



# STRATEGIC CONTEXT



## **CHAPTER 2**

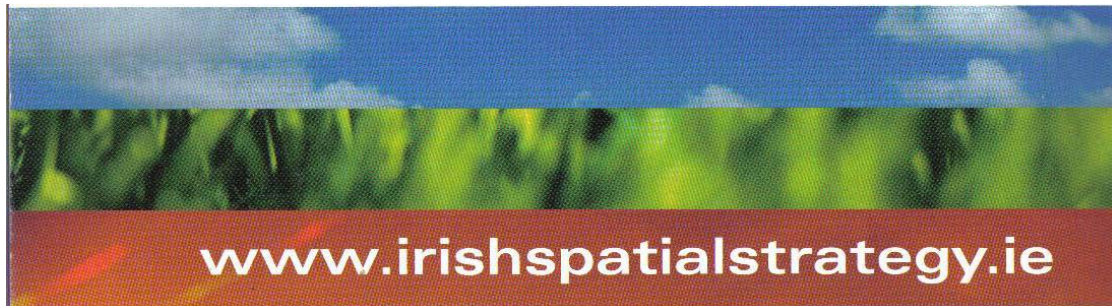
### **STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

#### **2.1 The National Development Plan 2000 – 2006**

The purpose of the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 is essentially to enhance regional economies and foster the growth of new economic activity. It stresses the need for local authorities to take a wider perspective in formulating planning policy, development needs and new infrastructure. This is particularly pertinent in the case of Drogheda given its geographical location. A number of major infrastructural projects under the NDP 2000 – 2006 have already impacted directly upon Drogheda whilst others will follow. These include:

- Drogheda Bypass (M1 Motorway)
- Monasterboice to Gormanstown Motorway
- Cloghran to Balbriggan Motorway
- Dublin Port Tunnel
- Iarnrod Éireann Railcar Servicing Centre

#### **2.2 The National Spatial Strategy 2000 – 2020**



Within the NDP 2000 – 2006 the Government objective for regional policy is to secure more balanced regional development and to reduce disparities between regions. The goal is to develop regions in order that they contribute in the greatest possible extent to the prosperity of the nation as a whole. The implementation mechanism for the NDP 2000 – 2006 is the National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020 (NSS 2002 – 2020)

In the pursuit of this objective a number of regional authorities have been established. Drogheda occupies a unique position straddling two functional regional authorities, both of which are identified in the NSS 2002 – 2020. The Border Region to which Drogheda has been assigned lies to the north whilst the Dublin and Mid East Regions lie to the south and west of the town. Within the context of the Border Region, the NSS noted the significant potential for economic growth in Drogheda given its existing population base, established enterprise culture, strong transportation links and associations with Greater Dublin.

In relation to the Dublin and Mid East Regions of the NSS, Drogheda is given the status of “Primary Development Centre”. The role of Primary Development Centres within the Dublin and Mid East Regions will be essentially to become economically self sustaining



