



RETAILING



Chapter 9

RETAILING

PART 1: RETAIL HIERARCHY

9.1 Introduction

The provision of social and commercial facilities in both the Town Centre and suburban areas of the Borough has not always kept pace with population growth, with a resultant deficit in facilities. The Development Plan strategy is designed to reinforce the town centre as a place for work, shopping, services and living. The strategy also provides for the expansion of land uses sympathetic to the town centre into a development area termed “The Inner Quays” together with the development of complementary uses within the Drogheda Transport Development Area. (DTDA)

9.2 Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities

All local authorities outside the Greater Dublin Area are obliged to follow the Guidelines ‘*Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities, January 2005*’ issued by the Department of the Environment & Local Government. The guidelines require all such Planning Authorities to prepare a retail strategy for their jurisdictional area, identifying retail policies and proposals applicable to the area.

The *Retail Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities* were produced as a response to the changing retail environment with the aim of producing an optimal spread of retail development accessible to the widest possible population. They supersede the directives and other guidance on retail planning issued over the last two decades. Within the context of Drogheda Borough, the following matters must be addressed in any assessment of the retail sector;

1. Confirmation of the retail hierarchy, the role and size of the town center.
2. Definition in the Development Plan of the boundaries of the core shopping area of the town center.
3. A broad assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace,
4. Preparation of policies and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of town center.
5. Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail developments.

The Retail Planning Guidelines established a national retail hierarchy reflecting the settlement structure of the state and establishing a retail classification for urban centres such as Drogheda. The national hierarchy is based on a series of tiers as outlined below;

**Tier 1:**

Metropolitan Dublin (30 % of state population)

Tier 2:

Greater Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford (10 % of state population)

Tier 3:

Drogheda, Dundalk, Athlone, Carlow, Ennis, Kilkenny, Portlaoise, Tralee etc.
(Large Towns with 6 % of state population)

Tier 4:

Smaller Town in the population range 1,500 – 5,000 (6 % of state population)

Having defined the hierarchy, the guidelines then give a comprehensive framework which guides local authorities in the preparation of development plans and the retail elements contained therein. The overall aim of the guidelines is to ensure that all development plans incorporate clear policies and proposals for retail development which are efficient, equitable and sustainable.

9.3 Retailing Trends

The Louth retail study, “*A Retail Strategy for County Louth*” identified a number of major trends in the County as a whole and within Drogheda Borough in particular. The Countywide trends included;

- Increased concentration of ownership in the retail sector.
- The likely survival and prosperity of existing independent retailers due to factors such as cultural differences, population densities and deterrents to foreign retailers.
- The launch of new formats by supermarket retailers in order to increase market share. These have included entry into product areas such as Clothing, DIY, Media Products and Household Products.
- The entry of discount food and other product, stores such as Lidl and Aldi.
- The rapid development of forecourt retailing.
- An expected concentration on the clothing sector.
- The influx of UK based retailers to the larger Irish urban centers.
- The growth of factory outlet retailing.
- The development of retail warehouse parks.

9.4 Drogheda Retailing Trends

- Drogheda lacks significant quality convenience and comparison shopping resulting in significant shopper “leakage” from the Borough to neighbouring centres including Greater Dublin, Dundalk, Navan and Newry.
- Problems with the Drogheda shopping experience include lack of parking, lack of choice and the need for more modern shops
- The size and quality of available floorspace demanded by major national and international retailers is lacking in Drogheda.

In response to these findings a number of specific policies were proposed. The policies have been adopted as specific objectives within the Town Centre section of the Plan.



9.5 Neighbourhood Strategy

The urban area administered by Drogheda Borough Council is characterized by a relatively dense central residential area surrounding the Town Centre proper. Beyond this area at a distance of approximately 0.5 km all development becomes progressively less dense and is increasingly characterized by relatively featureless suburban areas. These areas have tended to be separated from the principal employment, shopping, educational and recreational uses, with the resultant reliance on private transport and excessive consumption of agricultural land and urban sprawl.

An essential element of a sustainable urban strategy is the development of a compact town, which is characterised by the consolidation of existing, and the establishment of new neighbourhoods. Whilst on a spatial front, Drogheda remains relatively compact, the manner in which residential development has developed almost in isolation from support



services, impacts adversely upon the town centre in terms of traffic movements which create car parking demands in the town centre, degrade the environmental and complicates pedestrian movements.

