



CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY





2 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will set out the role and function of Dundalk in Louth and the wider region. The opportunities and challenges facing Dundalk will be identified, which will provide a context for the growth and development strategy for the town during the life of this Plan. The chapter will also demonstrate the alignment and consistency of the growth strategy for this Local Area Plan with national and regional policy and the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan.

2.2 Context

In the 2022 census Dundalk had a population of 43,112, making it the second largest town in Ireland. It is the County town and administrative centre for Louth. The town is a multi-modal settlement that benefits from its strategic location along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor which provides excellent connectivity with the two largest cities on the island. Dundalk and Greenore Ports provide access to international markets for local businesses, whilst its location on the border and proximity to Newry presents opportunities for cross-border collaboration. The town offers a broad range of retail, health, education and community services and open spaces that serve a wide catchment. It also benefits from an established base of Indigenous and Foreign Direct Investment businesses. These businesses benefit from the presence of Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT), which provides opportunities for collaboration and access to a talented and educated workforce.

This Plan will seek to facilitate population and economic growth in Dundalk and enable the town to compete ambitiously for jobs and investment.

This is consistent with national and regional policy, which acknowledges the importance of Dundalk as an employment hub and service centre in the north-east of the country through its designation as a Regional Growth Centre.

2.2.1 Alignment with Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework

The NPF identifies a set of goals expressed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's), which underpin the overarching vision for the country. These NSO's are significantly aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in areas such as climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities and innovation and infrastructure, as well as education and health. An overview of how this Plan aligns with the NSO's that are relevant to Dundalk are set out below.



Compact Growth

As part of the strategy of promoting the sustainable growth of Dundalk, this Plan will place a strong emphasis on achieving compact growth and making the most efficient use of land. Support will be given for regeneration projects and the re-use of vacant and under-utilised infill and brownfield lands that will have a positive impact on the urban core of the town. Such projects include the progression of a public realm project on Park Street and Francis Street and the rejuvenation of St. Nicholas Quarter and the Long Walk Quarter which seek to create a vibrant mixed use urban quarter and demonstrate how sustainable town centre living can be achieved.



Enhanced Regional Accessibility

Dundalk benefits from excellent road and rail links via the M1 Motorway and the Dublin-Belfast Rail Line. There is also a strong network of regional roads from Dundalk to key service centres in the north-east of the country. This connectivity makes the town an attractive location for economic investment. This Plan will support investment in infrastructure projects that will improve connectivity within, to and from Dundalk.



Sustainable Mobility

It is recognised that a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport is required in order to enable the delivery of more compact patterns of development in addition to supporting the wider strategy of mitigating against the impacts of climate change. This Plan will support investment in sustainable transport projects and changes in mobility options including the transition towards electric vehicles.



A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

Dundalk will continue to be a focal point for economic investment in the north-east of the country. This Plan will seek to maximise its strategic location and designation as a Regional Growth Centre by highlighting its strengths and identifying the infrastructure investment required to enable the town to continue to be an attractive location for investment by both foreign and indigenous companies.



High Quality International Connectivity

The location of Dundalk along the border provides the town with direct access to the UK market. This is critical for both EU and UK based companies who want to retain strong connections to both jurisdictions. This Plan will seek to maximise Dundalk's border location and to strengthen cross border links with Newry and Belfast.



Enhanced Amenities and Heritage

Dundalk benefits from its unique location on the Castletown River and Dundalk Bay while the Cooley Mountains provide an attractive backdrop to the town. Recreational areas and open spaces in Dundalk include St. Helena's Park and Ice House Hill Park in addition to walking and cycling trails at the Navy Bank and the Castletown River.

The built heritage of the town, which includes Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian style buildings contribute to a distinct sense of place.

This Plan will continue to protect the natural, built, and archaeological heritage of Dundalk. It will also facilitate the sensitive and sustainable regeneration of buildings and streets of architectural and historic interest in addition to investing in new and improving existing recreational amenities in the town.



Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

The policy framework that will enable the objectives and targets of the Climate Action Plan and Climate Act to be achieved will be set out in this Plan. There will be an emphasis on the creation of more sustainable communities by promoting more compact patterns of development, giving greater priority to walking and cycling, and facilitating employment related development close to where people live to reduce the need for long distance commuting.

