

Chapter 3 Economic Development, Retail and Tourism

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the spatial elements of economic development including tourism development and retailing. It is primarily concerned that the Plan area has sufficient zoned and fully serviced land for employment related uses. It is also concerned with the creation of a high quality environment that is conducive to economic development and which is perceived as affording a very high quality of life for existing and future inhabitants, a positive experience for visitors and ultimately capable of providing a sufficient return for investors.

3.1.1 Regional Context: The Eastern Corridor and the Border Region

The designation of Drogheda as a Primary Development Centre in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and Regional Planning Guidelines for both the Greater Dublin and Border regions is, in part, a recognition of the dynamism which Drogheda offers to both regions, particularly in terms of economic development potential. The national and regional land use strategies envisage Drogheda developing not primarily as a dormitory town for the Dublin Metropolitan Area but as a strong urban centre along the eastern corridor, with a high degree of self sufficiency, accompanied by high level employment activities, retail opportunities and a full range of social facilities.

The Eastern Corridor extends from Dublin to Belfast in Northern Ireland. In the Border Region, the corridor is anchored by Drogheda and Dundalk, with Newry having an increasingly influential role through the Newry /Dundalk Twin City Strategy. In 2006, these three settlements had a combined population of 98,720 persons. The challenge for this corridor is to exploit the potential of Newry / Dundalk coupled with the growth of Drogheda. The latter is to a large extent driven by the Greater Dublin Area. The eastern corridor benefits from an ever improving inter-urban motorway and good cross border rail services. This corridor experienced very strong growth over recent years and all indications are that it will continue to experience strong growth over the Plan period.



Drogheda functions at a micro level as a sub-regional centre, servicing south County Louth, East County Meath and much of north Fingal. It provides employment opportunities

for local inhabitants as well as, to a lesser extent, residents of neighbouring areas. It also functions as the destination for health related services over a much wider area encompassing much of counties Louth, Meath, Monaghan and Fingal by dint of the presence of a major acute hospital in the Borough (Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital). Finally, Drogheda provides a high level range of retail, commercial and social services to a wide surrounding catchment. These services include retail provision, leisure and arts services.

The strategic objective for Economic Development, Retail and Tourism is:

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.

3.1.2 Economic Potential

Attracting investment, creating employment opportunities and supporting economic development are fundamental ingredients in sustaining a flourishing urban centre such as Drogheda. The creation of employment opportunities in Drogheda must cover the full range of enterprise generation including sectors such as services, manufacturing, tourism, retailing, creative industry, logistics and the health industry.

Drogheda has an historical legacy of employment based on traditional industries such as linen and textiles, brewing, shipping and manufacturing. The decline of these traditional industries over the past number of decades has resulted in pockets of long term unemployment which must in part be addressed by the Plan.

Drogheda is one of the largest and fastest growing towns in Ireland. It is functionally part of the Greater Dublin Area with a large number of the people residing in Drogheda and its hinterland commuting to Dublin. Drogheda has a wide economic base from which to build. The proportion of residents in the key economically active age group of 20-44 years is appreciably higher in Drogheda and its hinterland compared with other locations in the State. Drogheda has a strategic location along the eastern corridor. Access to the M1 Motorway, rail and port facilities mean that the town is well positioned in terms of domestic and international markets. Drogheda is a medieval town with a large number of attractive protected structures, a striking medieval street layout and a undulating topography. These attributes together combine to make Drogheda an attractive destination for tourists, although this potential has yet to be fully exploited. The retail offer in Drogheda has expanded significantly over recent years with the result that Drogheda is now a highly desirable retailing destination along the eastern corridor.

The challenge for the future is to ensure that Drogheda harnesses its unique and impressive range of economic strengths to win new investment and to become more competitive. It is anticipated that Drogheda's population will continue to grow rapidly. It is therefore essential that employment opportunities keep pace. The quality of the jobs delivered will also be important, with specialisation in knowledge based and high-tech industries considered essential. Drogheda's economic future is also inherently linked to its potential as a major tourist destination. Drogheda is also becoming a recognised centre for the creative arts and media industry at a national level. It should be recognised that the promotion of this form of enterprise can generate significant economic benefits.

3.2 Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda and its Environs (2009 – 2015)

The Indecon, "Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda and its Environs (2009-2015)" Report (March 2009) provides a thorough analysis of Drogheda and its environs in terms of its economic strengths and economic development opportunities. The information contained therein will be utilised in the formulation of the Development Plan to ensure that Drogheda widens and develops its economic base not only over the Plan period but for the years to come. The Report carried out a detailed assessment of the strengths of Drogheda in terms of investment potential. It also analysed the strengths of Drogheda in terms of overall economic development.

The key features of Drogheda's labour market and economic activity as identified in the Indecon Report are as follows:

- In Drogheda the proportion of residents in the age group 20-44 years was 42.4% (2006) compared with 39.8% for the State. Drogheda therefore benefits from a comparably high economically active population.
- Out of the total population there were 15,592 residents of Drogheda at work in 2006, including 23.2 % in the industry sector, 46.7% in market services, 27.8% in non-market services and 2.3% in other sectors. This represents a large potential labour market which could be accessed by investors.
- A significant number of Drogheda residents commute to Dublin for work. These are highly skilled and well educated thus providing a valuable labour resource which could be harnessed for the benefit of Drogheda.
- The number of self employed people residing in Drogheda and its Hinterland grew by 29.4% during the period 2002- 2006.
- Most firms in Drogheda and its Hinterland are micro enterprises or small firms employing less than 50 people. The majority of firms (72.6%) experienced either growth in employment or no change in employment between 2005 & 2008.
- The total jobs accounted for by foreign-owned firms have been growing faster in Drogheda compared with the rest of county Louth and the State overall. Permanent full-time employment in such firms grew by 2.2% per year in Drogheda compared with 0.6% per year growth in the state and a contraction of 2.1% in case of County Louth, over the period 2002-2007.

