



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Plan Aim and Format

The aim of the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2005 – 2011 is to promote, develop and regulate the resources of Drogheda Borough in order to maximise the benefit whilst minimising the cost for all the citizens of the Borough under both present and future circumstances.

This plan format outlines a set of strategic land use policies for the area under the jurisdiction of Drogheda Borough Council given in policy format followed by a set of specific objectives for the plan period. The strategic policies and specific objectives are augmented by geographically based land use objectives and overall Development Control Parameters.

1.2 Location and Function



Drogheda is situated in the east of Ireland approximately 47 km (29 mi.) north of Dublin, 35 km (22 mi.) south of Dundalk, 122 km (76 mi.) south of Belfast and 28 km (17 mi.) east of Navan. The town centre clusters around the narrow Boyne river Basin and is confined on both north and south sides by sharp hills. Drogheda's central area is punctuated by a number of notable church spires and buildings which when combined with local topography, give a unique sense of place to the town. Drogheda is the largest

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town in Ireland (2002 Census) and acts as the major industrial, service and commercial centre for South County Louth, East and North County Meath. Drogheda's Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital acts as the acute medical provider for the entire North East Region whilst Drogheda Port acts as a major import and export centre for much of the Eastern Irish Seaboard. The town forms the natural eastern gateway to the Boyne Valley, an area well endowed with a wide range of natural and built resources and a rich heritage including archaeological monuments of international significance including the world heritage, UNESCO designated, Bru na Boinne site. The Boyne Valley forms the southernmost extremity of County Louth and marks the border with County Meath to the south. Drogheda straddles both counties but is predominantly situated in County Louth.

1.3 Context and Strategic Purpose

The Drogheda Borough Council Draft Development Plan 2005 - 2011 will act as a framework for development in the town of Drogheda through the early years of the Twenty First Century. The Development Plan outlines Drogheda Borough Council's policies for improving the social, economic, cultural and environmental health of the Borough through both direct action and as a partner and facilitator for private, state and community sectors. Implementation of the Plan is vital given the continued strong population growth in the Borough and confirmation in the 2002 census that the Borough was the largest urban centre in the state after the five cities.

The strong growth in population within the Borough boundaries has been mirrored in areas immediately adjacent to and contiguous with the Borough. Such is the rate of development that it is now likely that the "Greater Drogheda" area, incorporating parts of south County Louth and east County Meath could ultimately contain an overall population exceeding 70,000 and will operate as the pre-eminent urban centre in both counties. At the heart of this metropolitan area will be Drogheda Borough itself. The role of the Borough will be to act as the heart of this urban centre. It will form the natural focal point for a wide variety of urban functions including Employment, Retail, Leisure, Healthcare, Tourism, Community Facilities, Transportation, Infrastructure and Services. The 2005 – 2011 Development Plan has been framed with the aim of consolidating Drogheda's "lynch pin" role within both the envisaged "Greater Drogheda Area" but also within the wider South Louth and East Meath context.

1.4 Scope and Jurisdiction of the Plan.

Under the Government's Planning and Development Act 2000, Section 9(1) Planning Authorities are obliged to prepare a development plan relating to the areas which they serve, every six years. The purpose of a development plan is to provide a detailed guidance framework for the control and regulation of development and use of land in a sustainable and orderly fashion, which will benefit all of the local community, which the plan serves. As with previous Plans, its purpose is primarily to ensure that the future development of the Borough is accommodated within the context of an ordered framework, having regard to social considerations, efficiency in the use of public services and in particular financial feasibility.

The new Plan for Drogheda Borough Council covers the six year period from 2005 to 2011 and is valid from 17th May 2005, being 4 weeks from the date of adoption by Drogheda Borough Council, subject to any review, variations or alterations which may be required in the future.