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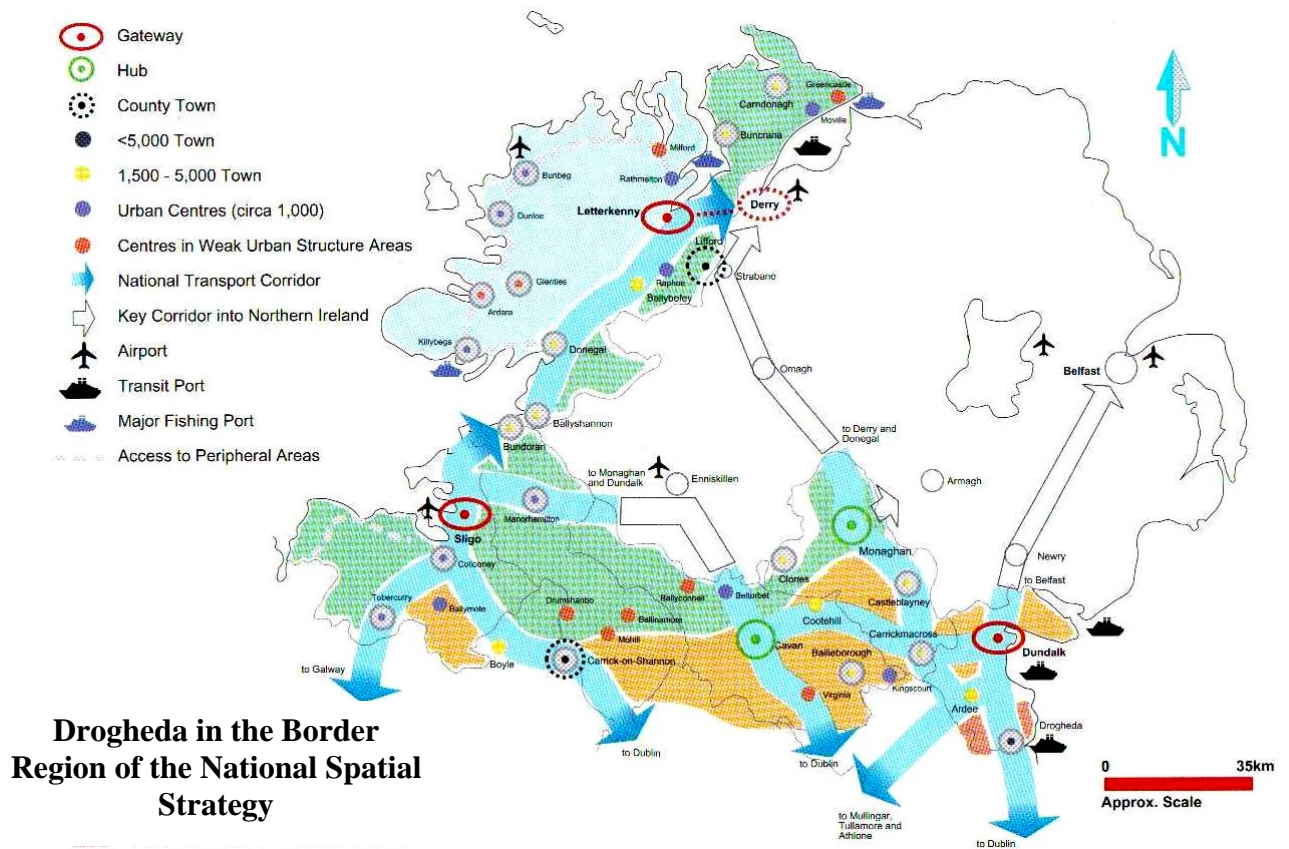
within their own catchment areas as well as maintaining close links to surrounding regions.

Drogheda’s unique location means that it’s future growth will have to be assessed closely in relation to the Greater Dublin Area in particular. The NSS aims to consolidate the growth of Dublin and achieve more balanced regional development. In the case of Drogheda, this policy is likely to generate significant physical and population growth both within the Borough boundary and in the adjoining areas of South County Louth and East County Meath.

Both the Dublin and Mid East and the Border, Midlands and West Regions have prepared Regional Planning Guidelines. Each local authority within the Regions has contributed to the preparation of these guidelines. Drogheda has made submissions to both Regional Authorities. The Regional Planning Guidelines will reflect the unique position of Drogheda and the benefits which the Borough can bring to both regions as a result.

**2.3 Regional Context**

Regional development in Ireland is guided by the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). The NSS was devised by Government in order to achieve more balanced regional development which would act as a counterbalance to the Greater Dublin Area which is increasingly facing problems of congestion, high land prices and urban sprawl.



Drogheda straddles two regional authorities although for historical and administrative reasons, it is an integral part of county Louth and therefore lies within the jurisdiction of the Border Regional Authority (BRA). Immediately south of Drogheda is the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) In this context Drogheda occupies a unique regional niche in that whilst placed within the Border Region, it is perhaps most strongly influenced by the



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Greater Dublin Region on its doorstep. The BRA is a largely rural region characterised in most part by physical remoteness, poor communications and consequent peripherality and disadvantage. The region has few large urban centres and in fact, Drogheda is the largest population centre in the entire region, surpassing the size even of the largest designated Gateway / Hub, Dundalk. Whilst Drogheda has been designated the status of “Primary Development Centre” by the NSS, its distinct position within the region has been recognised by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region. The guidelines note that:

**“Drogheda occupies a unique position by reason of its strategic location on the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor (and) its proximity to Dublin City and Dublin International Airport..... It is anticipated that Drogheda will continue to develop, driven largely by factors originating outside the Border Region.”**

The factors which the Border Regional Authority alludes to are primarily the pressures emanating from the Greater Dublin Area. In this respect the NSS explicitly recognises that whilst Drogheda is placed within the Border Region, it nevertheless has a strong functional role within the Dublin Region, specifically:

**“Drogheda’s close functional and physical links with the GDA highlights a need to consider its role in the spatial development of the GDA when reviewing the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the GDA”**

It should, in addition, be noted that Louth County Council in its capacity as local authority for the northern environs of Drogheda (beyond the Borough Boundary) has also taken cognisance of Drogheda’s role in its County plan 2003 – 2009:

**“It is the view of the planning authority that Drogheda is ideally located to act as a self containing sustainable development centre to counter act the continued growth of the capital in the manner that is described in the strategic planning guidelines for the greater Dublin area. Development policy for the town and its northern environs will reflect this view”**

In summary, it is safe to categorise Drogheda Borough as essentially an interface between both Regions. In this respect the Borough has a role to play in both and can draw positive elements from both regions.