The Report concluded that Drogheda demonstrates remarkable assets in terms of its favourable location along the Belfast- Dublin Corridor, strong transport infrastructure, its cost competitive location, its proximity to Dublin airport, favourable demographic structure, entrepreneurial spirit, highly skilled and well- educated work force, availability of well serviced sites and availability of telecommunications infrastructure

3.2.1 Drogheda Economic Forum

In order that Drogheda can capitalise on its existing strengths and attractiveness as a location for investors and as a place to live, work, visit and study, the Indecon study recommends a partnership approach be developed within Drogheda. This has been formalised with the creation of the Louth Economic Forum which has as a sub-group, the Drogheda Economic Forum. This partnership involves Louth Local Authorities, state development groups, other agencies and the business community, and is tasked with

developing specific economic initiatives for the Borough such as branding, tourism and other relevant areas.

Policy ED 1

Support a collaborative approach to the economic development of Drogheda within the context of the Eastern Corridor involving initiatives undertaken in partnership with the authorities in Dundalk, Meath, Fingal and Northern Ireland.

Create sustainable economic development and growth in Drogheda Borough and the wider Drogheda Environs to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the Borough and to act as a key driver of the economic development of the Eastern Corridor.

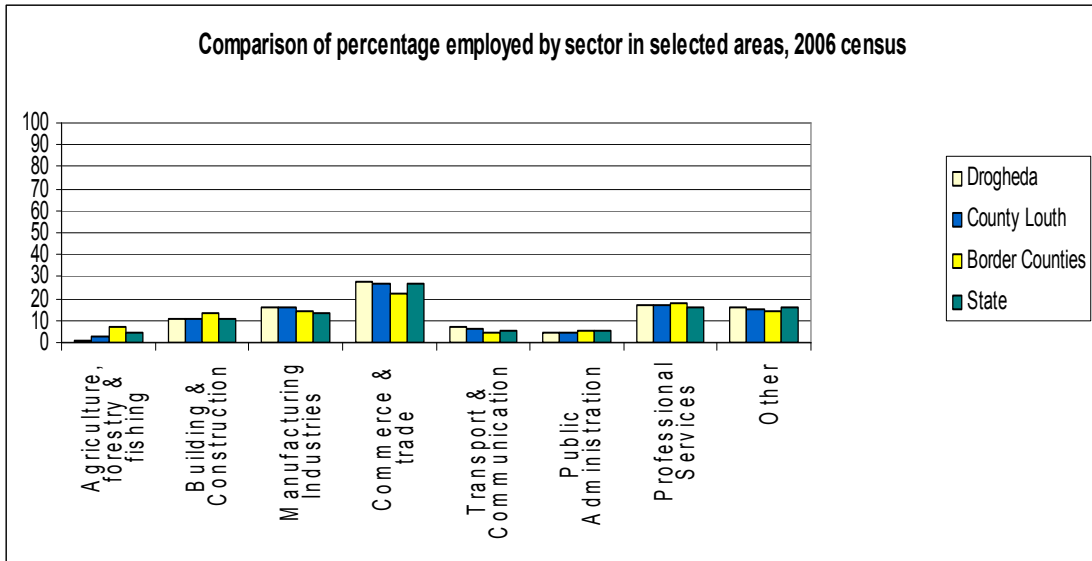
3.2.2 Economic Development Trends and Infrastructural Strengths of Drogheda Borough and Environs

Recent trends in employment patterns in Drogheda demonstrate a move away from the manufacturing base towards newer sectors such as the internationally traded services sector including information and communications technology, business, professional and financial services, food and drink processing, tourism and hospitality services and retailing.

Drogheda has a number of over-riding economic infrastructural strengths which are likely to prove central in growing the Borough's economy in a sustainable manner over the course of the Plan period. These strengths include;

- Size and demographic features. Drogheda together with Dundalk are the two largest regional towns in the State. Demographic trends in Drogheda suggest that its growth will far outpace that of Dundalk and any other regional town over the period of the plan
- Drogheda forms the natural focus for the myriad attractions contained within the Boyne Valley and adjacent areas of counties Louth and Meath. The Borough itself contains a wealth of cultural and historic sites which are of national and international significance
- Proximity to national road infrastructure including national motorway network
- Proximity to national level airports along eastern corridor
- Proximity to Greater Dublin Area
- Proximity to Northern Ireland and Greater Belfast
- Proximity to national and local level seaports
- Proximity to intercity and regional rail services
- Availability and quality of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure
- Access to domestic and international markets
- Cost and availability of suitable commercial / industrial premises and/or sites

Figure 3.1: Employment by Industry: Drogheda, County Louth, Border Region and State



Source (CSO: 2006)

3.2.3 Labour Force

The economic development strategy identifies the need to retain a greater proportion of the current workforce who commute from Drogheda to the Greater Dublin Area. A quality labour pool will only be attracted and retained in Drogheda by ensuring that Drogheda continues to develop as an attractive and competitive place to live in terms of social infrastructure and housing provision.

In addition to the strong infrastructural strengths which Drogheda possesses, there are also a number of people based strengths inherent to the Borough and its wider environs which mark the Borough out as a key potential economic growth pole along the Eastern Corridor. These are outlined in table 3.1 below;

Table 3.1: Labour Force Strengths of Drogheda Borough

	Key strengths of Drogheda
1	Youthful Working Population: In Drogheda the proportion of residents in the age group 20-44 years was 42.4% (2006) compared with 39.8% for the State. Drogheda therefore benefits from a comparably high economically active population.
2	Large Potential Labour Force: Out of the total population there were 15,592 residents of Drogheda at work in 2006. 23.2 % in the industry sector, 46.7% in market services, 27.8% in non- market services and 2.3% in other sectors. This represents a large potential labour market which could be accessed by investors.
3	Highly Skilled Commuter Labour Force: A significant number of Drogheda residents commute to Dublin for work. These are highly skilled and well educated thus providing a valuable labour resource which could be harnessed for the benefit of Drogheda.