Buildings and urban spaces will need to be resilient and adaptable to any potential impacts of flooding or sea level rises whilst a reduction in waste generation and the continued shift towards a circular economy will be supported.



Sustainable Management of Water, Waste, and other Environmental Resources

The provision of reliable and effective water services infrastructure is essential in facilitating the population and economic growth of a settlement. This Plan will support and facilitate the ongoing investment in water services infrastructure in Dundalk in order to address any quality, reliability, or capacity issues.

The Council will work closely with Uisce Éireann to address any infrastructure constraints and identify investment requirements in the network. The Plan will also seek to manage, and where necessary, improve the quality of surface water bodies and groundwater aquifers in addition to integrating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) into the control and management of surface water runoff.

The transition towards a circular economy is integral to climate change targets being achieved. This Plan will, therefore, promote environmentally friendly practices in the management and disposal of waste.



Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

An integral element of creating a sustainable and healthy community is ensuring there is an appropriate level of social and community infrastructure available to meet the needs of the population. Support will be given to the provision of new and upgraded community infrastructure, particularly in areas where a need has been identified. As we strive to achieve more compact patterns of development and as the residential population of the urban core increases, this Plan will seek to ensure that the requisite schools, childcare, and healthcare facilities are available within the urban core.

2.3 Consistency with the Core Strategy

In order to ensure alignment with the County Development Plan and national and regional policy, there is a requirement for Local Area Plans to be consistent with the core strategy of the County Development Plan. This requirement is set out in *Section 19(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*.

The Core Strategy in the Louth County Development Plan is closely aligned with the growth strategy in the NPF and RSES, which prioritises growth in the higher tier settlements and identifies the opportunity for Dundalk to develop into a centre of scale and a regional driver for population and economic growth. The population and housing projections for Dundalk up to 2027 are set out in Table 2.1.



Table 2.1: Projected Population and Housing Requirements for Dundalk in the County Development Plan 2021-2027 as varied

Settlement	Projected Population Increase to 2027	Housing Allocation 2021-2027
Dundalk	7,660	2,447

Taking account of the fact that the lifetime of this Plan it will be necessary to project the population and housing requirements for Dundalk beyond that set out in the Core Strategy of the 2021-2027 County Development Plan, as varied. The Settlement Strategy for Dundalk in the RSES envisages a population of 50,000 by 2031. This will be factored into the calculation for the population projection up to 2030 and is as follows:

Table 2.2: Projected Population Increase in Dundalk 2028-2030

Settlement	Projected population 2027	Projected population 2031	Difference between projected population 2027 and 2031	Projected annual population increase 2028-2031	Projected population increase 2028-2030
Dundalk	46,664	50,000	3,336	834	2,502

The housing allocation for Dundalk between 2027-2030 will be calculated on a pro-rata basis of the allocation between 2021-2027 and is as follows:

Table 2.3: Projected Housing Allocation for Dundalk 2028-2030

Settlement	Housing allocation 2021-2027	Annual average allocation 2021-2027	Housing allocation 2028-2030	Housing allocation 2021-2030
Dundalk	2,447	408	1,224	3,671

Table 2.4: Projected Population Increase and Housing Requirement for Dundalk 2016-2030

Settlement	Population 2016	Population 2022	Projected population increase to 2016-2030	Projected population 2030	Housing allocation 2021-2030	Total lands zoned New Residential Phase 1 (ha)	Total lands zoned New Residential Phase 2 (ha)
Dundalk	39,004	43,112	10,162	49,166	3,671	136.8	80.9

Table 2.5: Estimated Yield of Lands with Potential to Deliver Housing¹

Settlement – Dundalk	A1 Existing Residential	A2 New Residential	A3 New Residential Phase 2	C1 Mixed Use
Quantum of lands with potential to deliver housing	40.4ha	136.8ha	78.8ha	22.4ha
Potential Capacity of the lands	854-942 units	2,246 – 2,817 units	1,857 – 2,650 units	750 units

¹ The figures in Table 2.5 are estimates and are based on a net site area of 70% and a density of 35-50 units per hectare. Other factors such as extant permissions on undeveloped lands, the densities of these permissions, and topography were also taken into account. See maps in Settlement Capacity Audit for details.



