

Introduction

Dundalk and its environs constitutes one of the largest towns in Ireland and occupies a strategic position between Dublin and Belfast, proximate to the border with Northern Ireland. The town lies approximately equidistant from the cities of Belfast and Dublin at approximately 80km from either.

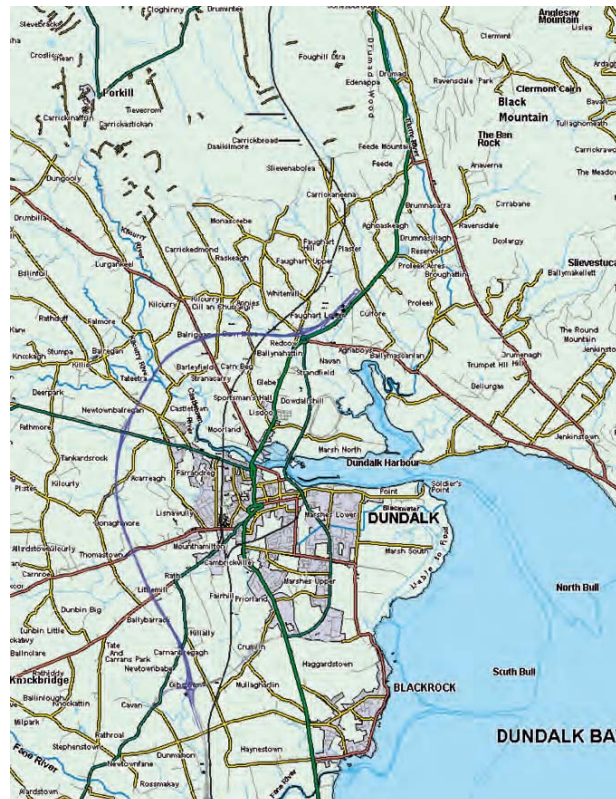


Map 1 Dundalk in the Local Context.

Drogheda, County Louth's other major urban centre lies 35km to the south, whilst Newry, Northern Ireland's fifth city is 16km to the north. To the west, the designated hub towns of Monaghan and Cavan are some 50km and 80km distant respectively. Dundalk is located on nationally strategic road and rail links and is well positioned spatially to energise eastern parts of the Border area. Dundalk has substantial capacity for development in terms of land and services and contains important facilities such as the Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) and several major industrial sites including Xerox, Heinz, Diageo, Dimplex, Fyffes and Irish Life.

Location

The DSWLAP area is geographically defined by a strategic quadrant bounded by the Carrickmacross Road to the north, the Southern Link Road Dual Carriageway to the south, the M1 / Dundalk Western Bypass to the west and the Dublin Road to the east (See Map 3). The bulk of the plan area falls under the administrative control of Dundalk Town Council, however the southern extremities of the area lie within the jurisdiction of Louth County Council. The Plan covers parts of the District Electoral Divisions of Dundalk Urban, Castletown and Haggardstown. The plan area lies to the south west of the existing built-up area of Dundalk and has common boundaries with some older industrial areas of the town to the north east, low density suburban housing areas to the north and south east and open countryside to the west. Dundalk Town Centre is approximately 2km from the geographic centre of the plan area. The plan area incorporates extensive lands to the southwest of Dundalk. The total land area comprises some 600.4 hectares, the bulk of which is undeveloped.