	Key strengths of Drogheda
4	Strong Entrepreneurial Tradition: The number of self employed people residing in Drogheda and its Hinterland grew by 29.4% during the period 2002- 2006.
5	Well Developed SME Sector: Most firms in Drogheda and its Hinterland are micro enterprises or small firms employing less than 50 people. The majority of firms (72.6%) experienced either growth in employment or no change in employment between 2005 & 2008.
6	Well Developed FDI Sector: The total jobs accounted for by foreign-owned firms have been growing faster in Drogheda compared with the rest of county Louth and the State overall. Permanent full-time employment in such firms grew by 2.2% per year in Drogheda compared with 0.6% per year growth in the state and a contraction of 2.1% in case of County Louth, over the period 2002-2007.

(Source: "Indecon Economic Consultants – Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda and its Environs 2009-2015)

3.2.4 Economic Infrastructural Development Priorities

The following key infrastructural priorities have been identified as being necessary to secure the continued economic development of Drogheda. All projects will be subject to the availability of funding.

1. Marleys Lane road upgrade with Cement Road Bridge Crossing
2. Scotch Hall (Phase 3) North and South of the Quays Bridge Crossing
3. Bridge at Greenhills linking the Southern Environs of Meath with the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR)
4. The construction of a new road from the Marsh Road through the DTDA east of the railway station to the Borough Boundary.
5. Bryanstown Cross Route Extension to the East
6. Maintaining and enhancing social infrastructure provision throughout the Borough
7. Facilitation of the Project Kelvin high speed broadband infrastructure within the Borough

Not all of these priorities lie within the control of the Planning Authority. It will be the policy of Drogheda Borough Council to encourage engagement with the relevant bodies with regard to resolving particular issues.

Policy ED 2

Seek the implementation of the economic infrastructural development priorities for Drogheda in partnership, where necessary with adjacent Local Authorities, service providers, development agencies, the private sector and the local community.

3.2.5 Economic Development Opportunities in Drogheda Borough and Environs

The indicators for the development of the Irish economy over the period of the Development Plan indicate that most employment growth will occur in the services sector and in certain manufacturing industries in which Ireland has a comparative advantage. Within the services sector, employment in market or traded services will grow at a faster pace than employment in non-market services. The Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda and its Hinterland takes account of these wider national trends and tailors the strategy accordingly. It is recommended that a mixed pattern of commercial and other development that facilitates high quality employment generation in both the manufacturing and services sectors be developed within Drogheda.

3.2.6 Economic Clusters within Drogheda

The Economic Development strategy and this Plan recommend that employment generation occurs in a clustered fashion and / or in a focused range of activities. The advantages of aiming for a focused and clustered approach are that it builds on the comparative economic strengths of the area and is more likely to result in synergies and catalytic benefits, which will serve to make economic development more sustainable. There are a number of economic clusters operating in the Plan area which should be developed further.

Table 3.2: Economic Clusters within Drogheda

Sector	Specific Activities
Internationally-Traded Services	Business Services
	Shared Service
	Financial Services
	Professional Services
	ICT including software development and related activities such as data storage and outsource management
Sector	Specific Activities
Manufacturing	Food – functional, convenience and other high-value food production
	Engineering – medical technologies and devices
	Pharmaceuticals/Chemicals
	Renewable/sustainable energy technologies
Distribution and Logistics	Freight forwarding/transport
	Port activities
	Logistics management
	Warehousing/storage

Tourism	Overseas and domestic holiday tourism
	Cultural and heritage tourism
	Eco-tourism
	Food/agri-tourism
	Topical tourism (e.g. summer schools, educational activities)
	Overseas and domestic business tourism/ conferencing activities
Health	Health services and health-related activities
	Maintain the momentum of promoting Drogheda as the preferred location for any new centre of excellence for the NE
Creative, Multi-Media, Design and Performing Arts	Music, art and related design and production activities (technology, ICT and innovation-based important)
	Possibility of academy of creative and performing arts

3.2.7 Locational Criteria

1. Internationally-Traded Services Locational Criteria

This economic sector is heavily dependent on the availability of high quality IT support including high speed broadband. Where this is available, the development of this sector need not be location specific and at the lower end of the employment spectrum can be operated as a home based business. However, where large numbers of employees are involved at a single location, this form of economic activity is best located close to high quality public transport facilities, town centres or other readily accessible locations. For these reasons, the preferred locations for such employment generating activities will be in order of preference, the:

1. Drogheda Transport Development Area
2. Heritage Quarter
3. Donore Road Enterprise Zone
4. Other Employment Generating Zones

Drogheda Borough Council reserves the right to determine the level of employment numbers suitable to locate in the preferred areas detailed above.

2. Manufacturing Locational Criteria

The manufacturing economic sector is targeted at both the domestic and export market and is, to a greater extent dependent on the ready-availability of external transport links and extensive land banks. This form of economic activity is best located close to high quality road transport links, ideally in close proximity to the motorway and / or national primary road network. The optimal location for this sector is to the west of the Borough, in the employment generating zones both north and south of the River Boyne.



3. Distribution and Logistics Locational Criteria

By its very nature the distribution and logistics economic sector is optimally located adjacent to the motorway, national primary road network, River Boyne and Boyne Estuary. This sector is also dependent on extensive land banks. The optimal location for this sector is to the west of the Borough in the employment generating zones both north and south of the River Boyne and in or in close proximity to, existing port facilities. In certain cases the proximity of the rail network shall be a consideration in assessing applications for this form of economic activity.