The population projection for Dundalk in 2030 is 49,166 persons. This projection is reflective of Dundalk's designation as a Regional Growth Centre and is closely aligned with the target population of 50,000 by 2031 as set out in the RSES. The 2030 population projection would represent a growth in population of 6,054 persons between the Census 2022 figure and 2030.

The annual average population increase between 2022-2030 would be 757 persons. Based on current population trends this figure is considered realistic and achievable.

In 2022 the total housing stock in Dundalk was 17,470 units, which was an increase of 6.8% (1,119 units) on the 2016 figure. During this period, the vacancy rate fell from 9 % to 6%.

This is a strong indication of the current demand for housing in the town. CSO housing completion data indicates that there were 883 units completed between 2021-2023, which is an average of just under 300 units per annum. This is below the annual average housing allocation as provided for in the Core Strategy of the 2021-2027 County Development Plan, as varied, which provides for an annual average delivery of 408 units per annum. Based on recent trends and the number of extant permissions in the Plan area it is anticipated that house completions will continue to increase.

This Plan will seek to facilitate a continued increase in the completion of residential units in line with that envisaged in the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan. This will ensure that the housing needs of the existing and future population of the town are met and will also assist in maintaining the economic competitiveness of the town, with housing availability being an important consideration when businesses are choosing where to invest.

2.4 Development Strategy for Dundalk

An integral element of Dundalk maximising its potential as one of the principal locations for economic and population growth in the north-east of the country is to ensure there are sufficient lands available for employment related development and housing.

The Plan has identified c.422 hectares of undeveloped land for economic investment and employment generating development.

This provides clarity as to the future location for employment related development in Dundalk and will ensure there is sufficient land available to facilitate employment generating development over the next number of Plan cycles.

In order to ensure Dundalk continues to be attractive for inward investment it is critical that there continues to be a steady delivery of housing to meet demand. This Plan has taken this into account and has zoned a quantum of land for residential use that will ensure choice in the lands available for development. For various reasons, lands in parts of Dundalk have been slow to be brought forward for development in recent years. In order to avoid a situation where the supply of housing is restricted due to a lack of available lands, the quantum of lands identified for residential use has factored in the potential for land hoarding or a prolonged timeframe in lands zoned for residential use being brought forward for development.

The Council is satisfied that, through the Development Management process, the build out of these lands can be appropriately phased to ensure that the housing allocation, as set out in Table 2.4, will not be exceeded.

This approach will facilitate the continuing momentum of the upward trend in housing completions and will enable Dundalk to play a key role in the national housing target set by the Government in 'Housing for All' being achieved.



2.4.1 Compact Growth

This Plan recognises the benefits of compact growth in creating a sustainable settlement pattern, including:

- A reduction in commuting times as people live closer to places of employment, services, and amenities;
- A healthier lifestyle with more opportunities to walk or cycle to work;
- A more efficient use of land;
- A critical mass of population that provides a greater return on public infrastructure investment; and
- Assisting in the transition to a low carbon society.

Within the built-up footprint of Dundalk there are significant tracts of vacant and under-utilised lands of various sizes that have the potential to accommodate mixed use or residential developments. The strategy of this Plan supports the creation of a more compact settlement and will seek to deliver at least 30% of all new homes within the existing built-up area of the town.

2.4.2 Density and Building Height

This Plan recognises the contribution higher densities and increased building heights can make in the creation of more compact settlements.

The recommended density in Dundalk is based on the densities set out in the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines (DHLGH, 2024)*.

Table 2.6 sets out the minimum recommended densities in the central and suburban areas of the town. Applicants and developers are advised that this is a minimum recommended density.

Table 3.4 of the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines (DHLGH 2024)* provides a range of densities that shall generally be applied in Regional Growth Centres.