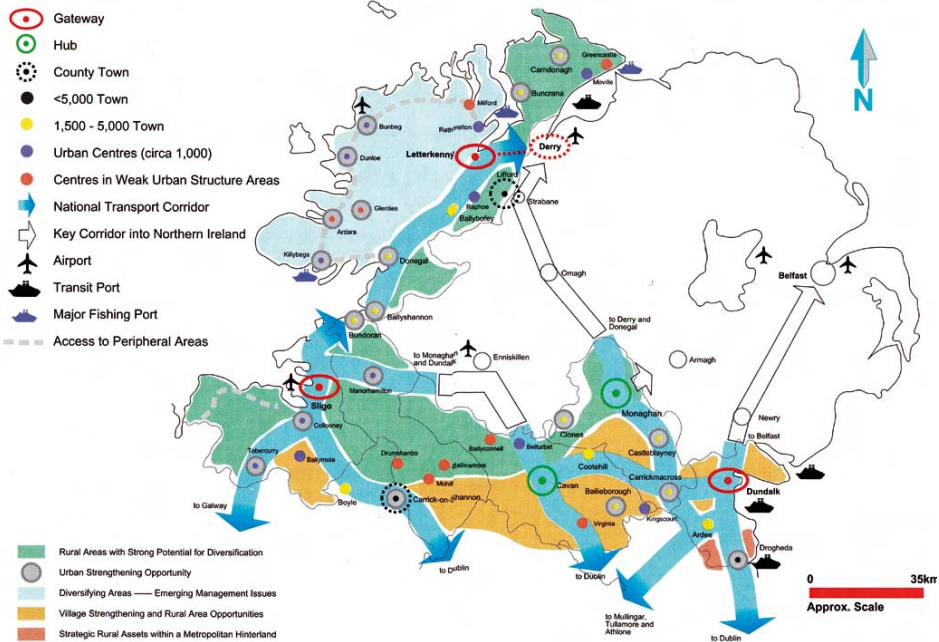
Map 2 Dundalk in the Local Context.



Map 3 DSWLAP Plan Area, Aerial View.

Purpose of the Dundalk South West Local Area Plan (DSWLAP)

Taking account of these strengths and the issue of ensuring development within and at the extremities of the Dublin-Belfast corridor, Dundalk has been identified as a “Gateway” town, under the National Spatial Strategy. The DSWLAP is consistent with and supports Dundalk’s Gateway status as designated in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region.

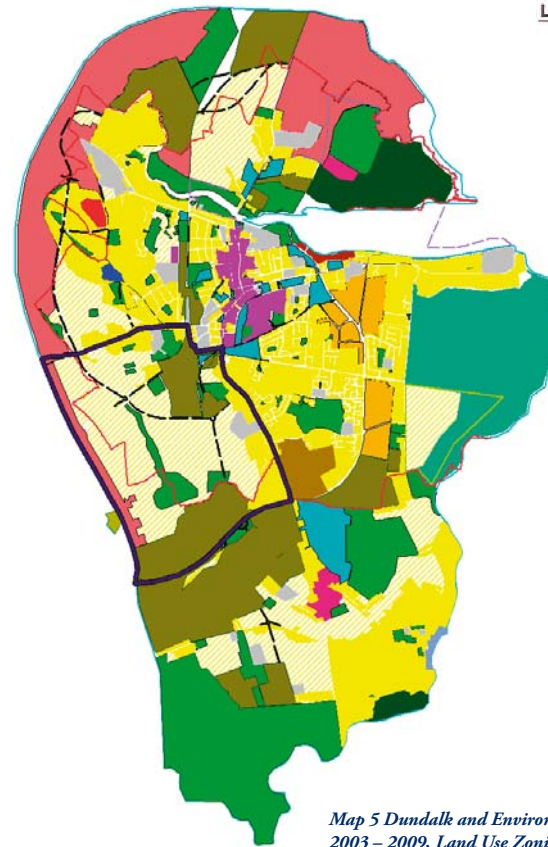


Map 4 Dundalk within the Border Region.

The DSWLAP has been prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the provision contained within the act which permits the preparation of statutory Local Area Plans for new development areas. The rationale behind a Local Area Plan is to provide a detailed guidance framework for the control and regulation of development and use of land in a sustainable and orderly fashion which will benefit all of the local community which the plan serves. The Plan’s purpose is primarily to ensure that future development is accommodated within the context of an ordered framework, having regard to social considerations, efficiency in the use of public services and financial feasibility. The Dundalk South West Local Area Plan sets out a broad guiding framework for the future built development of the area. It identifies the nature and extent of the built form including infrastructure layout, open space and building form, uses which may be permitted, and amenities and facilities that are required.

