

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Plan Title

The Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017 is the statutory Development Plan for the geographical area in County Louth under the administrative jurisdiction of Drogheda Borough Council. It will remain valid for six years from the date of adoption by the elected members of Drogheda Borough Council, subject to any review, variations, extensions or alterations made in the future.

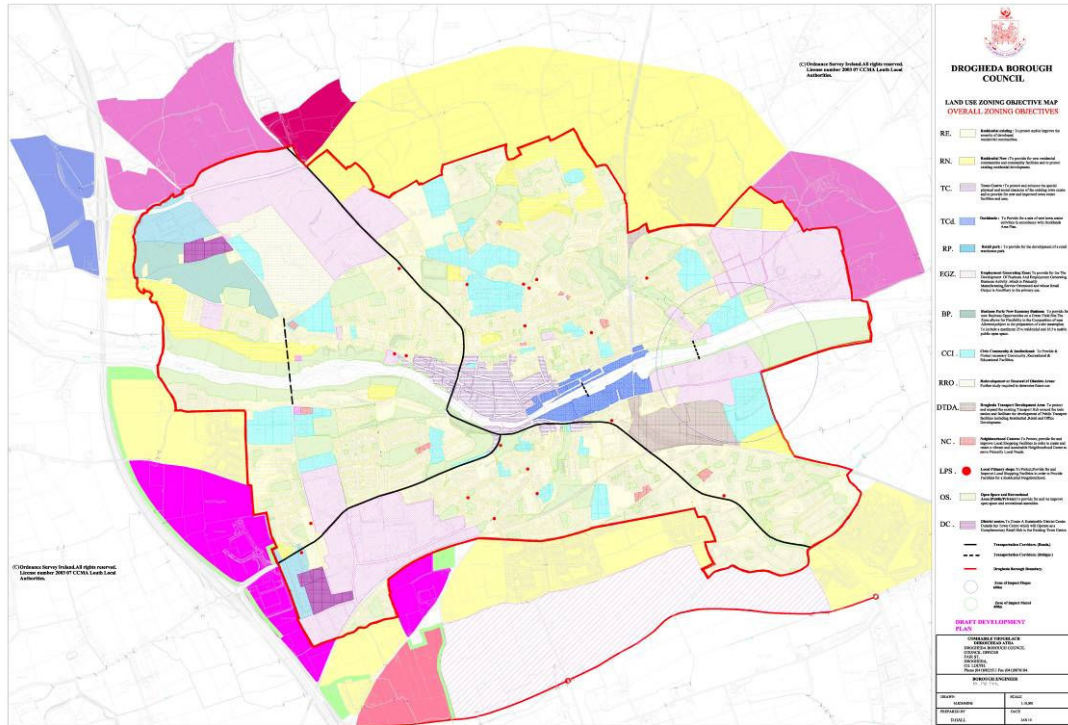
1.1.2 Plan Area

Drogheda is one of the oldest and most distinguished urban centres in Ireland with a history stretching back to its founding in 1194. Unlike many other towns of such antiquity, Drogheda has continued to flourish into modern times. Drogheda today, is one of the most substantial urban settlements in the State in terms of population and physical extent. The town forms a key component along with Dundalk, in making County Louth the most urbanised county in the state beyond Greater Dublin. The functional administrative area covered by Drogheda Borough Council covers most but not all of the actual built up urban



area of Drogheda. There remain a number of contiguous suburban areas which lie outside the administrative boundary of the Borough Council which are administered by Louth County Council to the North and Meath County Council to the South. Together with the Borough Council Area, this forms a Greater Drogheda Area. The Drogheda Borough Council area comprises the electoral divisions of Fairgate, St.Laurence's Gate, West Gate and parts of St. Mary's and St Peter's, the former was originally part of County Meath.

Map 1.1: Drogheda Borough Council Plan Area including continuous analogous Local Area Plan areas in Adjacent Jurisdictions



1.2 Context and Legislation

The purpose of the Development Plan is:

- To provide a blueprint for the sustainable development of the plan area in order to realise its full potential in the interest of the Borough and County
- To provide a detailed framework for the management and regulation of development and use of land that will guide day to day planning decisions
- To include proposals for the development and use of land and to zone lands for specific purposes which will provide guidance and information for developers and the public
- To promote the economic, social and cultural development of the Borough to give local communities the opportunity to participate in the planning process as it relates to their local area and their daily lives

1.2.1 Format

The Development Plan comprises this written statement with supporting land use zoning and objective maps. The written statement includes Drogheda Borough Council's objectives and policies for the development and use of land. In the event of any conflict or ambiguity between what is contained within the written statement and the supporting maps, the written statement will take precedence.

1.2.2 Stages of the Plan making process

There are three stages in the review and the making of a Development Plan which are detailed below:

Stage 1 – Pre-Draft

- Background work, data gathering.
- Initial notification, in a newspaper circulating in the area, of the Planning Authority's intention to prepare a new Development Plan.
- Consultation with prescribed bodies, service providers, government agencies and departments and members of the public
- Report to members outlining the manager's response on issues raised in public consultation and recommendations on policies to be included in the Development Plan.
- Making of a direction to the manager by the members regarding the preparation of the plan.
- Scoping of Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Stage 2 – Preparation of the Draft Plan

- Submission by the manager of a Draft Plan to members for their consideration.
- Consideration by members of the Draft Plan, including the making of amendments by members
- Sending notice and a copy of the Draft Plan to prescribed bodies
- Public display of Draft Plan and Environmental Report and invitation for submissions.

Stage 3 – Making of the Development Plan

- Preparation by the manager of a report on submissions received.
- Consideration by members of the draft plan and manager's report.
- Making of the Development Plan by accepting or amending the draft, except where an amendment represents a material alteration of draft plan. In this case, material amendments go on public display, including amending environmental report if necessary, for a further period of one month
- Preparation of manager's report on submissions.
- Consideration of the amendment and manager's report by the elected members.
- Members make the plan by resolution.