## **2.4 Local Context**

At a local level the plan must have due regard to the provisions of a number of policy documents. These include:

- Drogheda Borough Council, Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2003 – 2007
- Louth Local Authorities, Housing Strategy for County Louth 2001
- A Retail Strategy for County Louth 2002
- Louth County Council Childcare Strategy 2002



- Draft Local Area Plan for the North Drogheda Environs 2001

## 2.5 Population Trends

The population of Drogheda (Urban Area) as recorded by the most recent census was 28,337\* persons. This made Drogheda the largest town in the county and indeed, in the state. (excluding cities) The population results represented a substantial 15.7% increase in the population between 1996 and 2002. There are strong indications that the increase in population within and around Drogheda, is set to continue. Much of the growth is likely to arise from commuter based development. In many cases the new residents of Drogheda will be people with strong employment and social links to Dublin who choose to live in Drogheda and commute to the city daily. The lower cost of housing in Drogheda coupled with the completion of the M1 Drogheda Motorway By-pass and the continued upgrading of commuter rail services will strengthen this trend.

Throughout all the inter-censal periods from 1951 to 2002, the population of the Borough of Drogheda has increased steadily. In particular, significant population growth rates occurred in the twenty-five year period between 1961-1986 reflecting the growth in the national population over this period, which in turn reflected significant growth in the national economy. Between 1981-86, the rate of growth had reduced to 3.6% and during the inter-censal period 1986-1991, the population of the Borough declined by slightly under 1%. This decline reflected the County decline of 1.2%, which was larger than the national population decline of 0.5% over the 1986-91 period.

In the advent of the so-called “Celtic Tiger” period during the 1990’s Drogheda’s population once again began to grow significantly. The growth partially reflected that of the adjacent Greater Dublin Area where the ripple effect which the effective powerhouse of the Irish economy has impacted strongly on adjacent local authorities in terms of the establishment of new commuting patterns by workers forced ever further from the capital by rising house prices in particular. Drogheda has been well placed to cater for such demand given it’s high capacity transport links and relative proximity to the capital. The population growth of Drogheda has also been affected by a reduced rate of out migration and significant in migration both from within the state but also from Northern Ireland, Europe and the rest of the world. The influx of asylum seekers into the Borough is likely to continue to affect overall demographics. Again these trends have been manifested nationally.

\*Census 2002



## Drogheda Borough Council Population Trends

Census Year *Estimate	Persons	Percentage Change
1951	16,779	
1961	17,085	+ 1.8 %
1971	20,202	+ 18.0 %
1981	23,247	+ 15.0 %
*1986	24,086	+ 3.6 %
1991	23,848	- 0.98 %
1996	24,496	+ 2.6 %
2002	28,337	+ 15.7 %