4. Tourism Locational Criteria

Drogheda possesses several clusters of tourist attractions in distinct locations, however these can act in tandem as a single destination ranging over a range of niche markets. Thus for example, a family group may visit some of the historical attractions in the Heritage Quarter whilst combining this with a Core Retail Area shopping trip, followed by a trip to the various active leisure destinations in the Borough or in its immediate environs. It is therefore appropriate to treat the Borough together with its environs as a single location for tourism purposes. However, with regard to the historical tourism product, it is appropriate to direct such developments into the Town Centre.



5. Health Locational Criteria

Health related public sector activities are most appropriately directed towards the hospital campus surrounding Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. However, other health services and health-related activities are not so location specific. The development of new health related service facilities should have regard to Guidelines for the location of Nursing Homes in County Louth.

6. Creative, Multi-Media, Design and Performing Arts Locational Criteria

Drogheda is a growing centre for the Creative, Multi-Media, Design and Performing Arts. It is now recognised as possessing a sufficient critical mass of performers, productions and activities to be considered as a national player in this sector. Further, many of the courses currently provided by Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE) relate to this sector and there

may be scope to further develop this aspect of tertiary education in Drogheda, possibly on a collaborative footing between DIFE and DkIT. A proposed new academy of creative



and performing arts in Drogheda would be located at the Millmount Centre and would also utilise facilities at the Highlanes Gallery and Droichead Arts Centre all within easy walking distance of each other and giving the proposed new institute an attractive multi-campus feel within the town centre area and on both sides of the Boyne. Additional creative arts activity will be directed into the Heritage Quarter in general, Old Abbey Precinct and Docklands Area in particular.

Drogheda Borough Council will promote economic vitality and growth through the ongoing regeneration of its built environment. The new Development Levy Scheme 2010-2014 shall examine if regeneration proposals can be suitably incentivised to ensure that Drogheda Borough is an attractive place to live, work and visit which in turn will result in widespread economic benefits and attract inward investment.

Policy ED 3

Support the development of trade clusters at suitably zoned locations within the Plan area.

3.2.8 Feasibility Study for Lands zoned Employment Generating

It is recognised that the identified employment generating zones throughout the Borough may require additional detailed planning studies to determine the feasibility of specific proposals and concepts. In this regard, the area bounded by the Cement Road, R132, and the proposed PANCR, and the Collon Road, be subject to a development feasibility study within the time frame of the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan other areas designated Employment Generating Zones in the Borough may be subject to similar studies.

3.2.9 Green Industry

Green Industry in the context of the Development Plan is construed to encompass the wide range of goods and services that fall within the scope of environmental and natural resource use, management and protection. It may include;

- Renewable energies – Wind, Water, Solar, Bio, Geothermal. This list is not exhaustive and refers to the direct utilisation of such energy, the production of the means to capture such energy and research and development into new forms of such energy.
- Eco-building and construction materials
- Environmentally friendly forms of transport
- Environmental services and other green technologies
- Water / Wastewater Treatment
- Waste management

This list reflects the larger components of green industry however it should be noted that opportunities will arise in a wider range of sectors including eco tourism, agriculture, retail and leisure.

3.2.10 Opportunity Sites

Across the Borough a range of opportunity sites have been identified. Refer to Map 3.1, Opportunity Sites. The purpose of identifying the opportunity sites is:

- To raise the profile of Drogheda Borough area at international, national and regional levels.
- To strengthen the position of Drogheda Borough as a centre for economic development and to promote its position along the Eastern Corridor
- To promote revitalization and redevelopment of the Heritage Quarter
- To promote regeneration of the opportunity site and surrounding area.
- To establish a 21st century economy to compete at an international level.
- To promote sustainable development through integration of existing facilities

Table 3.3: Opportunity Sites

No.	Location	Description	Constraints
1	Mill Lane	Former Bed and Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor physical access ▪ Dependent upon adjoining land owners for access
2	Mill Lane	Overall street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Owned by various individuals ▪ Poor physical access
3	Georges Street, north of Narrow West Street and west of Scholes Lane.	Block of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Archaeology ▪ Protected structure located on site ▪ Huge difference in ground level between Fair Street and Narrow West Street ▪ In the number of different land owners ▪ Architectural Conservation Area

No.	Location	Description	Constraints
4	South of Narrow West Street including Old Abbey Lane.	Block of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of land owners ▪ Archaeology ▪ Protected Structures ▪ ACA
5	Fair Street	Borough Council Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be evaluated as part of redevelopment process ▪ Protected Structure
6	West Street	The Tholsel – Originally built as a Tholsel and later also used as a courthouse, it became a bank in 1889.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protected Structure ▪ Architectural Conservation Area
7.	East of Scholes Lane	Block of Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Architectural Conservation Area ▪ Protected Structures ▪ Archaeology
8	Donore Road.	Former Coca Cola factory site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None
9	Scarlet Street	Former fire station site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None

The Drogheda Borough Council Development Levy Scheme 2010-2014 offers a 50% reduction in the contributions due for development on Opportunity Sites. It is anticipated that this shall encourage regeneration proposals to ensure that Drogheda is an attractive place to live, work and visit which in turn, will result in widespread economic benefits and attract inward investment.

Policy ED 4

Encourage and facilitate sustainable development of the identified Opportunity Sites in order to generate economic activity and renewal.

3.2.11 Home-Based Economic Activities

Home-based economic activities are small-scale enterprises located within an individual's main place of residence. The Planning Authority will consider favourably proposals for such home based activities, subject to being satisfied that the use does not detract from the residential amenities of the area by reason of traffic, noise or other considerations. The allocated area for economic activity of both home based activities and live work units should not exceed 25% of the total floor area of the dwelling.

Live / Work Units

Purpose built live/ work units are a new concept which will be supported in appropriate locations. The inclusion of these units within mixed use proposals in the Town Centre, Drogheda Transport Development Area, district/ local centres or along key transport corridors will be considered favourably.