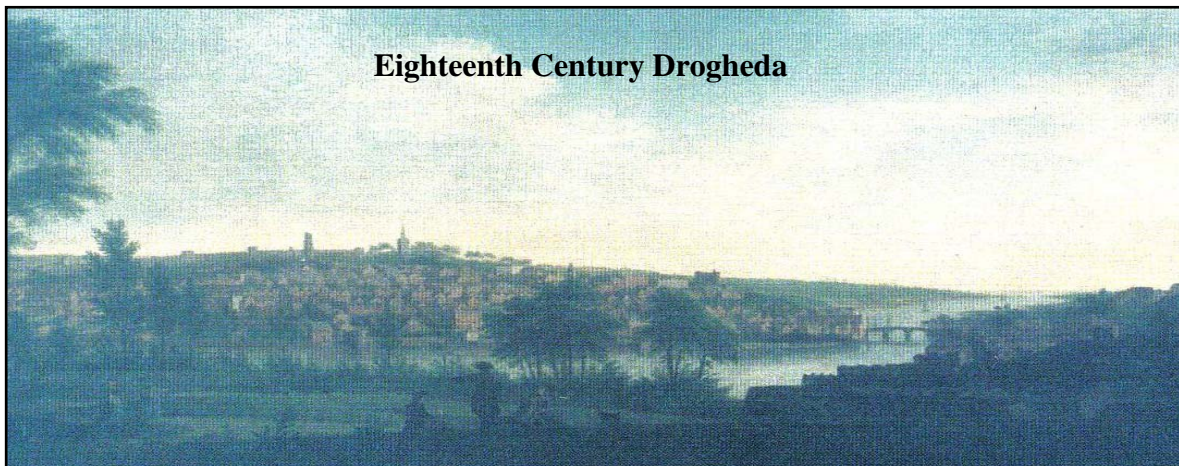
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The previous development plan for Drogheda Borough was the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 1999. This plan was originally adopted in 1997. In 2002, the Council carried out further variations to the 1999 Plan in relation to aspects such as: the Residential Density Guidelines (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1999), Retail Planning Guidelines, (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2000), Childcare Facility Guidelines (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2001), and the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

1.5 Historical Background

Drogheda Borough Council (Comhairle Thoghlaigh Droichead Atha) represents one of the oldest Local Authorities in Ireland and indeed Europe and can trace its origins back some 600 years. The town of Drogheda is among the oldest urban centres in Ireland. The history of the Council and the town it represents is long and sometimes controversial. Drogheda takes its name from the Gaelic, Droichead Atha meaning “Bridge of the Ford” referring to the town’s strategic location at a bridging point on the River Boyne between the provinces of Ulster and Leinster. Drogheda was founded by colonising Knights, Hugh de Lacy and Bertram de Verdon who founded respectively the Meath and Louth sides of the town. The town as it is known today came into existence in 1415 when the two separate settlements previously operating independently on the north and south sides of the Boyne River were united by a single constitution and local authority.



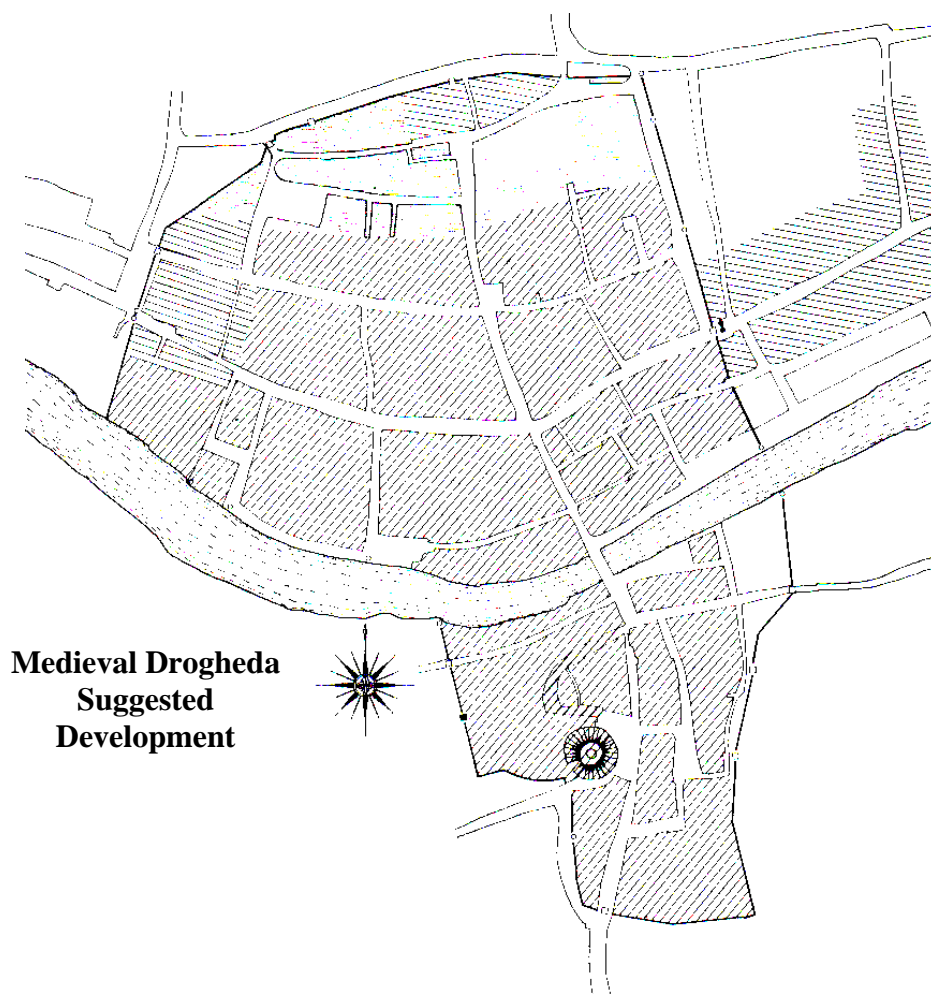
The settlement quickly grew into a substantial and nationally significant trading centre. Links were established with European and British ports and trade became a critical component of the town’s economy. Such was the importance of Drogheda that its size and population far exceeded that of Dublin for many years. As the centuries passed Drogheda became the focus for momentous events on both the Irish and European stage.

