



Comhairle Contae Lú  
Louth County Council



# Louth County Development Plan

## 2021-2027




### Two-Year Progress Report

### September 2023

**PROGRESS INFOGRAPHIC SUMMARY**


## LCDP 2021-2027 2-Year Progress Report


**Population 2022**  
**139,703**




- Increased by 10,819 persons - 8.4% increase
- 57.5% of population growth took place in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk
- Drogheda and Dundalk are on target reach a population of 50,000 on or before 2031
- Current rate of population increase for the County is broadly aligned with that projected in the Development Plan

**Housing**




**3,548** 


residential units granted in the County since Plan came into effect

**1,330** 

residential units completed in the County since Plan came into effect

**51%** 

of all units granted in urban areas located on infill /brownfield lands

**239** 


new homes completed in the open countryside since the Plan came into effect

- Progress is being made on Capital Housing Projects by the Council
- Renovation works being carried out to vacant social housing stock


**Economic Development**



- Almost 700 hectares of undeveloped lands are available for employment related uses in the County.
- The Council continues to work closely with businesses, the IDA and Enterprise Ireland in facilitating and supporting economic development



**Enabling Infrastructure**



**PANCR**

Phase 1 of the Drogheda PANCR under construction, releasing strategic lands to the north of the town centre for development.

**Mount Avenue**

Construction of the Mount Avenue Link Road in Dundalk ongoing releasing strategically located lands to the west of the town centre for development.

**Newtown Drogheda**

To the south of the Marsh Road at Newtown, Drogheda an access road is currently under construction that will unlock a land bank of approximately 18 hectares for development.

URDF Funded Projects	
Project Description and Location	Current Stage of Project
Westgate Vision in Drogheda	Planning application for public realm works is at an advanced stage
St. Nicholas' Quarter and Backlands Regeneration in Dundalk	Consultants have been appointed for the first phase of the project

RRDF Funded Projects	
Project Description and Location	Current Stage of Project
Ardee Castle	Part 8 approved and the Ministerial Consent application sent to DHLGH
Living in Carlingford Visiting Carlingford	Part 8 approved for the public realm scheme and associated facilities and amenities
Omeath Placemaking Scheme	Works are due to commence on this project in October 2023
Ardee 2040	Planning application for public realm works is at an advanced stage

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted by the elected members of Louth County Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and the Plan came into effect on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Under section 15(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) the planning authority is required, not more than 2 years after the adoption of the Development Plan, to give a report to the members on the progress achieved in securing the objectives of the Plan.

In the two years since the adoption of the Development Plan considerable progress has been made towards achieving the policy objectives of the Plan. Parts of the County have experienced substantial growth and investment. This report will detail the progress achieved since the adoption of the Plan.

### 1.1 FORMAT OF THIS REPORT

The format of the Report will follow the chapter headings of the County Development Plan. A selection of policy objectives from each chapter will be referenced alongside a narrative to indicate any progress made to date.

### 1.2 VARIATION 1 OF THE LOUTH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

At a Council meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022 the elected members agreed, by resolution, to make Variation 1 of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. This variation updated the County Development Plan to take account of the methodology and housing projections as detailed in the Section 28 Guidelines 'Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning' and the Projected Housing Demand by Local Authority Area 2020-2031 – ESRI NPF Scenario Housing Supply Target' provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in December 2020. This resulted in an amendment to the Core Strategy Table (Table 2.15) and in particular the housing allocation for the County and each settlement during the Plan period. The Variation also updated the Development Plan to ensure it is consistent with Part V of the Planning and Development Act as amended by the Affordable Housing Act 2021. The amendments as agreed under this Variation were inserted into the Development Plan with a 'consolidated' version incorporating the amendments published on the Council website.

Table 1.1 overleaf is the updated Core Strategy Table following as a result of the amendments made under Variation 1 of the Plan.