Policy ED 5

Proposals for home based activities will be favourably considered provided that they do not detract from the residential amenities of the area.

3.2.12 Education

Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE)

Drogheda Institute of Further Education, located in the north of the Borough, has a central role to play in the further economic development of the Borough. It has the capacity to enhance the educational attainment of residents within the Borough and the wider environs, including preparing them for onward study, for example in the Dundalk Institute of Technology, the Greater Dublin universities or universities in Northern Ireland. It has a further role in addressing the needs of the unemployed in Drogheda. Most of the courses at DIFE permit progression to higher education institutions. DIFE offers a range of courses which are categorised in broad terms below;

- Technology and Design
- Business with Language
- Business
- Information Technology
- Services, Leisure and Tourism
- Sport and Leisure
- Community and Healthcare
- Applied Science
- Adult Education – Part Time and Modular

DIFE has achieved a high degree of success over the course of its history to the extent that it has now exceeded its physical capacity.

Third Level Education

During the course of the Plan period, DIFE in partnership with DkIT, Louth Local Authorities and the University of Ulster will be engaged in an innovative project designed to establish a third level outreach campus of DkIT in Drogheda. This campus will offer a range of third level courses in a new purpose built location, likely to be in or close to the Heritage Quarter

Policy ED 6

Drogheda Borough Council will facilitate any expansion plans proposed by the Drogheda Institute of Further Education.

Drogheda Borough Council will work in partnership with Dundalk Institute of Technology and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate the establishment of a third level outreach campus of DkIT in Drogheda on an appropriate site.

3.2.13 Development Management Guidelines

Applications for economic development proposals will be assessed having regard to the following development management guidelines:

- The proposed development is on appropriately zoned lands.
- Development is compliant with the provisions of any Local Area or Framework Plans.
- There is availability of service infrastructure
- Traffic safety considerations are taken into account
- The need for Traffic Impact Assessments/ Mobility Management Plans are taken into account
- There is compatibility with uses on adjoining sites, particularly residential amenities.
- Provision is made for on site storage, loading and unloading and parking facilities or where appropriate, such provision can satisfactorily be made offsite.
- Provision is made, where appropriate, for a landscaping plan of the site.
- The design, materials, security fencing, signage and other ancillary elements associated with the site is of a high standard and does not unnecessarily impose on surrounding areas.
- Where appropriate a noise impact assessment and the provision of mitigation measures, shall be submitted.
- The proposal includes provision for waste storage and/ or recycling facilities.

3.3 Retail

3.3.1 Louth Retail Strategy

The *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005* issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, requires Local Authorities to prepare retail strategies and policies to guide and manage retail development, particularly having regard to the protection of the retail function of town centres.

The *Louth Retail Strategy 2009* addresses the following:

- The identification of a county wide retail hierarchy,
- Identification of the core retail areas of Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee,
- Guidance on the location and scale of retail development
- Policies to protect the town centres of Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee,
- Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail developments.
- Recommendation for retail polices for Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and other smaller towns and villages.

Drogheda Borough and the Louth Retail Strategy

The *Louth Retail Strategy 2009* recognises the importance of protecting and enhancing the retail function of Drogheda. It also identifies the need for local retail centres (local shops, neighbourhood centres, civic and commercial centres and small distinct centres) to meet the needs of existing and emerging residential communities. In addition, the strategy acknowledges the existing and potential role of Drogheda as a regional shopping destination. The Council will, therefore, support retail developments that would enhance the attractiveness of Drogheda as a regional shopping destination for the North East Region, subject to it being satisfactorily demonstrated that such development will not negatively impact on the town centre.

The Louth Retail Strategy 2009 notes that the quantum of retail floor space available in Drogheda over the period 2001 – 2011 has increased by a huge percentage amounting to some 170 %. The quality, range and scale of retail provision available in Drogheda as a whole and in the Town Centre in particular, reflects the growth of the Borough and its environs over the 2005 – 2011 Plan period, particularly in terms of residential development.

Drogheda Borough has witnessed a transformation of its retail product over the course of the present Plan. Within the town centre, Scotch Hall and the Laurence Town Centre, operating since 2005 and 2006 respectively have provided residents of the town with retail facilities on a par with virtually anywhere else in the State. Beyond the town centre, considerable retail development has occurred on the edges of the urban area. These developments include new Aldi and Lidl discount retail stores on both the north and south sides of the town, a large Tesco outlet at Donore Road. These facilities have greatly enhanced the floor space provision and retail product available within the town. Such is the scale of development within the Drogheda area that there are indications that the area may have reached capacity in terms of retail provision.

Whilst out of town centre retail activity has been strong, it is important to protect the traditional role of the town centre as the primary retailing and business core for the entire urban area. It is also important to ensure that the physical fabric of the town is maintained to a very high standard and that areas requiring urban renewal or redevelopment are encouraged and facilitated by the Plan.

3.3.2 Drogheda Town Centre and The Louth Retail Strategy

The Review of the Louth Retail Strategy was adopted in 2009, and one of its key objectives is to ensure that Drogheda retains and develops a strong retail sector of regional importance. It will also be important to maintain the primacy of the town centre as the core retail area of the town and protect it against out-of-centre and out-of-town shopping developments that would be likely to detract from its retail function, result in increased vacancy rates and damage the physical fabric of the town.

Policy ED 7

To implement the policy recommendations contained in the *Louth Retail Strategy 2009* in so far as they relate to the core retail area of the Town Centre of Drogheda

3.3.3 West Street and Narrow West Street

The retail facilities of West Street requires enhancement, as befitting its role as the primary shopping thoroughfare in Drogheda Town Centre. Drogheda Borough Council has completed the West Street Environmental Improvement works. This has resulted in pedestrian-friendly space in the traditional retail core of the town, including new street furniture, a new paved surface and new bespoke lighting.



