include a running track and soccer pitch and possibly other facilities for tennis and bowling. The main private pitches located within the study area are as follows:

- Young Irelanders GFC and Glenmuir FC
- Dundalk Rugby Club
- De La Salle/Fatima School
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Clan na Gaels
- Friary Playing Fields
- Army Playing Fields

There is a need for more public playing fields and there are a number of potential locations, including the new Linear Park at Toberona and the landfill site at Newry Road.

CF1 Provision of Community Facilities

The Council will seek to ensure that necessary community facilities will be provided, where possible, as part of all new developments and in areas where there is a recognised need.

The Council will seek to promote, where possible, access by all members of the public to community facilities.

For the purposes of the zoning plan and policies, community facilities will include the following:

childcare facilities, education, further education and training, arts and culture, sports and leisure facilities, health and social facilities and uses associated with public worship or religious instruction plus other related facilities the Council would consider of benefit to the wider community.

The Plan aims to meet the requirements laid down under the *Planning and Development Act, 2000*¹, (as amended) by:

¹ DoELG, Planning and Development Act 2000, Pt II, Section 10.

- Integrating the planning and sustainable development of Dundalk and the Environs with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population and;
- Provide or facilitating the provision of services for the community including, in particular, schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities

CF2 Provision of Childcare Facilities

The Council will seek to encourage the provision of childcare facilities in all major residential developments, workplaces, large retail outlets, educational facilities and health and social outlets, where appropriate, in a sustainable manner compatible with land use and transportation policies.

For the development of new larger residential estates, the Council will require that 1 childcare facility with places for 20 children will be provided for each 75 dwellings²

The council will monitor and analyse the provision of childcare facilities in the planned area.

The Council will aim to identify a methodology to facilitate the development of childcare facilities on council managed estates, which would be developed as part of a larger estate development strategy³

Ministerial Guidelines for Planning Authorities were published by the DoELG in July 2001 which requires that the Development Plan makes provision within its objectives and policies for the provision and monitoring of childcare facilities within the plan area.

Louth County Council has produced Draft Childcare Guidelines, which set out the strategy for provision of childcare facilities and the preferred location;

The preferred locations include;

- Large New Housing Estates
- New housing estates, which contain in excess of 75 dwellings, should contain at least one childcare facility unless there is a significant reason to the contrary. The provision of spaces for 20 children per 75 dwellings is considered appropriate; such provision should consider the existing level of provision in the area and the projected demographic profile of the immediate area.
- Industrial estates and business parks and other locations where a significant number of people work
- In the vicinity of schools and other community and educational facilities
- Neighbourhood and district centres; where community facilities such as shops already exist or where such facilities are being changed to residential use, it is to be encouraged that these should remain mixed-use development including childcare.
- Adjacent to public transport corridors in order to be accessible to the maximum number of people and to reduce the need to travel by encouraging linked trips.

² DoELG, The Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Local Authorities, 2001

³ Louth Local Authorities, Childcare Facilities & County Louth Estate Development Strategy, 2001

Childcare facilities can be sessional or full day care, which will provide services for pre-school children and school going children after school hours. Childcare facilities are required as they provide a safe and healthy environment for children to learn and develop. Quality childcare provision also plays a key role in addressing social exclusion/disadvantage and promoting equality. They also assure parents that their children are safe while they go to work or socialise, enhancing economic development, particularly at local level.

The Council will establish a system whereby all childcare facilities in Dundalk and the environs are identified and recorded. They will then assess the needs of these facilities and provide for them accordingly. This will be part of the monitoring process required in the Development Plan.

The location of childcare facilities can often be contentious; due to such facilities normally being provided within residential areas and the potential associated traffic and congestion problems. This can impact on the residential amenity of the area in terms of increases in noise and disturbance, traffic generation etc. It is therefore important that such issues are taken into consideration when assessing applications for childcare facilities.