Table 2.6: Recommended Minimum Density for Residential Development

Settlement	Recommended Density Ranges per hectare (net)	
	Town Centre and Urban Neighbourhood	Suburban area/Urban extension
Dundalk	50 units per ha	35 units per ha

Section 5.6 of the Plan provides further information on building heights. Whilst Table 2.6 above sets out the minimum recommended density, any application should take into account the character of the area and the capacity of the lands to accommodate the development proposed. In this regard, it is recognised that a balance is required in achieving recommended densities and creating quality developments and attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods.

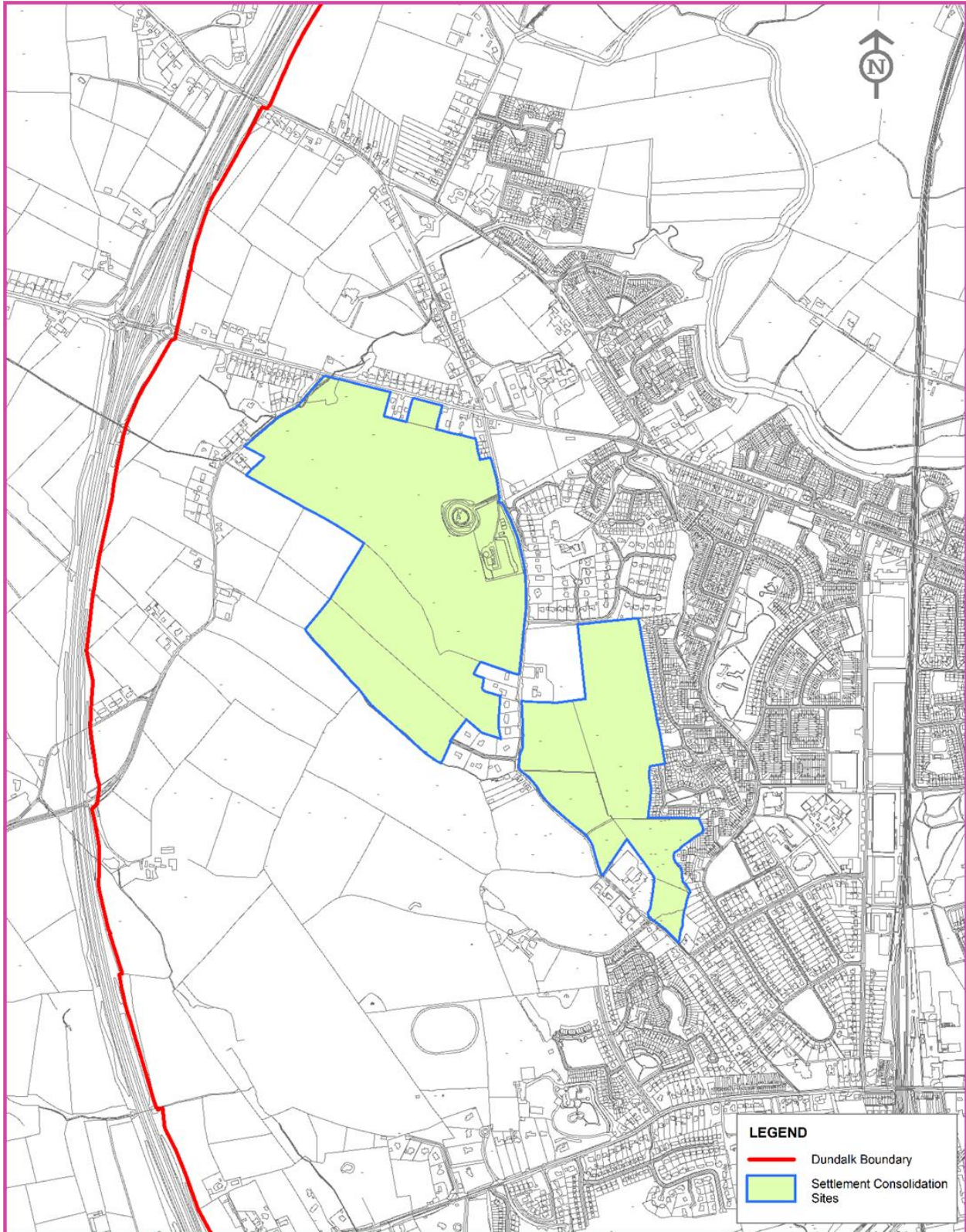
2.4.3 Settlement Consolidation Sites

The *Development Plan Guidelines (DHLGH, 2022)* recommend that lands, which will have a critical role in delivering the core strategy objectives, are identified as 'Settlement Consolidation Sites'. The lands in the Mount Avenue area are considered to be an important development area to the west of Dundalk town centre. There are approximately 45.5ha of land zoned A2 New Residential Phase 1. These lands have the capacity to deliver c.1,600 residential units.