LAND USE ZONING DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

- Employment Mixed Use Zone
- Education, Recreation, Enterprise and Innovation Mixed Use Zone – To Provide for Education and Institutional Uses, Research and Development /Enterprises/Offices ancillary to /Start up units/Leisure/Recreation/Amenity
- Leisure, Recreational and Residential Mixed Use Zone – To Provide for Hotel, Motel, Guest House, Leisure Facilities, Public Houses, Local Shop/Facilities and Residential Uses
- To Provide for Industrial/Light Industrial/Storage and Distribution/Recreation/Leisure and Amenity/Non Food Retail Warehousing of Bulky Household and D.I.Y. Goods of which not more than 10% of gross floor area may be used for ancillary non bulky goods retailing.
- To Provide for General Business Uses
- Residential Zoned land
To Provide, Protect and Improve Residential Amenities
- Premature for Residential Planning the Provision of a Public Mains Drainage Scheme
- To Provide, Protect and Improve Town Centre Facilities and enable Town Centre expansion
- To Provide, Protect and Improve open space, Amenities and Recreation
- To Provide, Protect and Improve Education and Community Facilities
- To Provide for Commercial Agricultural Sites
- To Provide for Port and Related Uses
- To Provide a Strategic Land Reserve



Map 5 Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003 – 2009, Land Use Zoning Map.

It is an objective of the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003—2009 to prepare a Local Area Plan for the development of the south west area of Dundalk. The aim of the plan is to enable Dundalk to achieve balanced development and sustainable growth in line with its status as a Gateway and anticipated future city status.

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region have noted that Dundalk has the capacity to function as a service industry capital for the entire Region. In this context it is vital that sufficient lands are available and zoned to provide for a concentration of critical mass in order that investment, employment opportunities and infrastructure can be directed towards the town as envisaged under the Regional Planning Guidelines of May 2004. The development of the Dundalk South West Local Area Plan (DSWLAP) area will, to a large extent, address this requirement.

There is a general presumption in favour of development which adheres to the objectives and concepts detailed within this plan. Any development proposals which significantly vary from the plan or adversely compromise any component of the plan, are unlikely to be acceptable.

Population

Within the plan period the Central Statistics Office projects the population of Dundalk to rise considerably from the 32,505 figure in 2002 to 45,542 in 2008. The National Spatial Strategy has set a projected population of 60,000 for Dundalk by the year 2020. It is envisaged that the full development of the DSWLAP could provide an estimated population of 20,000 persons.

Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003 – 2009 Population Statistics (2002)	
Dundalk	
Dundalk Urban No 1	2,490
Dundalk Urban No. 2	1,064
Dundalk Urban No. 3	1,430
Dundalk Urban No. 4	6,527
Castletown	1,552
Dundalk Rural	14,206
Haggardstown	116
TOTAL	27,385
Dundalk Environs	
Haggardstown	4,287
Castletown	417
Dundalk Rural	347
Dromiskin	69
TOTAL	5,120
Dundalk and Environs Total	32,505