Any application to the Planning Authority for childcare facilities should, where applicable, be accompanied by the following information:

- *The size and nature of the proposed facility (full day care, sessional day care etc)*
- *Number and age range of children (based on maximum of children to be accommodated)*
- *Number of staff*
- *Internal floor area devoted to use*
- *Landscaping/screening proposals*
- *Car-parking arrangements*
- *Identification of outdoor area and likely duration of outdoor playtime*
- *Availability and ease of access to public transport services*
- *Local traffic conditions*
- *Requirements of the Childcare services (pre-school services Regulations, 1996 in relation to Planning Applications)*
- *Where development is proposed in existing residential areas, the layout and design of the housing estates should be considered in terms of its suitability to accommodate such a development. The likely effect of the development on the amenity of the area should also be an important consideration*
- *In applications for shopping centres the need to have a temporary drop in centre for the children of customers must be taken into account. Large-scale shopping centres should also consider the needs of staff. It should also include baby changing and feeding facilities. Such facilities should preferably be located at ground floor level.*
- *It should be a requirement that all childcare facilities be accessible for the disabled and the elderly*

Where planning permission is granted, the Planning Authority may impose conditions in connection with the criteria outlined above (apart from the number of staff).

In the case of applications for childcare facilities in existing residential areas it is generally considered that detached houses or substantial semi-detached properties are most suitable. Such dwellings generally enjoy greater open space within the curtilage of the dwelling and hence provide the most suitable accommodation for childcare facilities. These properties are more likely to possess the required space for off-street parking and/or suitable drop off/collection points. It is considered that childcare facilities in dwellings, which are located at the end of a cul de sac, are generally unsuitable by reason of the traffic hazard they pose.

There will be a general presumption against applications where it is proposed to change the entire residential dwelling into a childcare facility.

Neighbourhood centres within existing residential areas and sites in proximity to primary traffic routes and close to public transport corridors would also be favourably considered as this will promote sustainable transport practices and offer an alternative mode of transport for those without access to a car. In this respect other locations that would encourage linked trips would include employment and educational areas. Locating childcare facilities within or adjacent to such uses allows for more efficient use of existing resources. Schools and places of employment will often have ample parking on site and may also have access to open space, which can be utilised by the childcare facility⁴.

CF3 Provision of Educational Facilities

The Council will facilitate developments, which will enhance educational facilities without having a negative effect on the environment. It will also seek to ensure that all schools, where possible, have adequate facilities and space for future expansion and development

The Council will seek to zone additional land adjacent to the Institute of Technology for future expansion and will encompass the development proposals being drafted in the Strategic Plan for Dundalk Institute of Technology during the same plan period.

All developments for educational facilities should be in accordance with all the sustainable guidelines within the Plan.

Learning is important in community regeneration. The council will help to meet the school's need to expand and develop and will support education by identifying possible sites for educational uses and safeguarding such land for future expansion.

⁴ Guidance from Louth County Childcare Strategy - Draft

The Dundalk Institute of Technology provides the plan area with a skilled workforce and also attracts business to the town and environs. The Institute therefore, requires land for further development and expansion.

CF4 Provision of Further Education & Training

The Council will promote the development of further education and training facilities in the plan area.

The Council will seek to support the work undertaken by training/skills development centres, community organisations and other facilities, which promote further education and training in accordance with the other plan policies.

The Council recognises that all of these facilities are vital for enhancing people's own development and are an indication of the active and vibrant community life in the plan area.

The plan area is fortunate to have the Institute of Technology located within its area, to cater for third level educational needs locally. However, there is a recognised need for basic and further education and training facilities, particularly in Muirhevnamor⁵ and Cox's Demesne⁶. The Council will seek to support local initiatives for training and upskilling and support the work of the educational institutions to provide opportunities for basic education and training, in partnership with other public and private sectors.

CF5 Provision of Arts & Cultural Facilities

The Council will seek to protect and promote the existing arts and cultural facilities within the plan area, by designating suitable areas for such uses within the Plan and encouraging the provision of additional arts and culture in accordance with the policies in the Plan.

Dundalk and the environs are very fortunate to have a well-established Arts office and cultural tradition. The area is well equipped with venues, the county library, museum and many local community arts groups, drama groups, musical societies and choral groups. These facilities and organisations encourage social interaction within the community and promote self-development. It also promotes public participation and social inclusion, complying with the guidelines for a sustainable community.

CF6 Provision of Health and Social Services

The council will encourage the maintenance and enhancement of health and social services where possible and will seek to designate sufficient land to meet the requirements for health and social services, voluntary and involuntary, and will seek to encourage adequate access to facilities in accordance with the other plan policies.