The opening of Scotch Hall and the St. Laurence Town Centre has had the effect of creating flagship retail developments at the southern and eastern edges of Drogheda's



traditional town centre. This has had a positive impact upon the retail development of St. Peter Street, Laurence Street and particularly along Shop Street and Dyer Street which now act as the primary corridors linking Scotch Hall and West Street. However, the western element of West Street has witnessed a decline in the attractiveness of its retail offer. It is the objective of the retail strategy that further targeted measures should be applied to the western portion of West Street from Stockwell Lane westwards in order to combat the drift of retail activities east and southwards and to address the increase in vacant floorspace in this area in the period since 2002.

Specific recommendations for the core retail area include:

- The amalgamation of units to facilitate the provision of high street comparison retail floorspace, including larger scale units necessitated by modern comparison retailers;
- The complete restriction of a variety of uses which are incompatible with West Street's role as a primary commercial thoroughfare. These uses may include bookmakers, off licences, adult stores, discount comparison units, ground floor office units and convenience symbol stores;
- The redevelopment and, where necessary, the demolition of existing structures to facilitate the development of modern format, retail floorspace while respecting Drogheda's unique historical texture;
- The provision of a range of café, bar and restaurant uses and the development of multi level retail floorspace as part of wider mixed use development including residential and non-retail uses, with possible additional access points along Stockwell Lane.

Policy ED 8

It is the policy of Drogheda Borough Council that targeted measures should be applied to the western portion of West Street from Stockwell Lane Westwards in order to address the increase in vacant floorspace in this area.

It is the policy of Drogheda Borough Council that the loss of convenience or comparison floorspace in the core retail area should be resisted and the amalgamation of units permitted in order to attract quality retailers to the street. In particular, the change of use from retail to non retail uses should not be facilitated.

3.3.4 Retail Warehousing

There has been a significant expansion of retail warehousing in Drogheda in the period since 2002. The Louth Retail Strategy 2009 indicates that Drogheda has attained a level of retail warehousing provision sufficient to cater for current population projections. The further development of retail warehousing should have regard to the need to avoid an over concentration of such floorspace in the Donore Road and Mell Road areas in order to facilitate an equitable distribution of retail warehousing floorspace in the wider Drogheda and Environs area

Policy ED 9

It is the policy of Drogheda Borough Council that in considering applications for further retail warehousing development the consideration of the cumulative retail impact on the core retail area and other retail parks will determine the scope for additional retail warehouse floorspace

3.3.5 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.



Drogheda currently has one purpose built district centre in operation in the Rathmullan area. The current Development Plan also contains provision for a further District Centre catering for the northside of the Borough within a site identified off the Collon Road in Mell. It is unlikely that further such provision will be required within the Borough during the course of the Plan.

Within the wider Drogheda Environs area, district centre scale retail provision exists in Bettystown and at Colpe Cross in the southern environs.

3.3.6 Neighbourhood Centres

The core retail area within the Heritage Quarter is supported by a series of Neighbourhood Centres located at strategic locations across the Borough. During the course of the 2005-2011 Plan, purpose built Neighbourhood Centres were constructed at Rathmullan and Bryanstown. These complemented other existing 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. Neighbourhood Centres will be encouraged on existing, improving or developing public transport routes.

Policy ED 10

Drogheda Borough Council will promote the development of new Neighbourhood Centres where there is a clearly demonstrated need to serve new or expanding residential areas with basic facilities, such as local convenience shopping and community facilities. All Neighbourhood Centre proposals must be in clear adherence to the Retail Planning Guidelines. A maximum net retail floor area of 500sq.m shall be permitted, this area pertains to a number of smaller units or a single larger unit.

3.3.7 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 that additional shops 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 sq.m, only one such outlet shall be permitted in a neighbourhood centre or group of local primary shops. An upper limit of 500sqm shall apply in all cases, with the exception of discount food stores.

Policy ED 11

A single convenience local shop shall not exceed 200sq.m of net retail floorspace, and only one such outlet shall be permitted.

3.3.8 Petrol Filling Stations

In order to remain consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines it is the policy of Drogheda Borough Council that where retail space in excess of 100 sq.m net retail sales area is associated with petrol filling facilities, the application of the sequential approach to retail development should apply.

3.3.9 Discount Food Stores

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

3.4 Tourism

Drogheda has the potential to be a major regional tourism centre by virtue of its location, accessibility and the diversity of attractions. The development of tourism in the Borough and its hinterland requires an integrated approach, combining the provision and promotion of facilities and infrastructure, the continuation of urban renewal and urban design initiatives, branding and marketing. Drogheda town centre with its outstanding skyline can be a beguiling sight for the first time visitor. The town centre lies largely to the north of the River Boyne and is focussed upon a medieval street pattern which has survived almost completely intact since the foundation of Drogheda in the twelfth century.



In this respect, Drogheda is the equal of cities such as Kilkenny and Waterford. The street pattern is complemented by a large number of attractive protected structures, located at key points throughout the town centre. The richness of the town centre is enhanced further by a broad range of retail, commercial and professional outlets providing a wide variety of goods and services. Together, these factors make for a lively and vibrant town centre. Within the Heritage Quarter, a number of visitor attractions catering for a diverse range of interests exist. These include destinations aimed at a variety of potential visitor markets including those interested in history and heritage, active breaks and the youth market.

3.4.1 Regional Tourism Policy

Fáilte Ireland East & Midlands Regional Tourism Development Plan 2008-2010

The Strategic Tourism Plan 2008 – 2010 for the East and Midlands Region provides a ‘road map’ for both national and local agencies, Local Authorities and other public sector

agencies to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in the region. Covering the counties of Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath and Wicklow, this Plan aims to deliver increased tourism benefits to the region by providing better hospitality, greater appeal and an improved, quality, visitor experience. Drogheda Borough Council will take cognisance of the strategic goals of the Strategic Tourism Plan 2008 – 2010. The mission statement of the Tourism Strategy for County Louth is to attract tourists to County Louth by providing a quality visitor experience.