Key events in Drogheda’s historical chronology include: the visit of King John in 1210, the Black Death in 1348, the holding of Parliament at various times over the years 1441 – 1493, the effects of the Plague in 1479, the passing of Poyning’s Law in 1494, the swearing of allegiance to the Crown by the defeated Ulster Chiefs in 1603, the attack by Cromwell in 1649, and the Battle of the Boyne outside Drogheda in 1690. In the Twentieth Century Drogheda played its role in the momentous events, which shaped the modern nation including the 1916 Easter Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War during the years 1919 – 1923.



1.6 The Urban Fabric through History

Following the unification of the two settlements on either side of the Boyne, work began on enclosing the new entity through the erection of fortified walls, which were completed in 1334. Little remains of Drogheda's walls today since successive construction projects over the centuries have utilised material recovered from the walls and gates. The former line of the town walls can however, still reasonably be determined. The walled town, together with its numerous gates and mural towers enclosed approximately 45 hectares, making it one of the largest walled towns in medieval Ireland on a par with other major Irish and European centres of the time. A rare feature among modern towns is the survival of Drogheda's medieval street pattern and street names are medieval in form and have remained largely unaltered to this day, particularly to the north of the Boyne. Its medieval property boundaries, Churches and functions have also remained largely intact.



One of the earlier known archaeological features is the Millmount Motte thought to have been established by Hugh de Lacy before 1186, being an ideal defensive site overlooking the River Boyne. However, souterrains discovered at Mell in 1983 provide evidence of prehistoric settlement in the vicinity. While the line of the Town Wall can be reasonably determined, the exact number and position of town gates and towers is uncertain.

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A number of items of archaeological/ historical interest have survived virtually intact, i.e. St. Laurence's Gate Barbican, Sections of the Old Town Wall, Magdalene Tower, Section of the Augustinian Abbey and Abbey Lane. Archaeological findspots have to date been concentrated to the north of the River Boyne where the area enclosed by the wall was more extensive due to more favourable topography.

Drogheda also has an extremely rich heritage of buildings of architectural merit, the majority of which date from the 18th Century onwards. Some of the more important architectural features of the town include churches, Georgian town houses and terraces, traditional shop fronts, public buildings, warehouses and streetscapes. Lack of investment over time, particularly prior to the 1970-80 period, has resulted in dereliction within parts of the historic core of Drogheda and the removal of architectural details and features. In recent years Drogheda has witnessed redevelopment on an unprecedented scale as the population has grown and investment has flowed into the town. Drogheda is now partially re-inventing itself whilst simultaneously bearing testimony to its illustrious past.

1.7 Consultation Process

A key element in the development plan is the need to carry out consultations with those who will be most directly affected by the contents of the plan. These include the general public, elected representatives, local stakeholders, service providers, and bodies prescribed under the Planning and Development Regulations.

The Planning and Development Act 2000, Section 11(3) (a), empowers a planning authority to take "whatever additional measures it considers necessary to consult with the general public and other interested bodies" during the consultation period associated with the preparation of a strategic land-use plan.