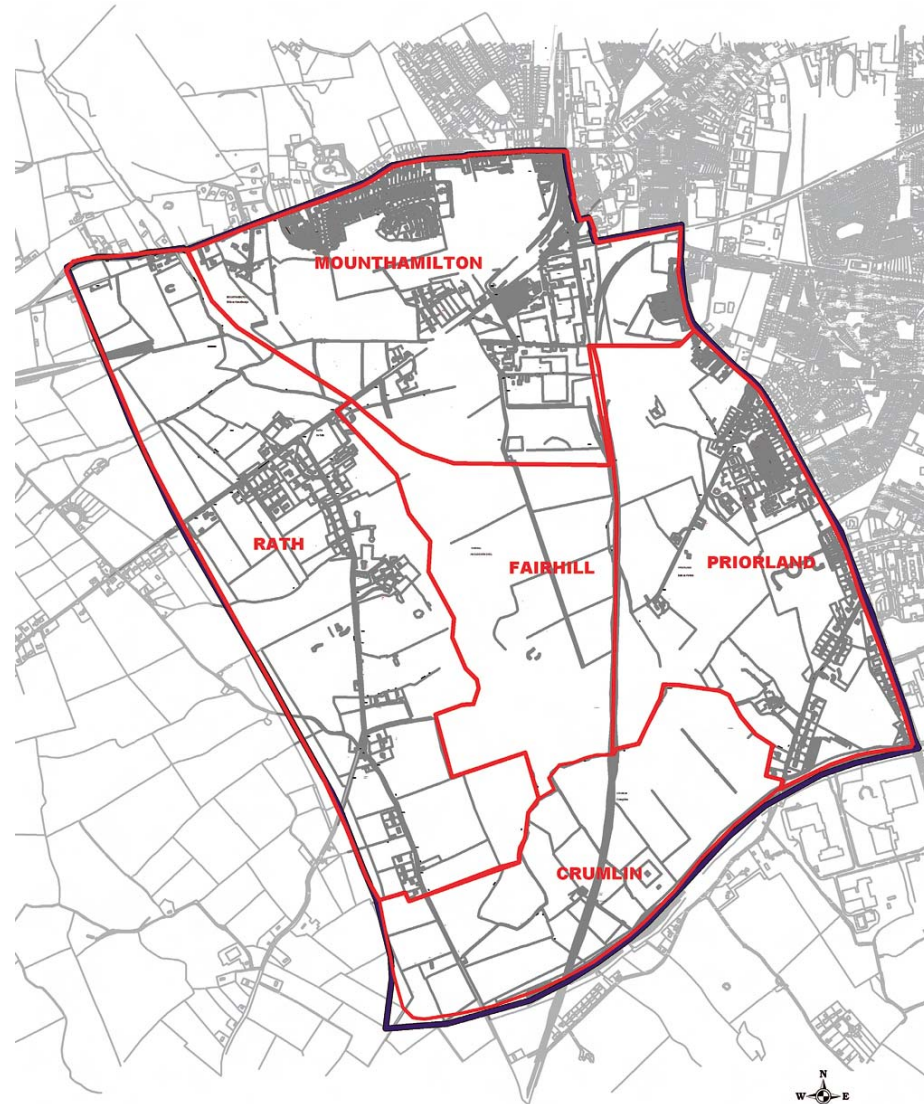
Source; Census 2002

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Description of Lands, Sector Summary

In planning terms the DSWLAP represents an extremely large development area of over 600 hectares. As a result of this large geographical extent, the plan has adopted a Sector and Parcel approach to the lands. Thus a series of five geographical

sectors have been identified. Each of these five sectors have names based on existing townlands. The sectors are, Mounthamilton, to the north of the DSWLAP, Priorland to the east, Crumlin to the south, Rath to the west, and Fairhill in the geographical centre. Each sector has then been further subdivided into a number of parcels, each being based, where possible on the number of housing units which could realistically be provided by any one commercial developer. Each of the sectors possess a wide variety of landscapes and topography and each possesses a distinct character from the others. Within each sector the range of existing landscape features will provide the basis for an exciting, diverse and sustainable living environment. Each of the sectors contain a variety of opportunities but also a number of constraints; these are outlined below and illustrated on Map 7.



Map 6 DSWLAP Development Sectors.

Landscape and Visual Assessment

Fairhill (76.9 Hectares)

The Fairhill sector name comes from the townland Fairhill (An Clochan Caol) The sector forms the central portion of the DSWLAP. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the sector is restricted although an old disused roadway runs north south along the western edge of the sector stretching from the Ardee Road in the northern extremity of the sector to the southwest. A further laneway forms a central spine through the sector, again running on a north south alignment. The Dundalk - Dublin railway line lies to the eastern edge of the sector. The Fairhill sector is characterized by large cultivated fields with the predominant feature being the central access laneway which divides the sector into two distinct areas. The area next the railway and east of the laneway slopes down from the laneway at the 17 - 18 metre contour line to the railway embankment at the 8 - 9 metre contour. Mature hedgerows separate large fields in this area. The area affords spectacular views of the mountains of both the Cooley Peninsula and the Ring of Gullion.