The location of the lands are set out in Map 2.1 of this Chapter. Section 3.2 of Chapter 3 'Key Development Areas' provides more information on the Mount Avenue area.




Map 2.1 – Settlement Consolidation Sites in Dundalk



LEGEND

- Dundalk Boundary
- Settlement Consolidation Sites

 Comhairle Contae Lú Louth County Council	Comhairle Contae Lú Louth County Council Email: info@louthcoco.ie An Roinn um Pleanáil Planning Department www.louthcoco.ie	Date: March 2025 Scale: Not to Scale	Dundalk Local Area Plan 2025-2031	Drawing Name / Ref. Settlement Consolidation Sites
		CYAL50441422 © Tailte Éireann – Surveying		



2.4.4 Sustainable Mobility

As the dominant mode of transport, private car usage accounts for up to 80% of journeys within some areas of Dundalk, highlighting the need to transition towards more sustainable modes of transport. Sustainable mobility can be described as connecting people and places in a sustainable way through safe, accessible, comfortable, and affordable journeys using active travel and public transport. It is closely aligned with facilitating compact growth and provides an opportunity to reorientate neighbourhoods, so they become more people focused, liveable places. This Plan recognises the role sustainable mobility has in creating an attractive and healthy community and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

2.4.5 Phasing of Residential Lands

It should be noted that not all lands zoned for residential use will be available for development during the plan period. The residential land use zonings in Dundalk are as follows:

1. A1 – Existing Residential
2. A2 – New Residential Phase 1
3. A3 – New Residential Phase 2

There is also a significant quantum of lands identified as L1 Strategic Reserve. These lands will become available in subsequent plans when demand arises. It will be in these subsequent plans that the future use of these lands will be determined.

The phasing strategy for the release of residential lands focuses primarily on lands zoned 'A1 Existing Residential' or 'A2 New Residential Phase 1'. Residential development may also be facilitated on Town Centre or Mixed-Use zoned lands.

Lands zoned 'A3 New Residential Phase 2' will only become available for development in specific circumstances as follows:

1. Where at least 75% of the lands identified as 'A2 New Residential Phase 1' in the immediate vicinity of the Phase 2 lands have been developed (immediate vicinity means approximately 500 metres from the subject lands);

or

2. The annual rate of residential completions in Dundalk is less than 50% of the projected annual average output for Dundalk. This is based on the housing allocation for Dundalk as set out in Table 2.3, being divided by a 9-year period, taking account that this housing allocation is from 2021-2030.

In addition to fulfilling criteria 1 or 2, the Planning Authority will give consideration to the following:

1. **Extant Permissions** – Consideration will be given to any extant permissions within an approximate 500 metre area of the subject lands, the date of expiration of the permission and a realistic assessment of the likelihood of the permission being implemented (applicable to criteria 2 only).
2. **Infill and Brownfield lands** – The capacity of infill and brownfield lands within approximately 1,000 metres of the subject lands and in particular larger sites with a potential to deliver in excess of 100 units.
3. **Lands zoned 'A1 Existing Residential'** – The capacity of lands zoned 'A1 Existing Residential' within approximately 1,000 metres of the subject lands and in particular larger sites with a potential to deliver in excess of 100 units.
4. **Quantum of Lands Available** – The quantum of 'A3 New Residential Phase 2' lands to be released will not result in the housing allocation as set out in Table 2.4 of this Plan being exceeded.



This shall take into consideration a realistic assessment of the likelihood of the implementation of extant permissions, having regard to the remaining duration of such permissions, in addition to the rate of household completions in Dundalk during the Plan period.