9.6 District Centres

District centres comprise purpose built groups of shops separate from the Town Centre and normally located in suburban areas or on the edge of urban areas. A district centre would normally contain at least one food supermarket or superstore, a range of unit shops and non-retail services such as banks, post offices, beauticians, restaurants etc. District centres cater for catchments within 15 – 20 minutes drive time and are likely to comprise approximately 10,000 m². A district centre may be acceptable in Drogheda Borough in the context of;

- A proven level of existing retail under provision.
- Meeting the needs of a major growth in population either existing or planned.

There maybe scope for the provision of a district centre to serve the needs of the larger newly developed neighbourhoods of the Borough together with proposed new residential developments in both the Northern and Southern Environs of Drogheda. Any proposals for a District Centre must meet the various design and access criteria imposed upon Neighbourhood Centres.

9.7 Neighbourhood Centres

The town centre will be supported by identification of a series of neighbourhood centres. The location of neighbourhood centres seeks to ensure that all of the existing and future residential areas of Drogheda are adequately serviced by local facilities and services, including commercial and community centres. The provision of neighbourhood centres also seeks to provide a strong local focus for residential areas, creating a sense of place and community. A range of uses will be encouraged at neighbourhood centres - in addition to the retail uses. Such uses might include post office, credit union, dental and medical surgeries, places of worship, crèche and childcare facilities. The development of such facilities will cater, especially for those least able to access facilities in the centre of town. The scale, size and number of units will be restricted to ensure that they serve local needs.

In order to act as a focal point in a residential area, high urban design quality will be sought for purpose built neighbourhood and district centres. Buildings comprising the neighbourhood centre or in the immediate vicinity will generally be permitted to increase their heights to three or four storeys to reflect their prominence. A mix of uses will be encouraged at the centres, with residential and office uses promoted above first floor levels. This will also act as an incentive towards their construction and development. Local parks, civic spaces and community facilities will be encouraged in the immediate vicinity of neighbourhood centres so as to enhance their role in the community and encourage linked trips by modes other than the private car where such journeys are practicable.

The provision of cycleways and footpaths linking the neighbourhood centers to surrounding residential areas, will be encouraged. The neighbourhood centres will be encouraged to site on existing, improving or developing public transport routes.



9.8 Local Shops

There are several local centres scattered throughout the Borough. These neighbourhood facilities are generally not purpose built but rather have evolved over time. Local shops located in communities perform an important function in that they satisfy the local retailing requirements of the community. Similar to neighbourhood centres they play a vital economic and social role in communities and are important for essential day-to-day needs, with their accessibility to the less mobile sectors of the community of particular importance. They are largely owned and operated by independent traders. Drogheda Borough Council acknowledges the local importance of existing local shops and will require that they should be safeguarded and additional ones may be considered in areas where there is a clear deficiency of retail provision.

- In those cases where the proposed net sales area of a single convenience neighbourhood or convenience local shop exceeds 200 m², only one such outlet shall be permitted in a neighbourhood centre or group of local primary shops. An upper limit of 500m² shall apply in all cases with the exception of discount food stores.

9.9 Discount Food Stores

Discount Food Stores of up to 1,500 m² may be permitted to provide foodstore anchors to new or existing neighbourhood centres. Proposals for Discount Food should be measured against and be in compliance with Development Plan retail and other related policies and objectives.

9.10 Retail Warehousing

An exception to the overall policy of consolidating and reinforcing the retail function of the town centre is the provision of retail warehousing. This is typified by large single storey buildings specialising in the sale of bulky goods such as carpets, furniture, electrical goods, garden products and DIY items. They are generally served by a surface car park and ease of servicing, which requirements are not readily accommodated in a town centre location and would represent an inefficient use of serviced and zoned town centre sites. Retail warehousing should be restricted to truly 'bulky goods' and conform to pre-agreed size thresholds to be established by Drogheda Borough Council. In order to reduce the adverse impact of car traffic, it is considered appropriate to group retail warehouses on a single site to facilitate multiple shopping trips using a shared or communal surface car park. Drogheda Borough Council have identified a site on the North Western edge of the Borough at Mell which may be suitable for such development.