At present it is clear from the Failte Ireland product audit that the overall average quality of the East & Midlands product is, with some notable exceptions, below par. The Strategic Tourism Plan 2008 – 2010 notes that the counties closest to Dublin have a strong range of significant and well-established heritage sites, heritage towns and historic attractions. Within County Louth, this includes Drogheda and the Boyne Valley. The Borough is particularly well placed to offer and deliver a quality experience to domestic and overseas visitors interested in history, tradition and heritage.

The Failte Ireland notes that visitors “reasons to visit” reflect the varied tourism characteristics of the diverse area which is the East & Midlands region. Within County Louth the major heritage / historic sites such as those at Monasterboice and Mellifont, other heritage and historic attractions combined with the town of Drogheda provide a rich heritage menu.

The strategy concentrates on the potential of the region based on proximity to Dublin and aims to convert day visits into overnights by targeting visitors already in the capital using the themes, of Carlingford / Cooley and The Boyne Valley. There is a further strategic objective based on the outstanding themes of:

1. The Boyne Valley
2. Christian Heritage
3. Walled Towns

In terms of implementation Local Authorities are identified as key players in the delivery of;

- Local Authority operated visitor attractions
- Development planning
- Signposting and roads
- Parking facilities
- Coastal resorts and beach management
- Event space/amenity areas
- Access to amenities including walking / cycleways
- Tourist information
- Clean/aesthetically pleasing environment
- Public facilities (public toilets etc)

Policy ED 12

It is the policy of Drogheda Borough Council, in conjunction with the other Louth Local Authorities to implement those aspects of the Fáilte Ireland East & Midlands Regional Tourism Development Plan 2008-2010 identified as lying within the remit of local authorities.

3.4.2 Co-Operation with other Bodies

The Council is aware that the development of tourism in County Louth would benefit greatly from a co-operative approach with other Local Authorities and relevant agencies, both north and south of the border. Such initiatives could involve the co-funding of tourism infrastructure, product development and marketing. Co-operation on a number of projects has already taken place and it is proposed to pursue and bring to fruition these initiatives during the course of the Plan. In Drogheda's case, co-operation is most likely with a range of non-governmental agencies together with adjacent Local Authorities including Meath County Council and Louth Local Authorities. Cross border co-operation with regard to particular initiatives is ongoing and has been evidenced through the joint promotion of the High Lanes Gallery, Drogheda and the FE McWilliams Gallery, Banbridge.

3.4.3 Tourism Plan 2008 – 2012

Louth Hospitality, which is a Local Authority supported partnership with the private tourism sector in the County, operates to the provisions of the *Louth Hospitality Tourism Plan 2008-2012*. The mission statement of this Action Plan is 'to attract tourists to County Louth by providing a quality experience'. It aims to offer compelling reasons to motivate tourists to visit Louth and to make attractions more accessible and tangible. To facilitate the development of Louth's heritage sites as top class visitor attractions, it is an objective of the Action Plan to provide the necessary infrastructure, visitor services and promotional material to market the sites.

Policy ED 13

To support the implementation of the *Louth Hospitality Tourism Plan 2008 - 2012* and the *Fáilte Ireland East and Midlands Regional Plan 2008 – 2010*.

To promote the sustainable development of Drogheda as a quality tourist destination themed on heritage and culture and support innovative tourism projects that would boost employment and promote Drogheda as a major tourism destination on the Eastern Corridor.

To assist in the development and marketing of County Louth in conjunction with the Local Authorities north and south of the border.

To support the development of arts community festivals, cultural activities and other outdoor activities.

3.4.4 Boyne Valley

The historic Boyne Valley, Brú Na Bóinne, is a world heritage site. It also contains the site of the historic Battle of the Boyne. The Boyne Valley falls partially within the functional area of Louth County Council, Meath County Council and Drogheda Borough Council. Drogheda, is the gateway to the historic Boyne Valley and the significant potential contribution of the Boyne Valley for the development of tourism in Drogheda is recognised.

In conjunction with Meath County Council, Louth Local Authorities will produce a joint Framework Plan aimed at the protection, development and promotion of this important heritage site during the course of the Plan. Drogheda Borough Council will provide input into the outcome of this strategy.

3.4.5 Monasterboice

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has published a new draft tentative list of potential nominees to the World Heritage List. Monasterboice is one of a representative sample of Early Medieval Monastic sites in Ireland listed, which embody the Celtic Church's rich cultural and historical past, playing a crucial role in Europe's educational and artistic development.

Policy ED 14

To co-operate with Louth Local Authorities and Meath County Council in the preparation of a strategy for the protection, development and promotion of the Boyne Valley World Heritage Site and to support the designation of Monasterboice as a World Heritage Site.

3.4.6 Tourism in Drogheda Borough

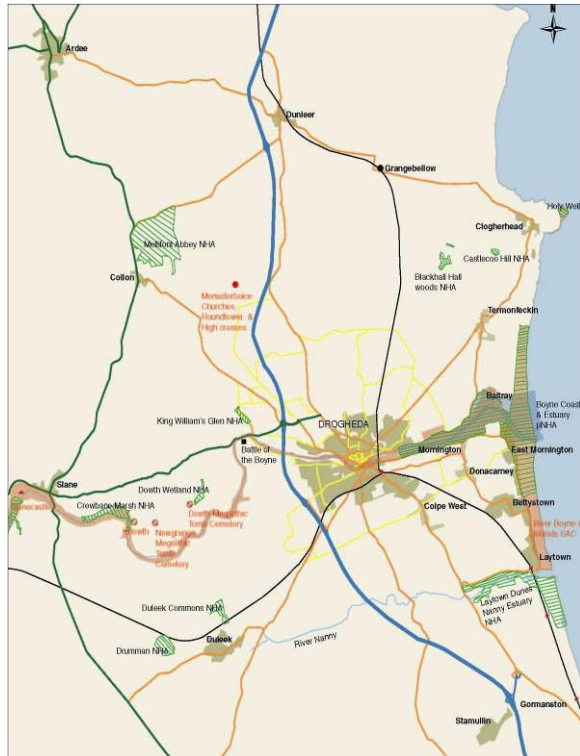
The tourism product in the Drogheda Borough area includes among others;