1.2.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Development Plan prior to any decision on its adoption. The Environmental Report has examined the likely significant environmental impacts of the policies and objectives of the draft Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan. Any amendments made to the draft plan will be subject to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process.

1.2.4 Monitoring, Review and Implementation

Drogheda Borough Council ensures that this Development Plan is regularly monitored and reviewed as necessary. The Development Plan cannot foresee all future issues and circumstances that may arise and therefore, regular monitoring and review will be required. The plan will be implemented through the development management process and a combination of pro-active public and private sector investment.

1.2.5 Strategic Infrastructure Act

The provisions of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 came into effect on 31st January 2007. The Act, which amends the Planning and Development Act 2000, provides for applications for permission for specified private and public strategic infrastructure developments to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála.

1.2.6 Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2009

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2009 will come into force during the course of the plan. A key element of the Bill as proposed is the introduction of a requirement for an evidence based, core strategy in Development Plans which will provide relevant information as to how the plan and the housing strategy are consistent with Regional Planning Guidelines and the National Spatial Strategy.

1.2.7 Legal Status

This Plan is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning and Development Acts 2000 - 2006*. Upon adoption, it will supersede the existing Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2005 – 2011. In accordance with Section 9(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, every Planning Authority is required to review its Development Plan and make a new Development Plan every 6 years.

The legal framework for the preparation of a Development Plan is the *Planning and Development Acts 2000 - 2006*. Under this legislation, the new Plan is required to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Borough. It must also be consistent with such national plans, policies or strategies that relate to proper planning and sustainable development. The Plan must also include a number of mandatory objectives for:

- The zoning of land
- The provision of infrastructure
- The conservation and protection of the environment
- The integration of social, community and cultural requirements
- The sustainable development of the area
- The preservation of the character of the landscape
- The protection of structures and preservation of Architectural Conservation Areas
- The renewal and development of areas in need of regeneration
- The provision of traveller accommodation
- The preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities

- Major Accidents Directive (Seveso sites)
- The provision of community facilities

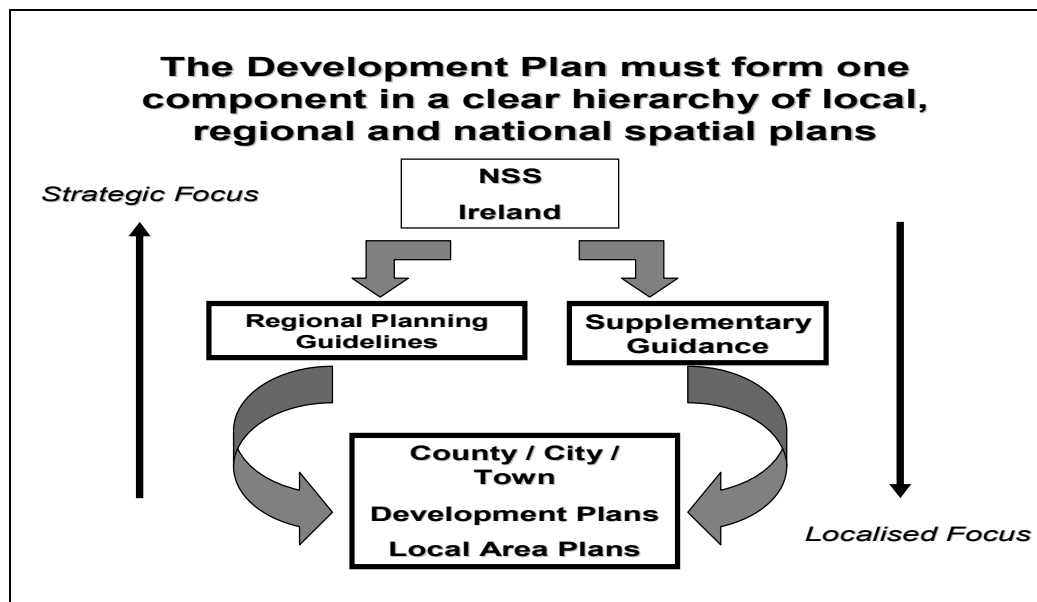
There have been some changes to the legislation since 2000, the most significant of which are set out below:

- The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002 which made changes to Part V of the 2000 Act and the provision for the preparation of Local Area Plans.
- The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004, which made substantial changes to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 which provided for, among other things, the establishment of a streamlined consent procedure for certain types of major infrastructure and the creation of a specialised division within An Bord Pleanála to make decisions on planning applications in relation to such projects.
- The Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2009 is due to come into force during the course of the Plan. It may introduce significant amendments to the plan making process and provide for a more transparent exercise.

1.3 National and Regional Context

The Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017 falls within a hierarchy of spatial strategies and plans. This hierarchy follows the format detailed in the diagram below with high level European, national, regional and local documents feeding progressively down into site specific local plans and policies.

Figure: 1.1: Hierarchy of Plans



1.3.1 European Plans and Programmes

A number of international, European, national, regional and local policies, directives and agreements are of direct relevance to the Plan. These include the following.