- Individual, single user retail warehouse units shall comprise a minimum gross floorspace of 700 m². Subdivision of units less than 700 m² will not generally be acceptable in locations beyond the Town Centre, DTDA or IQDA. Single user retail warehouse units in excess of 6,000 m² gross (including any ancillary garden centres) will not be permitted. The amalgamation of two or more adjacent retail warehouse units to form gross floorspace in excess of 6,000 m² will not be permitted.



9.11 Vehicle Sales / Showrooms

Drogheda Borough Council has considered the land use requirements of vehicle sales and services. It is acknowledged that vehicle sales would not normally be considered to represent a bulky comparison good when discussing a retail strategy. Nonetheless, to achieve these objectives, the Development Plan will promote the Retail Warehouse Park to accommodate vehicle sales and servicing, at a suitable location. It is also acknowledged that vehicle sales dealerships can represent elements of attractive urban design and may be suitable for a number of the identified 'Gateway' sites on the principle arterial approaches to the Borough.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN NOVEMBER 2005

9.12 Petrol Filling Stations

Most of the Borough's petrol filling stations and associated forecourt shops are located outside the main commercial core of the town. Traditionally the primary use of these sites was as a petrol filling station with a small ancillary retail outlet. However, the scale of retail outlets has increased and in some cases threaten to overcome fuel sales as the primary use of the site. The forecourt shops usually provide a wide range of convenience retail goods in associated shops and in some areas provide the same function as the local shop or minimarket.

National Retail Guidance indicates that the retail use of a site as a petrol filling station, pending the scale of such convenience store, can adversely impact on traditional retail outlets such as local corner shops. Subsequently 'The Retail Planning Guidelines' state that the size of a shop associated with any petrol filling station should take account of the following factors:

- Large stores tend to attract additional custom which can lead to additional car borne trips primarily for shopping purposes
- Large numbers of parked cars in station forecourts can cause disruption and queuing for those simply wishing to use the petrol pumps
- The preferred location for retailing is in town centres, not isolated sites outside these preferred locations

Notwithstanding the above, a shop of up to 100m² (net) retail floorspace is considered acceptable when associated with a petrol filling station. Above this threshold, the sequential test approach will normally be applied.



9.13 Assessment of Retail Proposals

All retail proposals should be in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines. Drogheda Borough Council reserves the right to request additional supporting background information to support any proposal as necessary. It will be a requirement that development proposals comply closely with the Development Plan. Where there is a doubt on any aspect of a planning application, the Drogheda Borough Council may require a detailed justification related to the matter that is questionable. The criteria to be determined in the assessment of significant applications will normally include;

- Testing the proposal against the ‘Sequential Approach’ and that other options have been considered
- The impact on Drogheda Town Centre, including cumulative impact,
- The baseline information and capacity/impact assessment is fit for its purpose and is transparent
- There is a demonstrable need for development
- The relationship of the application to Development Plan policies and objectives
- Its contribution to Town Centre or Neighbourhood or District Centre improvement
- Its contribution to site and/or area regeneration
- The quality of access by all modes of transport and by foot and bicycle

OBJECTIVES

- **RW 1**
To encourage the provision of retail warehousing at appropriate locations and appropriate scale
- **RW 2**
To restrict retail warehouse developments solely to the sale of ‘bulky comparison goods
- **RW 3**
To ensure that retail development is accessible by both public transport and private car, so as to ensure accessibility to all groups of the population,



OBJECTIVES

- **NC 1**
To promote the development of new neighbourhood centres to serve the needs of new or expanded residential areas with basic facilities, such as local convenience shopping, community facilities, children's playgrounds, etc.
- **NC 2**
To provide for the development of sustainable neighbourhoods, focused on neighbourhood centres with a mix of uses, densities and public services
- **NC 3**
To retain, protect and improve the environmental qualities of the existing suburban areas, to reinforce their neighbourhood centres and to provide for additional community services, amenities and facilities as identified in this Development Plan.
- **NC 4**
To examine the potential for the potential for Drogheda Borough to accommodate a purpose built District Centre
- **NC 5**
To protect existing local convenience shops and encourage the provision of new local convenience shops in residential areas where there is a clear deficiency of retail provision, subject to the protection of residential amenity