### Age Profile

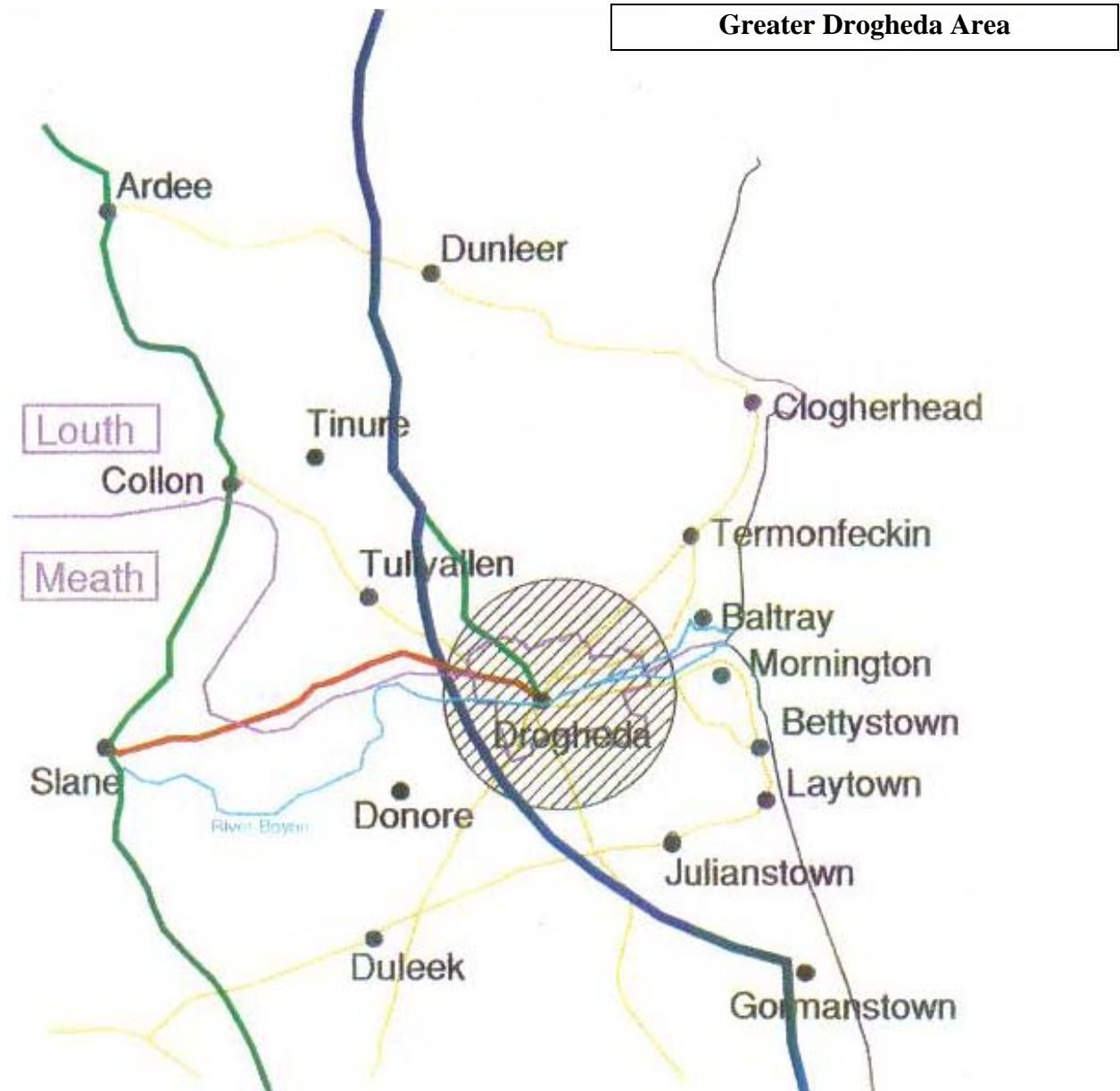
	Drogheda % Population	Co. Louth % Population	National % Population
Age < 15	22.1 (6269)	22.7	21.1
Age 15- 24	15.6 (4434)	16.1	16.4
Age 25 - 44	33.7 (9557)	30.3	30.1
Age 45 - 64	19.1 (5399)	20.5	21.1
Age 65 +	9.4 (2674)	9.4	11.1

### 2.6 Greater Drogheda Area

In a wider context, it must be recognised that Drogheda Borough is fast approaching its natural capacity to accommodate growth within its present boundaries. This fact has been recognised not only by the Borough Council but also by the adjacent local authorities, Meath County Council to the South and Louth County Council to the North. Meath County Council is in the process of preparing Local Area Plans for those areas south of and contiguous with Drogheda Borough where there is continued strong, often commuter led, demand for housing. Louth County Council has prepared a comprehensive Local Area Plan for the North Drogheda Environs in order to provide for measured growth to the north of the Borough and to capitalise on recent infrastructural development. The three local authorities are engaged in the preparation of an overall strategy for Greater Drogheda, which will encompass all aspects of growth in the areas outlined above. The overall, Greater Drogheda Area could thus be expected to expand to an urban area accommodating some 70,000 persons by the year 2020.

#### Greater Drogheda Population Projections

South Drogheda Action Area (Meath incl. Leonard's Cross)	17,155
North Drogheda Environs	15,750
Drogheda Borough (+17.9 %)	33,404
<b>Greater Drogheda Total</b>	<b>66,309</b>



## 2.7 Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has been described as “meeting the needs of the present generation without prejudicing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission). This concept now lies at the core of Government policy and revolves around the necessity to balance human activity with protection of the natural environment. The

Government has committed the nation to the concept through its signature to the UN Rio Conference 1992, Agenda 21, the Treaty of Amsterdam 1997 and the Johannesburg Summit 2002.