Agenda 21	<i>Local Agenda 21 is a process which facilitates sustainable development at community level.</i>
European Spatial Development Perspective (1999)	<i>The ESDP aims to achieve the balanced and sustainable spatial development of the territory of the EU in an increasingly integrated manner whilst still maintaining the individual characteristics of individual member states. The ESDP has protection of the environment as a core element</i>
Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, 2000	<i>This Directive requires the preparation of river basin management plans by 2009. Drogheda Borough Council falls within the Eastern Region International River Basin District which also includes the areas governed by Cavan County Council, Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council, Kildare County Council, Louth County Council, Meath County Council, Offaly County Council, South Dublin County Council, Westmeath County Council, Wexford County Council and Wicklow County Council.</i>
The EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA (Directive 2002/42/EC)	<i>The purpose of the SEA (Directive 2001/42/EC) is to ensure that environmental consequences of certain plans and programmes are identified and assessed during their preparation and before their adoption.</i>

1.3.2 National and Regional Level

National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020	<i>The NSS is a long term spatial planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. Its focus is on people, places and on building communities.</i>
Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland (1997)	<i>"Sustainable Development - A Strategy for Ireland" recognises the need for good spatial planning and the inclusion of sustainability concerns in urban and built environment policies. It recognises that the pattern and density of urban development has a major influence on travel patterns and encourages high movement activities to locate in areas of maximum accessibility to public transport.</i>

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<p>National Anti - Poverty Strategy (NAPS)</p>	<p><i>The NAPS is an initiative to place the needs of the poor and the socially excluded at the top of the national policy agenda. It recognises the scale of poverty and its impact on those directly affected and notes the distinct spatial aspects of poverty in urban and rural areas. The strategy emphasises the importance of a cross departmental policy response in dealing with the problem of poverty.</i></p>
<p>Transport 21(2006-2015)</p>	<p><i>Transport 21 proposes to invest €34.4 in Irish transport. Connecting communities and promoting prosperity is the core aim of this strategy. The programme seeks to meet the transport needs of the country's citizens and also underpin our competitiveness into the future.</i></p>
<p>Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009</p>	<p><i>These guidelines are focused on creating sustainable communities by incorporating the highest design standards and providing a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of essential infrastructure and services. They are accompanied by a best practice urban design manual which illustrates how the guidelines can be implemented effectively and consistently across the different scales of urban development around the country.</i></p>
<p>Urban Design Manual – A best practice guide 2009</p>	<p><i>This guide provides practical advice for those engaged in planning and urban design as to the optimal urban forms to adopt when engaged in the formulation of Development Plans</i></p>
<p>Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities 2007</p>	<p><i>These guidelines provide an overarching vision to guide the development of the Irish housing sector over the next ten years by delivering more and better quality housing responses and by doing this in a more strategic way, focused on the building of sustainable communities.</i></p>
<p>Retail Planning Guidelines (2005)</p>	<p><i>These guidelines provide a framework to assist Planning Authorities in preparing Development Plans, assessing applications for planning permission and to guide retailers and developers in formulating development proposals.</i></p>

<p>Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border 2010-2022</p>	<p><i>The 2002 Irish National Spatial Strategy as translated in regional terms in the 2004 Border Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines suggested that the Border Region’s future development might best be operationalised on the basis of a series of major urban settlements located within three distinct sub-regions. The urban centres were characterised as Gateways, Hubs, a Primary Development Centre and a Regionally Strategic Town. Drogheda became the primary development centre within the region, in recognition of its strategic location linking two regions and the influence which the Greater Dublin Area has upon the town.</i></p>
<p>Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines (2005)</p>	<p><i>The guidelines include the criteria to be applied when selecting proposed protected structures for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). It also contains guidance to support Planning Authorities in their role to protect the architectural heritage when a protected structure, a proposed protected structure or the exterior of a building within an ACA, is the subject of development proposals and when a declaration is sought in relation to a protected structure.</i></p>
<p>National Biodiversity Plan</p>	<p><i>This Plan was published in 2002. It aims to secure the conservation, including where possible the enhancement and sustainable use of biological diversity in Ireland and to contribute to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally.</i></p>
<p>National Climate Change Strategy (2007)</p>	<p><i>Under the Kyoto Protocol, Ireland agreed to a target of limiting its greenhouse gas emissions to 13% above 1990 levels by the first commitment period 2008 – 2012. Ireland ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2002, along with the EU and all other Member States and is legally bound to meet the challenging greenhouse gas emissions reduction target. To ensure Ireland reaches its target and building on measures put in place following the publication of the first National Climate Change Strategy in 2000, the Government has published the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012.</i></p>
<p>Making Ireland’s Development Sustainable (2002)</p>	<p><i>This document focuses on the link between economic activity and pressures on the environment. At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, world leaders agreed to implement an action programme for sustainable development called, Agenda 21. A Strategy for Ireland (1997), applies Agenda 21, in Irish circumstances. ‘Making Ireland’s Development Sustainable’ reviews progress, assesses the challenge we now face and sets out policies and actions to meet that challenge.</i></p>

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<p>Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006)</p>	<p><i>These guidelines offer advice to Planning Authorities on planning for wind energy through the Development Plan process and in determining applications for planning permission.</i></p>
<p>Flood Risk Guidelines for Local Authorities 2009</p>	<p><i>These guidelines detail appropriate action to be undertaken by Planning Authorities in response to the avoidance of flood risk, flood protection and managing the risk related to potential built developments.</i></p>
<p>National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)</p>	<p><i>The purpose of the NIAH is to identify, record and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, uniformly and consistently as an aid in the protection and conservation of the built heritage. NIAH surveys provide the basis for the recommendations of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the Planning Authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures (RPS).</i></p>
<p>Delivering A Sustainable Energy Future For Ireland - The Energy Policy Framework 2007 – 2020</p>	<p><i>This White Paper sets out the Government’s energy policy framework to deliver a sustainable energy future for Ireland. It is set firmly in the global and European context, which has put energy security and climate change among the most urgent international challenges. The Paper sets out the actions to be taken in response to the energy challenges facing Ireland, so as to deliver a sustainable energy future.</i></p>
<p>Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (NPWS 2009).</p>	<p><i>This represents the latest guidance in relation to the requirement for appropriate assessment. The subject of this guidance, is the requirement to consider the possible nature conservation implications of any plan or project on the Natura 2000 site network before any decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed. Not only is every new plan or project captured by this requirement but each plan or project, when being considered for approval at any stage, must take into consideration the possible effects it may have in combination with other plans and projects when going through the process known as appropriate assessment.</i></p>