5. **Compact Growth** – The location of the ‘A3 New Residential Phase 2’ lands proposed to be released shall be in a location that is within walking distance of schools, facilities, and services and the development of the lands will contribute to a consolidated pattern of development.

2.4.6 Key Development Areas

This phasing strategy will ensure the focus of growth in Dundalk will be on consolidation and the organic expansion of the town. It will prioritise the continued rejuvenation of the town centre by placing a strong emphasis on directing development towards the urban core of the town. The progression of the regeneration projects at St. Nicholas Quarter and the Long Walk will be used as exemplar projects in highlighting the benefits of town centre living. This will be strengthened further by the advancement of a public realm scheme along Park Street and Francis Street. As part of the active land management strategy the opportunity sites in the town centre area will continue to be promoted for redevelopment.

In order for the projected housing demand to be met development will also be required to be facilitated in other parts of the town.

The Mount Avenue and Castletown areas of Dundalk are to the west of the town centre. These lands are in close proximity to existing services and facilities including the railway station.

A large parcel of land has been zoned for residential use in this location. Connectivity in this part of the town has been significantly improved by the delivery of the LIHAF funded Mount Avenue Link Road, which was completed in Q4 2024.

Cú Chulainn’s Castle, Castletown Motte, Mount Avenue



To the east of the town centre the residential and employment lands are largely built out, however, there are infill opportunities including lands on the Red Barns Road and Point Road.

Much of the development activity in Dundalk over the past 20 years has been concentrated in the southern area of the town including the Blackrock area. This includes the construction of Industrial Estates and IDA Business and Technology Parks and the expansion of Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT). These works increased the demand for residential development in this part of the town.

This area of Dundalk will continue to be the primary location for economic investment due to the availability of land in addition to the opportunities to cluster and collaborate with existing businesses and a third-level institution.

Residential development in this part of the town will continue to be supported in order to facilitate the creation of a sustainable community and enable people to live close to their place of employment.



Lands have been identified for residential and employment related development to the north of the town centre. Whilst the Castletown River limits the connectivity between the town centre and lands north of the river, there are established residential communities and neighbourhood facilities in this location. The construction of the 'Dundalk North Business Park' on the Armagh Road is likely to increase the demand for residential accommodation in this part of the town.

There are opportunities for infill development and the creation of new residential communities close to lands zoned for employment generating uses north of the town centre, including along the Armagh Road, Racecourse Road, and Inner Relief Road.

In summary, this development strategy takes account of the existing built envelope of the town. It seeks to prioritise development in the urban core and ensure the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the town for the future. There is an emphasis on creating sustainable patterns of development that will enable people to live and work in a way that reduces their carbon footprint; with careful consideration also given to the potential impacts of climate change.

2.4.7 Policy Objectives

DS 1

To support the orderly expansion of the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk and enable the town to strengthen its role as a regional economic driver targeted to grow to city scale.

DS 2

To support and facilitate the provision of housing and the projected population increase as set out in Table 2.4 of this Plan.

DS 3

To capitalise on the strategic location of Dundalk along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

DS 4

To achieve compact growth through the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes in urban areas within the existing footprint of Dundalk, by developing infill, brownfield, regeneration, and town centre sites and redeveloping under-utilised lands in preference to greenfield lands.

DS 5

To support and manage the self-sufficient sustainable development of Dundalk in a planned manner, with population growth occurring in tandem with the provision of economic, physical, and social infrastructure.

**DS 6**

To support the progression and delivery of projects that would facilitate the rejuvenation of Dundalk and the creation of a vibrant and sustainable community, including any project to be funded by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

DS 7

To apply phasing to the delivery of new residential development in Dundalk as indicated on the Land Use Zoning Map, whereby new residential development will only be considered on lands zoned 'A3 New Residential Phase 2' when lands zoned 'A2 New Residential Phase 1' are not being brought forward for development and this is impeding the housing allocation for Dundalk being achieved. In such instances consideration may be given to releasing, during the lifetime of this Plan, appropriately located 'A3 New Residential Phase 2' lands, subject to the lands contributing to compact and consolidated patterns of development and the applicant demonstrating compliance with the relevant criteria set out in Section 2.4.5 of this Plan.