Planning Authorities play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development by regulating the use of land in order to:

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- Minimise the environmental impact of development in terms of water quality and visual amenity
- Minimise the negative environmental impact of development on surface and groundwater quality and overall amenity degradation.
- Ensure equality of access to employment and other social infrastructure
- Conserve energy resources
- Make prudent use of existing resources
- Encourage community involvement in decision making on environmental matters

## **2.8 Agenda 21 & Local Agenda 21**

Agenda 21 was agreed at the Earth Summit of 1997. The Agenda refers to nations agreeing to co-operate in achieving a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and furthermore achieve long term sustainable development. Local Agenda 21 guidelines were first issued in 1995. These have been followed by “Local Agenda 21 – Towards Sustainable Communities” in 2001. These latter guidelines emphasise a “grass-roots” approach to decision making whereby local communities can have a direct input into issues affecting their lives. The mechanism for achieving this has been the creation of new bodies for community involvement such as Childcare Committees and Strategic Policy Committees. The establishment of such structures has meant the local authorities are better equipped to take up the opportunities and challenges offered by the Local Agenda 21 process and aid in the Local Authority’s role of promoting social inclusion. Ultimately Agenda 21 and Local Agenda 21 is a process which aims to integrate environmental considerations into the centre of policy in all aspects of community development.

## **2.9 Social Inclusion**

The economic success of Ireland during the 1990’s and into the present day has not benefited all its inhabitants in the way it could be hoped. The wealth created over these years has not been equitably distributed and in fact has resulted in noticeably greater contrasts between those benefiting and those who have not. This has resulted in much greater levels of polarisation and marginalisation between different sections of society than was hitherto the case. The Government is pro-actively trying to reverse this trend through the promotion of Social Inclusion policies. These policies have been crystallised in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy 1997 and aim to achieve the following:

- Ensure equal access and encourage participation by all sections of society in the life of the nation
- Guarantee the rights of minorities through anti-discrimination legislation.
- Reduce inequalities particularly in relation to gender
- Encourage a national partnership approach
  
- Encourage self reliance through empowerment
- Encourage consultation with end-users particular with regard to services
- Significantly improve transportation services with particular reference to peripheral areas in the Border Region

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- Provide youth facilities particularly in deprived areas
- Ensure implementation of strategies dealing with Homelessness, Traveller Accommodation and remedial works schemes
- Implement a national Children's Strategy
- Ensure that all local authority housing developments exceeding 75 units have dedicated crèche facilities
- Complete consultations on the Disabilities Bill

The NDP 2000 – 2006 also aims to promote social inclusion through measures aimed at re-integrating the socially excluded, long term unemployed and a larger proportion of the female population, into the labour force. In addition, certain “at risk” social groups have been specifically targeted by the Government. They include Children from large families, Single adult households, Lone parents, People with Disabilities, Travellers, Refugees / Asylum Seekers, Homeless Persons, the Elderly and Early School Leavers.

## **2.10 Planning and Social Inclusion**

Drogheda Borough Council intends to address the issue of social inclusion directly through its role as the planning authority for the area. In this respect planning for built development can promote social inclusion through:

- The identification of locations where a Local Area Plan or similar mechanism would be appropriate to tackle urban decline. Such a plan would be approached with the needs of the local community to the fore. In addition, such a plan would involve community involvement from the outset.
- Ensure that access for people with disabilities is an inherent component of all new planning decisions, where appropriate.
- Promote environmental improvement schemes in co-operation with local communities particularly in publicly owned housing estates.
- Promote access to transport facilities and particularly, public transport services as a means of ensuring access for all sections of the community.
- Provide a broad variety of housing types to meet a variety of housing needs across the community including implementation of the County Louth Housing Strategy



## 2.11 Plan Implementation

The success of the Plan in addressing the development and land use needs of Drogheda over the proceeding five years will depend on action by Drogheda Borough Council in conjunction, when necessary, with adjoining Local Authorities, other statutory bodies, agencies, the private sector and local communities. This “Joined-Up” approach to development challenges forms the approach taken by Drogheda Borough Council and will be applied when required, throughout the Plan period. The implementation of the Plan, in order to achieve its strategic goals will be carried out by the application of planning control and enforcement and through the preparation of further area based plans and transportation / traffic management schemes. In general Drogheda Borough Council will endeavour to ensure widespread public consultation, as appropriate, in the implementation of the Plan.