1.3.3 County Level

<p>Waste Management Plan for the North</p>	<p><i>This is a joint Waste Management Plan for Counties Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan. The Plan identifies the current position, policy for future improvement and development and</i></p>
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<p>East Region 2005 - 2010</p>	<p><i>the means to implement and monitor progress. The objective for the Region is to develop a sustainable approach to managing resources, by minimising waste and managing the waste that is generated in a safe and environmentally sound manner.</i></p>
<p>County Development Board Strategy: Louth Working together for our Future 2002 -2012.</p>	<p><i>This strategy sets out a strategy for the social, economic and cultural development of the county. Implementation and monitoring is an integral part of this strategy to ensure that it is responsive to changing circumstances.</i></p>
<p>Louth Heritage Plan (2007-2011)</p>	<p><i>The Heritage Plan is a strategic framework plan which aims to co-ordinate the conservation, management and sympathetic development of the County's heritage.</i></p>
<p>Biodiversity plan for Louth 2008-2012</p>	<p><i>The purpose of the biodiversity plan is to provide a framework for nature conservation at local level, to create awareness and appreciation of local flora and fauna and to integrate consideration of biodiversity into all Local Authority activities.</i></p>
<p>Interchange Strategy for County Louth 2002</p>	<p><i>This strategy examines the potential of the motorway interchanges for development in order to maximise the benefits accruing to the County from the motorway.</i></p>
<p>Louth Local Authorities Disability Implementation Plan 2008 – 2015</p>	<p><i>This plan governs Louth Local Authorities development, in ensuring universal access to its services, public spaces and buildings across the entire county.</i></p>
<p>Louth Anti-Racism & Diversity Plan 2007 – 2010</p>	<p><i>The Louth ARD plan is an inter-agency, county-wide, three year action plan to provide strategic direction and leadership in counteracting racism and in developing a more inclusive, intercultural society in the county.</i></p>
<p>Louth Local Authorities Sports & Recreation Strategy 2007 – 2012</p>	<p><i>The Sports and Recreation Strategy aims to increase the level of general participation in sport and physical activity over the period 2007-2012.</i></p>

<p>County Louth Economic Development Strategy 2009-2015</p>	<p><i>In assessing Louth's economic strengths and weaknesses, this strategy identifies economic opportunities, potential funding sources and mechanisms and challenges facing the county.</i></p>
<p>Retail Strategy for County Louth 2009</p>	<p><i>The primary aims of this strategy are to promote a vibrant retail sector, protect the viability and vitality of existing town centres and ensure access to convenient centres of retailing in new residential areas.</i></p>

1.3.4 Other Relevant Local Plans and Strategies

Other relevant local plans and strategies which have relevance to the format of the Development Plan:

- Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda and its Environs 2009 – 2015
- Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area 2007
- North Drogheda Environs Local Area Plan 2004
- North Drogheda Environs Master Plan 2005
- Drogheda Docklands Area Plan 2007
- Local Area Plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda 2009-2015
- M1 Economic Corridor Development Study 2009 - 2022
- Conservation Plan, Town walls and other defences of Drogheda 2006
- Drogheda Bio Diversity Action Plan March 2009

The impact of these documents and other relevant local plans and strategies which have relevance to Development Plan policy will be dealt with more specifically the relevant chapter headings of the Plan. Regard has also been had to the Louth County Development Plan 2009 - 2015.

1.4 Social Inclusion

Despite the relative wealth of the country over recent years and a rising standard of living, many marginalized groups have not benefited. The Government has sought to counteract this trend with renewed impetus and thus social inclusion remains at the forefront of Government policy.

1.4.1 The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (2007 - 2016)

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) sets out the Government's strategic initiative to place the needs of the poor and socially excluded at the top of the national agenda. The strategy recognises the unacceptable scale of poverty and its impact on those directly affected and on wider society. It also notes the distinct spatial aspects of poverty in urban and rural areas. The strategy emphasises the importance of cross departmental policy response in dealing with the problem. The target of the strategy is to reduce consistent poverty below 2% of the population.

The strategy states that:

“The future challenge is one of optimising the current employment and layout mix in Ireland, consistent with maintaining sustainable rates of economic and employment growth combined with policies aimed at tackling social exclusion, poverty and inequality”

The National Development Plan also aims to promote social inclusion by:

- Promoting measures for the integration of the socially excluded into the labour force and equal opportunities for all
- Maintaining the effort to re-integrate those who are currently long-term unemployed into the labour force
- Supporting an increase in female participation in the workplace.
- Meeting the particular and diverse needs of specific groups in society, including those experiencing disadvantage and those with special needs, providing opportunities so that every individual can attain an adequate level of literacy and numeric skills

1.4.2 Age Friendly Society

In 2009 County Louth became Ireland’s first Age Friendly County. In March 2009 an action plan was produced which aims to promote and maintain the best possible health and well being of older people, thus making the County, as a whole, an attractive place in which to grow old. This initiative grew in part from the 2007 participation of Dundalk in the Age Friendly Cities Project. This initiative was piloted by the World Health Organisation in conjunction with a selected number of other urban centres across the world. An age-friendly society encourages active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. It adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities and caters for large sections of the population beyond those inhabitants who are elderly.

The age friendly approach will also benefit those people with impaired mobility, including those with physical disabilities, parents with young children and children themselves. From a planning and land use perspective, the study identified a broad range of ‘*characteristics of the urban landscape and built environment*’ that contribute to age-friendliness.

This Development Plan seeks to embrace the age friendly society concept and the policies therein are reflective of the objectives of the Age Friendly Project. The principles of an age friendly society are set out in the Appendix 1.