The area to the west of the laneway falls westwards and provides an intriguing contrast to its eastern neighbour. This area is more enclosed and sheltered and lies adjacent a natural wildlife amenity which has a variety of habitats ranging including scrubland, wetland areas and a tree lined wooded area. The sense of enclosure is further compounded by the higher ground in the Rath sector to the west which gives an amphitheatre effect to this portion of land. To the south there are views out of the sector towards the southern relief road and the motorway interchange.

Mounthamilton (140.1 Hectares)

The Mounthamilton sector name comes from the townland Mounthamilton (Mota an Hamaltunaigh) and is located in the northern portion of the DSWLAP. The sector is bounded by the Carrickmacross road to the north and the Dublin Belfast railway line to the east. The Ardee road tranverses the sector and the southern and western boundaries are the routes of proposed new roadways. The portion of Mounthamilton north of the Ardee Road is relatively flat scrubland with the exception of a number of rocky outcrops in the central area. The trackbed of the former Dundalk to Clones railway line traverses this area and its retention is integral to the sector strategy. West of this area is rolling agricultural land. The portion of Mounthamilton, south of the Ardee Road is predominantly agricultural with the notable exception of the industrial area centred around the McArdle Moore Brewery complex and the former Great Northern Railway workshops. The topography in this area is gradually rising to the south.

Existing housing development has taken place at Willow grove on the Carrickmacross Road and the Dundalk Soccer club have their grounds at Oriel Park close to Dundalk Railway Station. On the southern side of the Ardee Road close to the railway line are a series of terraced former workers cottages adjacent to the McArdle Moore complex. It is proposed to access lands within the sector via the existing Carrickmacross and Ardee roads and by taking accesses from the proposed new Roadways.

Priorland (120.0 Hectares)

The Priorland sector name comes from the townland Priorland (Baile an Phriora) and is located in the eastern portion of the DSWLAP. The sector is bounded by the Dublin road to the east, the Dublin Belfast railway line to the west, Balmers Bog to the north and an elevated ridge line to the south along the southern link road. Access to the sector can be gained through the existing Priorland Road which runs in a northeast - southwest line through the sector. Priorland Road rises to the summit of a hill where extensive views of the sector and Cooley and Ring of Gullion mountain ranges are afforded. The lands within the sector are largely agricultural and are mostly in pasture or under cultivation. There are low lying areas to the north at Balmers Bog which is a low lying wildlife habitat. A further low lying area is located in the extreme south west portion of the sector and has been prone to flooding. The sector is adjacent the Louth County Hospital and close to the Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Rath (169.2 Hectares)

The Rath sector name comes directly from the Irish word for an earthen ring fort. The sector forms much of the western portion of the DSWLAP and is bounded to the north by the Carrickmacross Road, to the west by the M1 Motorway, to the south by the Crumlin Sector and to the east by the Fairhill sector. The sector is bisected by the Ardee Road and a branch road from same which runs due south to eventually meet the Southern link Road Dual Carriageway. Rath is the most elevated of all the sectors with its central portion along the Ardee Road affording spectacular views eastwards towards the surrounding mountains, Dundalk Town and the Coast. The Ardee Road forms the central spine of the sector with lands falling from the high point in an easterly direction and rising slightly before leveling in a western direction. The predominant landuse is agricultural however there are notable residential areas at the junction of the Ardee and Knockbridge roads in the sector's north east. These housing areas comprise low density, primarily detached housing. Elsewhere in the sector a number of detached "one-off" houses are sited in ribbon form along roadways.

Crumlin (94.15 Hectares)

The Crumlin sector lies to the extreme south of the plan DSWLAP area. It has been zoned for the purposes of Employment Mixed Use. The purpose of the DSWLAP is primarily to provide a framework for development of the residential sectors and as such, the Crumlin sector has not been detailed to any great extent.



Fairhill.



Mounthamilton.



Priorland.



Rath.