In the case of the Planning Section of Drogheda Borough Council it was decided to adopt a "grassroots" approach to the consultation stage of the plan. In practice this means that the development plan should be prepared on the basis of a "bottom up" approach, in consultation with those whom it most affects, the public and other relevant bodies and organisations living / operating in Drogheda Borough. In this context the Planning Section produced an "Issues Paper" which detailed the key Planning Issues confronting the Borough Council Area during the period of the Development Plan Review. The issues raised included the following:

- Population Trends and Future Housing Trends
- Transportation
- Employment and Enterprise Development
- Town Centre, Retail and District Centres
- Tourism
- Recreation and Leisure
- Community Development
- Built Heritage
- Infrastructure

In accordance with section 11(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, a notice was published in the local circulating newspaper, ("The Drogheda Independent") on the 22nd

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August 2003 spanning the week ending 24th August 2003. The notice outlined the intention of the Borough Council to review the development plan and invited submissions or observations from interested parties to be made in writing to the Planning Section not later than 4.30pm on Wednesday 22nd October 2003. This allowed for a nine-week period during which submissions could be made to the Borough Council.

Letters of Notification of intent to review the Development Plan were sent to all the Prescribed Bodies and local stakeholders. The letters invited formal written submissions to be made to the Borough Council. Details of these submissions are set out in Section 2 of this document.

The background papers and draft proposals for the Borough which were made available for public inspection included the following:

- The National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020
- Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area
- Residential Density; Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Dublin Regional Authority & Mid East Regional Authorities,
- Regional Planning Guidelines Greater Dublin Area – Issues Paper
- Implementing the National Spatial Strategy
- Housing Strategy for County Louth 2001
- Childcare Facilities Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Border Regional Authority; Regional Planning Guidelines - Issues Paper, Implementing the National Spatial Strategy
- A Retail Strategy for County Louth 2002 (Draft)
- Urban Renewal Scheme 1999 – Drogheda,
- Annual Report for year ended 1st March 2002
- Drogheda Integrated Area Development Plan 1998 (Urban Renewal Scheme)
- Economic and Spatial Development Study of Drogheda and it's Environs; Final Report February 2001 – Peter Bacon & Associates, Economic Consultants

In accordance with Section 11 (3)(b) of the Act, it was decided by the Planning Section from the outset that a pro-active, community orientated approach to public consultation, would be adopted. The Planning Section of the Borough Council made strenuous efforts to advertise the Plan Preparation process. This included contacting local media both in the form of Newspapers and Radio. Notices of the Plan Preparation Process were also distributed through local community organisations via the Drogheda RAPID co-ordinator and information was disseminated through Parish Bulletins and Church announcements. In addition, a wide range of non-statutory bodies were contacted in writing or by telephone in order to raise the public profile of the Plan Preparation Process. Finally, each individual Council Member sitting on Drogheda Borough Council was supplied with a copy of the “Issues Paper” and invited to discuss relevant topics contained therein with the Borough Council Development Plan Team.

Councillors generally responded with enthusiasm to the invitation to discussion. Each Councillor held individual meetings with the Development Plan Team over the period 1st – 16th September 2003.

Following this period the Development Plan Team organised a series of day long public meetings (15.00hrs – 20.00hrs) at the following locations and dates:



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- 1. Bridgeford Centre, Newfoundwell (Northside) 8th October 2003**
- 2. St. Paul's School, Rathmullan (Southside) 9th October 2003**
- 3. St. Mary's Primary School, Congress Avenue (Southside) 15th October 2003**
- 4. V.E.C. College, Twenties Lane, Moneymore (Northside) 16th October 2003**

The Development Plan Team prepared a visual presentation for all the meetings thus giving the public a structure around which comments and submissions could be made. Attendance at each meeting averaged approximately 30 – 40 persons over the full time allocated. The purpose of these meetings was to give a “Human Face” to the Borough Council and to make a concerted effort to accommodate the views of the wider public into the Plan Process. A wide range of concerns were expressed at each meeting. These tended to be highly localised in nature although there was lively debate at all the public meetings in relation to the future direction of Drogheda as a whole.

1.8 Format of the Plan

The plan consists of a written statement together with land use zoning and specific objectives maps. Should any conflict arise between the written statement and the maps, the written statement shall take precedence.

The plan is laid out in a series of subject specific chapters which are further subdivided into specific headings. Policies attached to specific headings are contained after individual bodies of text and highlighted accordingly. Policies are cross referenced with relevant maps and zonings.

Underpinning the policy provisions of this Development Plan are the principles of “Sustainable Development” as identified both in the Aalborg Charter (Charter of European cities and Towns towards Sustainability) dated May, 1994 and in agreements on “Local Agenda 21” adopted at the Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, June 1992).