1.4.3 RAPID Scheme

The RAPID Programme was launched in February 2001 in order to direct state assistance towards improving quality of life and access to opportunities for communities in twenty five designated disadvantaged urban areas throughout Ireland. A total of seven such communities were identified in Drogheda. The areas include Moneymore, Rathmullen Park, Pearse Park, Yellowbatter, Marion Park, St.Finian’s Park and Ballsgrove. The areas have a wide geographic spread across the Borough. The

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Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is the lead Government Department for the programme. Framework III of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness sets out three objectives for the RAPID programme:

- To develop a specific integrated policy focus across the social inclusion measures identified in the National Development Plan directed at the social groups that are excluded, especially where cumulative disadvantage is pervasive;
- To tackle, in particular, the spatial concentration of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion in the designated disadvantaged areas.
- To stem the social and economic costs of social exclusion by developing a range of integrated measures so the physical, social and community infrastructure of the designated communities is developed to allow them to harness the social capital and capacity necessary for economic and community development.

A number of guiding principles underpin the Drogheda RAPID Programme. These include community participation and local ownership; promotion of strategic planning; co-ordination of provision of state services; building on existing structures; flexibility and targeting of additional services, investment and facilities. To this end, an Action Plan was devised in 2001 for implementation by the local Area Implementation Team (AIT). This is a working document which has guided the work of the AIT over the years. The objectives contained within the Plan change regularly as targets are met and new needs identified. Considerable progress has been made in the delivery of actions contained within the Plan with funding being sourced from numerous



national and local sources. Evidence of the success of RAPID in Drogheda is apparent across the Borough. The programme structures locally in Drogheda have built upon the existing strong community sector in the Borough. Good working partnerships with local stakeholders have been developed with the level of proactive agency involvement in the implementation of the programme's objectives now firmly established. The structure of the RAPID Programme has proven to be a highly effective mechanism locally, for facilitating the social regeneration of the seven estates in line with their physical regeneration.

1.4.4 Planning for Social Inclusion

In order to ensure that the policies and objectives contained within the plan are fully socially inclusive, it is proposed to

- Provide for inclusive communities across the Borough in order to prevent social exclusion.
- Ensure that as far as possible, access for the less able bodied is provided within all new developments, including the Council's buildings and services, as detailed in the *Louth Local Authorities Disability Implementation Plan 2008 – 2015*.
- Facilitate and promote the use of public transport to enable the socially excluded to gain access to employment and services.

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- Facilitate the provision of small-scale enterprise start-up units and / or micro scale home based enterprise at suitable locations throughout the Plan area.
- Encourage the provision of suitable and appropriate accommodation for all, in keeping with County Louth's age friendly ethos.
- Ensure that new initiatives do not decrease local community access to services through cost or location.
- Seek to target anti-racism and promote inter-culturalism in accordance with *Louth Local Authorities' Anti-Racism & Diversity (ARD) Plan 2007 – 2010*.
- Implement the regeneration projects in the Borough's RAPID areas.

1.5 Drogheda Profile

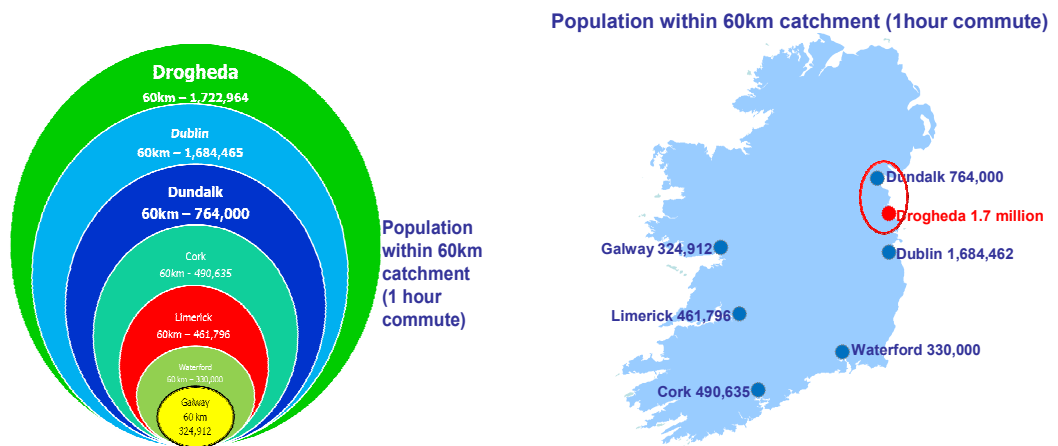
The Borough of Drogheda is one of the oldest Local Authorities in existence in Europe, having been in continuous existence since 1415. Drogheda takes its name from the Gaelic 'Droichead Atha' meaning "Bridge of the Ford", referring to the town's strategic location at a bridging point on the River Boyne, 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 around the year 1180. The Borough 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. Drogheda went on to become one of the largest walled towns in Ireland for a time surpassing the size even of Dublin. Drogheda has found itself at the epicentre of many of the most seismic events to have shaped Irish history. The best known of these events is the 1649 seige of Drogheda and subsequent massacre by an English Army led by Oliver Cromwell. To the west of the Borough, the Battle of the Boyne was fought in 1690 whilst the prehistoric megalithic World Heritage Sites at Bru na Boinne are also in close proximity to the Borough. Drogheda ranks as an equal partner in the title of Ireland's largest town with its neighbour to the north, Dundalk. The two towns have virtually identical population levels according to the 2006 census and together they form key components along with Newry in Northern Ireland in acting as the central urban component in the Eastern Corridor which links Dublin with Belfast. The Eastern Corridor also includes a number of other large urban centres on both sides of the Border.



Drogheda as an urban centre functions on a number of levels. Whilst lying within County Louth and therefore the Border Region of Ireland, the Borough is firmly within the orbit of Greater Dublin due to its close proximity, transport links and socio-economic ties with the capital. At a wider level Drogheda acts as the principal eastern entry point into Ireland's Border Region.