- *Millmount* – including the Millmount Museum and the landmark Martello Tower;
- *Churches* – including St. Peter's RC church (where the partial remains of St. Oliver Plunkett are on public display), St. Peter's Church of Ireland (which features, for example, occasional concerts and musical recitals) and, south of the Boyne, St. Mary's RC church (all three churches distinguished by their tall, prominent spires and giving the skyline of Drogheda a distinct feel);
- *St Laurence's Gate and Butter Gate* – including the medieval barbican/gates, which provides another unique landmark in the town;
- *Viaduct Railway Bridge* – which dates back to the nineteenth century and continues to be recognised as a marvellous feat of engineering;
- *Tholsel and Courthouse* – both attractive buildings with civic potential in the town centre;
- *Highlanes Gallery* – a newly opened, attractive gallery featuring an extensive collection of municipal art and artefacts from Drogheda and the North East Region;
- *Remains of the town walls* –enhanced in recent years.

3.4.7 Tourist / Visitor Attractions in the wider Drogheda Area

In the wider Drogheda area, a veritable ‘honey-pot’ of attractions are located within a 20 km radius of the Borough, these include, among others;

- Newgrange Megalithic Monument and Visitor Centre (World Heritage Site)
- Knowth and Dowth Megalithic Monuments,
- The Battle of the Boyne site and Visitor Centre,
- Mellifont Abbey,
- Monasterboice (proposed World Heritage Site)
- Beaulieu House (Historic House)
- Townley Hall (Historic House)
- High quality golf courses at Seapoint, Baltray, Bettystown and Bellewstown
- High quality beaches at Bettystown and Termonfeckin



Policy ED 15

It is the policy of Drogheda Borough Council to further develop the tourism potential of Drogheda through targeted initiatives including the identification of deficiencies in tourist infrastructure and through the development of joint initiatives promoting Drogheda as a short break and topic lead tourist destination

3.4.8 Tourism Related Signage

The provision of directional and promotional signage is important in facilitating tourists and enhancing their overall experience and enjoyment of their visit. The provision of finger sign posts and other directional signs is a function of the Local Authority and is provided under the roads capital budget. Significant improvements in this have taken place in recent years and the council will continue to improve road signage where required, subject to the availability of adequate funding.

In addition to the road signs provided by the Council, Section 254 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, makes provision, under licence from the Planning Authority, for additional road signage to facilitate existing significant activities including tourist related attractions and amenities. The Council will favourably consider the granting of licenses for Failte Ireland approved finger post signage where appropriate. However, it should be recognised that excessive numbers of signs can be counter productive as it leads to clutter and confusion which detracts from the appearance of buildings and rural landscapes and may conflict with essential Local Authority directional and safety

signage. Such a proliferation of signage will be resisted by the Council. Tourism related promotional and advertisement signs are also important for the industry. Such signs should be suitably designed and appropriately located on the building or within the curtilage, as appropriate, so that they do not detract from the visual amenities of the area.

Policy ED 16

Support the provision of tourist related directional and information signage to assist tourists and visitors provided that such signage does not detract from the visual amenities of the area.

3.4.9 Arts and Culture

In keeping with its rich cultural and heritage past, Drogheda has a thriving arts scene and is host to a number of annual festivals and events that are both popular and unique. The annual Drogheda Arts Festival attracts multiple thousands of visitors and includes street theatre, music, dance, visual arts, film, literature, a family fun day and comedy. Drogheda also hosts an annual Samba Festival every summer where Samba bands from around the world converge on the town for a weekend of drumming and parades.

Drogheda is also home to the Calipo Theatre Company, which specialises in multi-media productions and has achieved considerable success in Ireland and abroad. The Borough also supports one of the largest and most successful youth theatres in Ireland (Droichead Youth Theatre) which has toured Belfast, London, Italy and Sweden. The emergence of the Little Duke Theatre Company in Duke Street in the former Julian Blinds building, adds to the scene. The Municipal Centre in Stockwell Street acts as a base for most of the town's artists under the umbrella of the Droichead Arts Centre and also features a gallery space and a theatre. The former Garda station in West Street is now a satellite site of the Droichead Arts Centre. This site is called Barlow House.

During the period of the 2005 – 2011 Plan, the Borough's first dedicated municipal art gallery and visual arts centre, the Highlanes Gallery, housed in the former Franciscan Friary on St. Laurence Street was opened. The Highlanes Gallery holds Drogheda's important municipal art collection which dates from the 17th century, as well as visiting exhibitions, in a venue which meets key international museum and gallery standards. The Highlanes Gallery is a very attractive visitor space and it has become one of the most visited public buildings in the Borough.



Throughout the year there are also numerous events with a cultural flavour. These include for example, organ recitals at St. Peter's Church of Ireland, conferences and

talks of a cultural and historic nature at Millmount Museum and Visitor Centre and events hosted by the Louth Contemporary Musical Society. Drogheda also has a thriving underground music scene with genres including rock, punk, funk, metal, hip-hop and hardcore. This underground music has emerged over the past year or so as local youths have put a lot of work into creating this scene by forming bands and attending local gigs in large numbers. There is a large and varied range of live music venues in Drogheda, including traditional music venues hosting regular sessions by amateur and professional musicians alike.

Policy ED 17

Drogheda Borough Council will actively promote the further development of Arts and Culture in Drogheda as a key economic driver throughout the course of the Plan period