⁵ Áit na nDaoine, A Second View Within, 2001, pp. 32, 33

⁶ Le Chéile, Three Year Plan 2001-2003 for Le Chéile Community Development Project, 2001, pp 11

Health services covers GP surgeries, dentists and health centres while social services include homes for the elderly and day care centres. Although, the North Eastern Health Board provides most of these, the Council will facilitate their establishment through land use zoning and development standards.

The hospital is essential infrastructure in terms of health services and it is of vital importance that such services are maintained and enhanced, to meet the needs of the growing population.

The recently opened Youth and Adolescent Centre in the Counselling Centre is an example of successful co-ordination between voluntary and community organisations and the relevant Government departments (Department of Social and Family Affairs). This service will provide therapeutic counselling to young people who cannot afford to avail of these services privately. The facility also includes a Family Mediation Service, which provides a free and confidential service for separating couples.

Everyone needs to have access to health and social facilities and such facilities should be provided within communities so that they are accessible by all, including young, old and the disabled. The plan policy advocates this principle to encourage provision so that the whole community can experience a better quality of life. Inclusion of the whole community is essential as social exclusion often leads to powerlessness, insecurity, stress and illnesses.

The Council will where possible and appropriate seek to support the provision of health and social uses by the voluntary and involuntary organisations.

CF7 Protection and Provision of Sport and Recreational Facilities

The Council will resist the loss of existing public or private recreational open space unless alternative recreational facilities are provided in a suitable location or it can be proven that there is no longer a requirement to retain the facility

CF8 Provision of Sport and Recreational Facilities

The Council will assist in the provision of sports and recreation facilities by zoning adequate lands for their development, which are convenient and accessible for all sections of society, particularly children, teenagers and those with disabilities. The Council will also, where possible, co-ordinate private sector involvement in the development of these facilities.



A proposal for recreation and sport facilities including extensions and renovations, will be permitted provided that:

- a) it would not detract from the character of the surrounding area;***

- b) it would not have a detrimental effect on the surrounding area; and**
- c) it would be accessible to pedestrians, cyclists, the disabled and by public transport**

The Council will require developers to provide for sport and recreational facilities in proportion to the extent of development and the anticipated needs of the new community as an essential element of their proposals. Sporting Facilities should where possible be provided in unison with housing. Should such facilities not be provided the Council will impose a charge towards the provision of same.

The loss of recreational facilities to a community can often lead to a loss in community spirit and public participation. There is already a recognised need in the plan area for more recreational space. Only in the case of a suitable alternative location being identified or when it can be demonstrated that there is insufficient local demand for the facility, should the Council consider development on existing areas.

Participation in sport and recreation promotes good health and physical development. Sport provides many cultural, social and economic benefits and creates healthier lifestyles and a better quality of life. It is important for physical and mental health that everyone, especially children, the elderly and those with disabilities should have easy access to sport and recreational facilities. The Council has a major role to play in promoting healthier lifestyles and needs to provide land for this. The development of the public swimming pool is a good example and a step in the right direction.

The Council will use its powers under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), in accordance with the scheme of charges, to impose development levies on proposals where the development is likely to create a demand for new or enhanced sporting facilities.

The Council can require that sport and recreational facilities are provided with adequate layout and design and are able to cater for the needs of sport and the provision of playing fields in particular.

8.3 Land-Use Zoning

Development Objective

To protect, provide and improve community, education, sport and recreation facilities

Code: Grey

Colour

Education Institutions and uses ancillary to, and associated with, the use of land as such, including playing fields, car parks, research and development facilities and development involving employment generating linkages with educational institutions, Hospitals, Community Halls and buildings of worship, health and buildings related to community welfare, cemeteries, recycling facilities, public landfill sites, public installations for the treatment of water to

the Town as well as public installations for the treatment and disposal of sewage.

Community facilities cannot exist on the periphery of a neighbourhood but should be incorporated into the heart of all communities such that all residents can access them with minimum distance to travel.

The chapter on retailing outlines the Council's policy for local centres, which have been identified to perform an important role and function in meeting the daily needs of the community (see Map 6). The Plan prioritises the need to maintain and enhance the retailing element of these centres in proportion with their size and existing role. Consequently, as these services also provide for the community's needs they will be, to a limited degree, be encompassed within the local centres as priority community facilities.