Drogheda boasts an enviable location along the eastern seaboard of Ireland. As part of the Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda and its Environs carried out by the Indecon consultancy, an examination of the wider catchment of Drogheda was made. This study, carried out by the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) found that within 20km of Drogheda there is a catchment population of some 105,000 people; within a 40km range, 750,000 people are resident whilst, significantly within a 60km range there are some 1.7 million people resident. This latter range stretches the catchment to encompass all of the Greater Dublin area including County Wicklow, west to include most of County Meath, much of Counties Westmeath, Cavan and Monaghan and north, across the Border to include Newry and large portions Counties Down and Armagh.

Figure 1.2: Population Catchments



The significance of these catchments lies in the fact that Drogheda is now connected to most of the major urban centres in the catchments by a high quality road network including the M1 motorway and linking motorways including the M50 and M2 / N2, the latter of which is due to be upgraded significantly during the course of this Plan. Due to the presence of this road network, Drogheda lies within 30 minutes commuting distance of both Dublin City Centre, Dublin Airport and Dublin Port. The Borough is also easily accessible to the International and George Best City Airports in Belfast and Belfast Harbour at an approximate 1.5 hour drive time.

Drogheda also benefits from a high degree of public transport accessibility. The Borough acts as the principle terminal for Iarnrod Eireann's Northern Line suburban rail operations and is the site for a major rail servicing centre. The Borough is also served by the Dublin to Belfast Enterprise long distance rail service. This service is due to be upgraded during the course of the Plan. Drogheda is also a major centre for public bus services. Links with the Greater Dublin Area are on a high frequency basis. There are also frequent long distance services to Dundalk, Newry and Belfast.

Drogheda was designated a Primary Development Centre in the National Spatial Strategy. This designation takes account of the fact that Drogheda sits astride two regional planning authorities which have very different characteristics. The Borough as a whole is located within the Border Region, however a significant portion of the larger

urban area of Drogheda, that to the south of the Borough, lies within the Mid East Region. Therefore this area of Drogheda is influenced in policy terms by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Region. Primary Development Centres identified in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Region include Navan, Balbriggan, Naas/ Newbridge/ Kilcullen, and Wicklow.

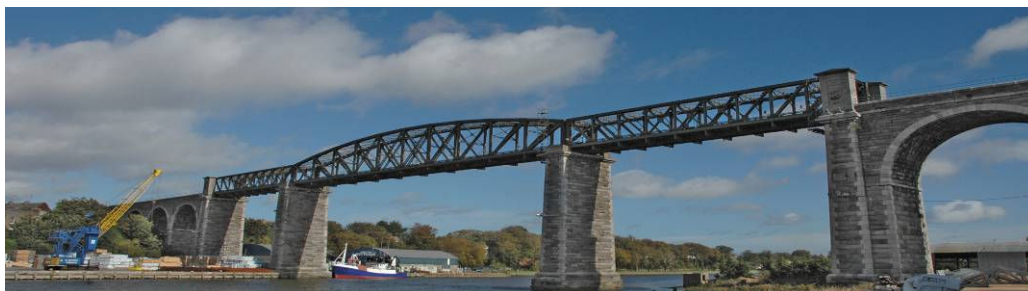
Drogheda's designation as a Primary Development Centre responds to its unique geographical position, its size and the fact that much of its growth impetus is derived from outside the Border Region and originates in the Greater Dublin Area. This influence has been quantified by the Economic Strategy for Drogheda and its Environs (2009-2015) which found that some 36% of those in employment, who resided in Drogheda Borough, commuted daily to Greater Dublin to access their place of employment.

The popularity of Drogheda as a place to live is reflective of the Borough's broad range of quality attractions and both its physical and social infrastructure. The long list of strengths which Drogheda possesses include its favourable cost competitiveness in comparison to Greater Dublin particularly for housing, easy access to Dublin Airport, Dublin Port and Drogheda Port, the ready availability of public and road based transport options, a range of artistic, social and active recreational facilities including a leisure centre, riverside walkway, the Droichead Arts Centre, Highlanes Gallery and a host of similar facilities. The Borough also benefits from a broad spread of high level retail facilities including two newly built town centre shopping centres and a number of other retail park developments on the edge of the Borough. The Drogheda area also benefits from an abundance of skilled labour with a particularly high proportion of residents having third level qualifications. Of these, some 52 % of those who commute daily to Greater Dublin being classified as employers and managers. The Borough and surrounding area has a favourable demographic structure with some 43 % of the population in the economically active age cohort in 2006. Finally, in terms of electronic infrastructure the Borough benefits from some of the highest capacity broadband capability anywhere in the state, as well as being in close proximity to national level electricity and gas networks.

Drogheda acts as the de-facto gateway to the internationally acclaimed Boyne Valley which contains the World Heritage Site at Brú na Boinne. This is one of the largest and most important prehistoric megalithic sites in Europe and acts as the centre piece to a cluster of other major visitor attractions in both Counties Louth and Meath including Monasterboice Round Tower and High Crosses, Old Mellifont Abbey, the Hill of Tara, the Battle of the Boyne site, Slane Castle, Kells Round Tower and High Crosses, Trim Castle and Beaulieu House. Within Drogheda itself lie a number of major historical attractions including St. Laurence's Gate, Millmount Museum and Tower, St Peter's Church and the Town Walls.

1.6 Population

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is a 20 year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population between regions. Its focus is on people, on places and on building communities. It is hoped that it will deliver more balanced regional development and hence a reduction in the disparities between and within regions. To achieve this, the strategy identifies a limited number of regional gateways and hubs upon which growth will be targeted.



Within County Louth, Drogheda is designated a Primary Development Centre whilst Dundalk has been designated a NSS Gateway. County Louth's strengths centre around its strong socio economic and physical links with Greater Dublin, together with its proximity to Northern Ireland. The Eastern Corridor is viewed as a key strategic opportunity for the development of this part of the region.

The population of the Drogheda Borough Council administrative area after the 2006 Census was 28,973 which represented a 2.2 % increase from the 2002 Census. The Greater Drogheda contiguous urban area, which includes parts of Counties Louth and Meath however recorded an increase of 13.1 %. This figure is well ahead of the County increase which was 9.3%. Population projections for Drogheda Borough and the Greater Drogheda Area have been prepared by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, in conjunction with the Border Regional Authority. These represent the minimum growth rates predicted for the key Border Region urban centres listed in the NSS and the revised Regional Planning Guidelines. The projections for Drogheda are detailed in table 1.1 below

Table 1.1: Drogheda Borough Council and Greater Drogheda Area Minimum Population Projections

Area	2006	2011	2016	2017	2022
Drogheda Borough Council	28,973	32,331	35,373	36,038	38,415
		+11.5%	+9.4%	+9.4%	+9.4%
		+2.3%	+1.8%	+1.8%	+1.8%
		(Annual)	(Annual)	(Annual)	(Annual)
Drogheda Contiguous Urban Area	35,090	39,651	42,108	42,613	49,127
		+11.5%	+6.1%		+13.3%
		+2.3%	+1.2%	+1.2%	+2.6%
		(Annual)	(Annual)	(Annual)	(Annual)

(DoEHLG and Border Regional Authority National and Regional Population Projections 2009)

Utilising the projections supplied by DoEHLG and Border Regional Authority, the annual growth rate between 2006 and 2011 will equate to an average of 2.3% or 11.5% over five years. Thereafter for the following five years up to 2016, the annual growth rate will slow to 1.88% or 9.4% over the five year period.

Table 1.2: Drogheda Borough Council Population and Projections Historical Trends

Area	1996	2002	2006	2011	2017
Drogheda Borough Council	24,460	28,333	28,973	29,610	30,261
		+13.6% 2.7% (Annual)	+2.2% 0.4% (Annual)	+2.2% 0.4% (Annual)	+2.2% 0.4% (Annual)

In order to accommodate the projected population increase of 9,442 persons within the Drogheda Borough Council area over the entire period to 2022, some 3,471 additional housing units will be required. Over the period of this Plan, this equates to the need for an additional 1,118 housing units at an average yearly output of 186 housing units.

The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Border Regional Authority population targets indicate that the population of Drogheda Borough should grow by an annual rate of 2.0% over the period of the Plan. Over the period 2002 to 2006 the actual growth recorded in the Borough equated to 2.2%. This equates to an annual growth rate of 0.3 %. At this rate of annual growth the population of the Borough would rise to a mere 29,943 persons by the end of the Plan period.

1.7 Age Profile

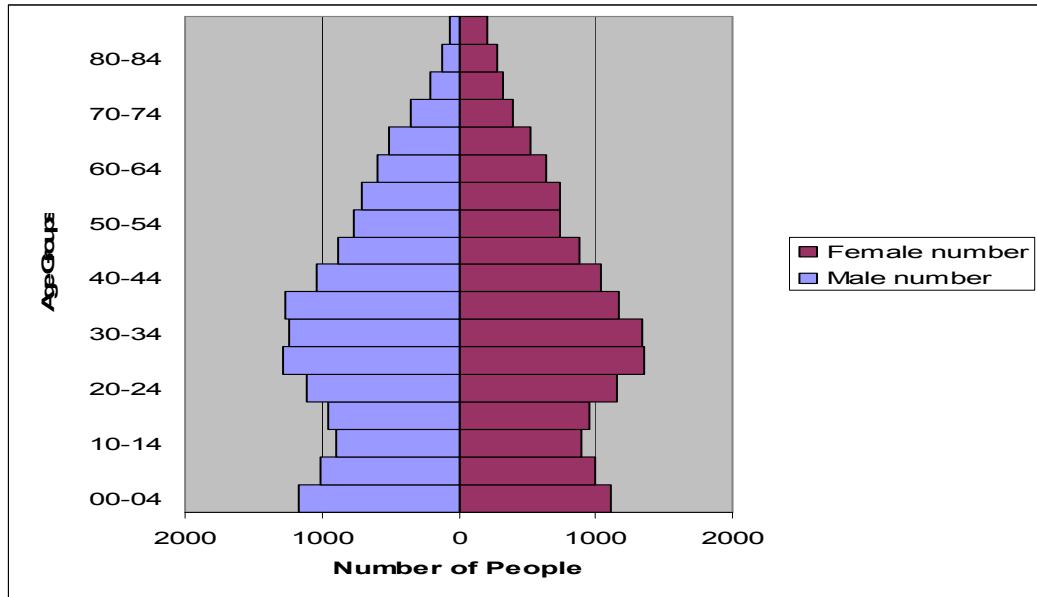
As illustrated in Table 1.3 and Figure 1.3 below, the Drogheda Borough Council area contains a relatively young population profile with a lesser number of dependants (31.3%) than the national average (33.0%). Table 1.3 and figure 1.3 below is based on the most recent CSO figures for 2006 and indicates that there is a high proportion of Drogheda's population in the 25- 44 age bracket. This has implications for economic development and provision of an active labour force for Drogheda.

Table 1.3: Age Profile at State, County and Borough Council Level

	0-14	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Total
State	864, 449 20.3%	632, 732 14.9%	1,345,87 3 21.9%	928,908 21.9%	467,906 11%	4,239,84 8
Louth County	24,568 22%	16,092 14.4%	35,570 31.9%	23, 432 21%	11, 605 10.4%	111,267
Drogheda Borough Council	6,034 20.8%	4,182 14.4%	9,753 33.6%	5,966 20.5%	2,712 9.3%	28,973

(CSO: 2006)

Figure 1.3: Distribution of Population, by Age and Sex in Drogheda Borough Council area (CSO: 2006)



The age profile of Drogheda will have implications for the provision of housing and employment to meet future population needs.

1.7.1 Spatial Trends

Population growth has not been universally dispersed through the plan area. Table 1.5 details the percentage change that occurred between 2002 and 2006 within the DED's covering the area.

Map 1.2: Percentage Population Change 2002 – 2006

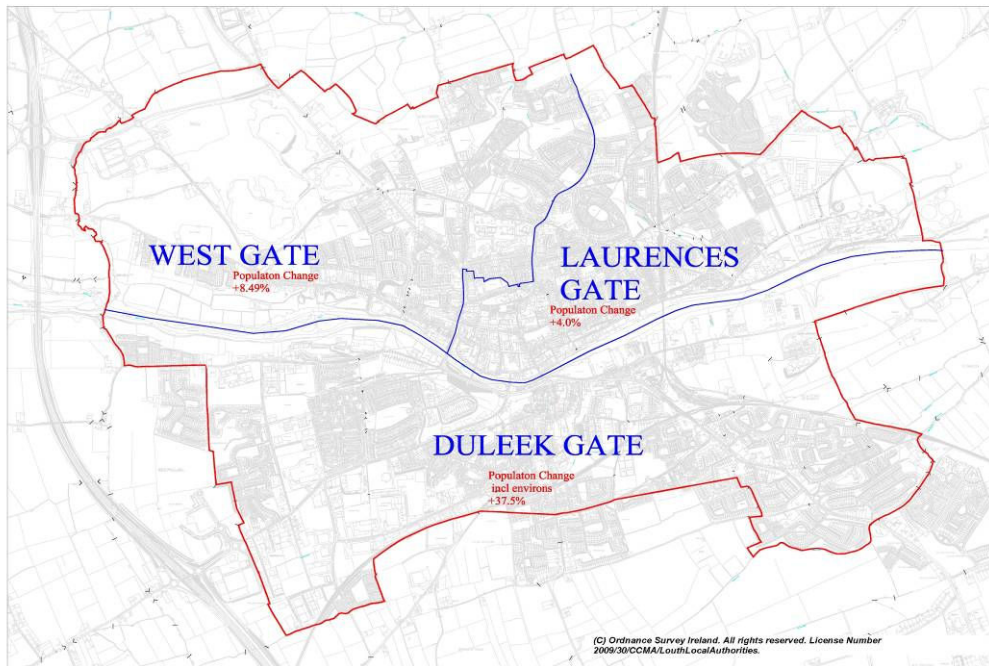


Table 1.4: Population Change within the Plan Area

Area	% Change 1996- 2002	% Change 2002- 2006
Fairgate	+3.66	-10.9
St.Laurence Gate	+4.01	+6.19
West Gate	+8.49	- 8.69
St Mary's ¹	+37.5	+21.4
St Peter's ²	+36.5	+20.0

(Source: www.cso.ie)

¹ Part of St Mary's lying within Drogheda Borough Council boundary

² Part of St Peter's lying within Drogheda Borough Council boundary

Table 1.4 clearly demonstrates that the areas of greatest population growth fall outside the core urban area and measures to address and reverse this trend need to be included in the Development Plan in order to protect the viability and vibrancy of the historic central areas of the Borough.

1.8 Vision for Drogheda Borough

'To promote Drogheda as the principal urban centre between the Greater Dublin and Border regions and as a key settlement along the eastern corridor, an inclusive flourishing urban community providing a high quality built and natural environment attractive to residents, visitors and investors alike'.

The Development Plan sets out the first step in the process of achieving the vision for Drogheda through promoting a balanced sustainable approach to development. The new Development Plan aims to direct employment, housing, retail, and community facilities towards the defined development areas within the Plan area.

The challenge for the Development Plan is to encourage and support growth that is consistent with this long-term vision. The new Development Plan will also aim to provide sufficient supporting facilities for anticipated growth, including additional infrastructure recreation and community facilities commensurate with the vision.

1.9 Strategic Objectives

The following strategic objectives provide an overall framework for the development of Drogheda Borough Council over the Plan period and each of the sections include specific policy objectives in line with the requirements of Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

Strategic Objective 1: To provide the highest quality living environment possible for all the citizens of Drogheda by ensuring that the Borough will evolve in a sustainable, dynamic and environmentally sensitive manner thus enhancing its pivotal role along the Eastern Corridor and with due regard for its distinguished history

Strategic Objective 2: To implement a settlement strategy which will guide new development within the plan area in accordance with the principles of sustainable development in order that Drogheda may continue to contribute to the building of critical mass along the Eastern Corridor.

Strategic Objective 3: To create and facilitate sustainable economic development and growth in Drogheda so that it may continue to flourish in tandem with other key centres thereby strengthening its position on the central portion of the Eastern Corridor.

Strategic Objective 4: Enhance the established role of Drogheda Town Centre as the retail, social and transport focus of the entire Borough and pro-actively position the town centre as a destination of choice for both visitors and residents alike with a special emphasis on the role played by the town walls

Strategic Objective 5: Provide a sustainable transportation system for Drogheda to secure the successful integration of land use and for the convenience of the public.

Strategic Objective 6: Ensure the provision of socially inclusive residential communities supported by the provision of high quality dwelling units and community facilities.

Strategic Objective 7: Protect and enhance existing recreation and amenity facilities within the Borough and secure the provision of additional facilities subject to demand and availability of land and resources

Strategic Objective 8: Protect and enhance the natural and built environment as an inherent part of the heritage of the Drogheda Borough Council Plan area.

Strategic Objective 9: Provide a framework for sustainable energy use in development and facilitate the provision of high quality telecommunications infrastructure.

Strategic Objective 10: Secure a high quality, clean and healthy environment while facilitating the sustainable development of Drogheda Borough through the continued improvement of infrastructure, including water, drainage, and waste management facilities.