Table 1.1: Core Strategy Table following the adoption of Variation 1 of the County Development Plan

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H	Column I	Column J
<b>Settlement Category</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Population 2016</b>	<b>Projected Population Increase to 2027</b>	<b>Projected Population 2027</b>	<b>Housing Allocation 2021-2027</b>	<b>Lands with potential to deliver Infill or Brownfield Development (ha)</b>	<b>Potential units to be delivered on Infill/ Brownfield Lands</b>	<b>Total Lands Zoned New Residential Phase 1 (ha)</b>	<b>Total lands zoned New Residential (Phase 1 and Phase 2) (ha)</b>
<b>County</b>	Louth	128,884	21,082	149,966	6,524	110.4	4,302	506.1	597.1
<b>Regional Growth Centre</b>	Drogheda	34,199	6,914	41,113	2,447	34.8	1,725	270	270
	Dundalk	39,004	7,660	46,664	2,447	30	1,743	150.3	225.7
<b>Self-Sustaining Growth Towns</b>	Ardee	4,928	1,655	6,583	440	8.5	298	35.9	51.5
	Dunleer	1,822	935	2,757	146	3.1	109	8.4	8.4
<b>Self-Sustaining Towns</b>	Carlingford	1,445	200	1,645	50	2.6	31	2.0	2.0
	Castlebellingham / Kilsaran	1,126	110	1,236	65	1.1	27	10.9	10.9
	Clogherhead	2,145	300	2,445	75	1.6	39	3.2	3.2
	Termonfeckin	1,579	250	1,829	70	3.4	40	4.5	4.5
	Tullyallen	1,547	220	1,767	65	1.2	29	0	0
<b>Small Towns &amp; Villages</b>	Level 4 Settlements	5,103	785	5,888	230	24.1	260	20.8	20.8
<b>Rural Nodes</b>	Level 5 Settlements	35,986	300	38,039	489	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### 1.3 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

There have been a number of amendments and updates to planning legislation since the adoption of the *Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027*. This includes the *Planning and Development (Amendment) (Large Scale Residential) Act 2021*, which restored the two-stage planning process, with applications for large scale residential developments being made to the planning authority in the first instance, with a subsequent right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála. This has replaced the Strategic Housing Development arrangements.

The *Maritime Area Planning Act 2021* was enacted to regulate the maritime area. It establishes a new marine planning system and a new licensing and development management regime. This will be administered in due course by the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority, in conjunction with An Bord Pleanála and the coastal local authorities. This Act replaces existing foreshore, planning and environmental processes with a single streamlined consent process.

A *Draft Planning and Development Bill* was approved by the Government in December 2022. This Bill, when finalised will replace the *Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)*. At the time of writing this Bill was at the Draft Stage.

#### 1.3.1 RESIDENTIAL ZONED LAND TAX (RZLT)

The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) is a new tax that seeks to activate zoned and serviced land for residential purposes. It was introduced by the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under Section 80 of the Finance Act 2021. Draft Maps identifying the lands that are to be subject to the RZLT were published in November 2022. The RZLT will be first due in 2024 in respect of land identified on the maps to be published on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and which meets the relevant criteria as detailed in the Finance Act 2021.

### 1.4 CENSUS 2022

Census 2022 took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022. The results, published as part of a series of themed reports were released between the 30<sup>th</sup> May and 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023. At the time of writing 3 reports had been published as follows:

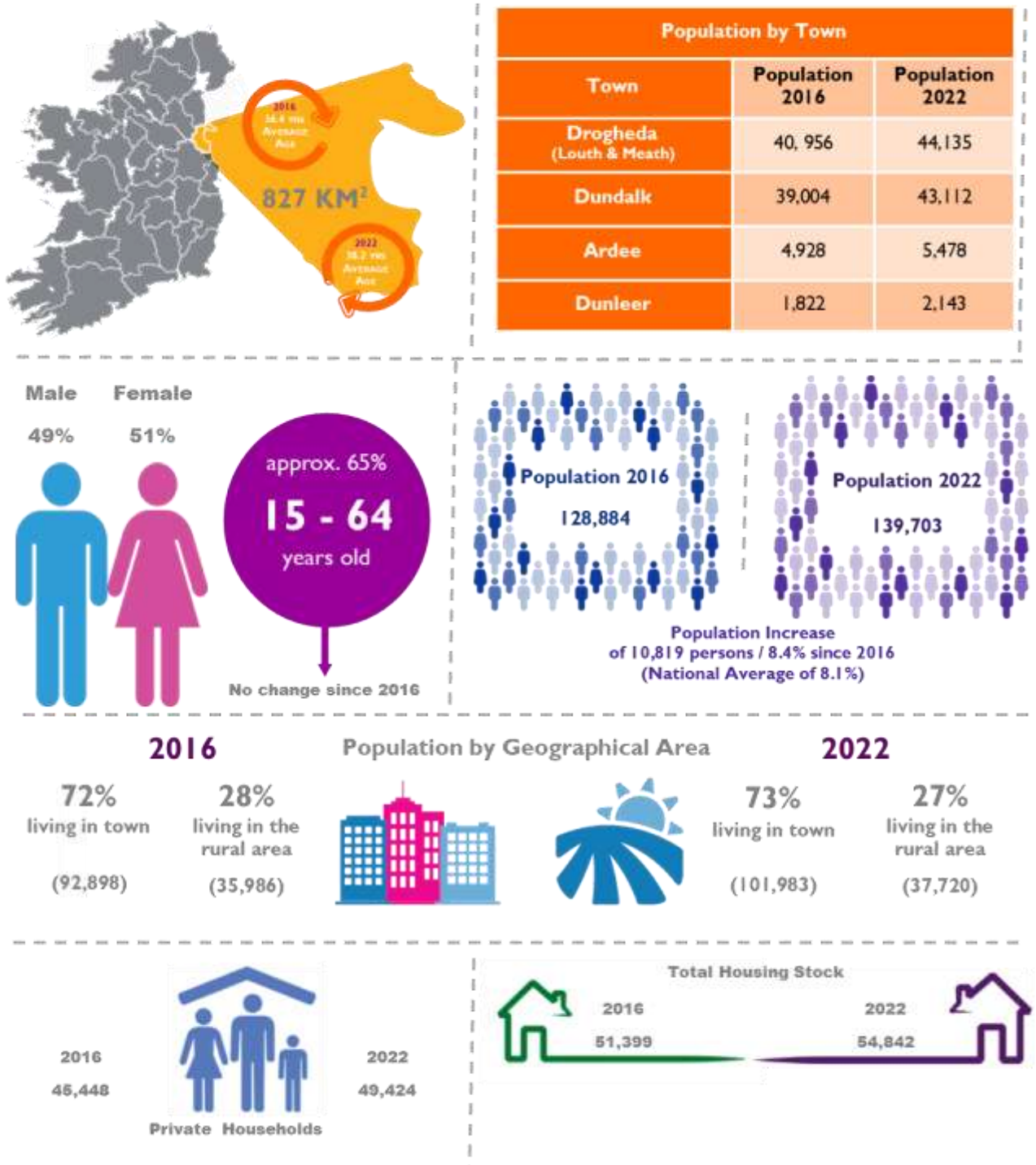
- Profile 1 – Population Distribution and Movement;
- Profile 2 – Housing in Ireland; and
- Profile 3 – Households, Families and Childcare.

The data from these reports is a vital source of information in analysing where growth and development is taking place in the County and the rate at which this growth is occurring. This will inform future investment decisions on infrastructure requirements in the County.

### 1.4.1 POPULATION

There has been a strong population growth in Louth between 2016-2022 during which the population increased from 128,884 to 139,703. This is an increase of 10,819 persons (8.4%). The annual average population increase during this period was 1,803 persons. This rate of growth is much higher than that which took place between 2011-2016, when the population increased by 5,987 persons (4.9%).

#### Key Facts and Figures (Census 2016 & 2022)

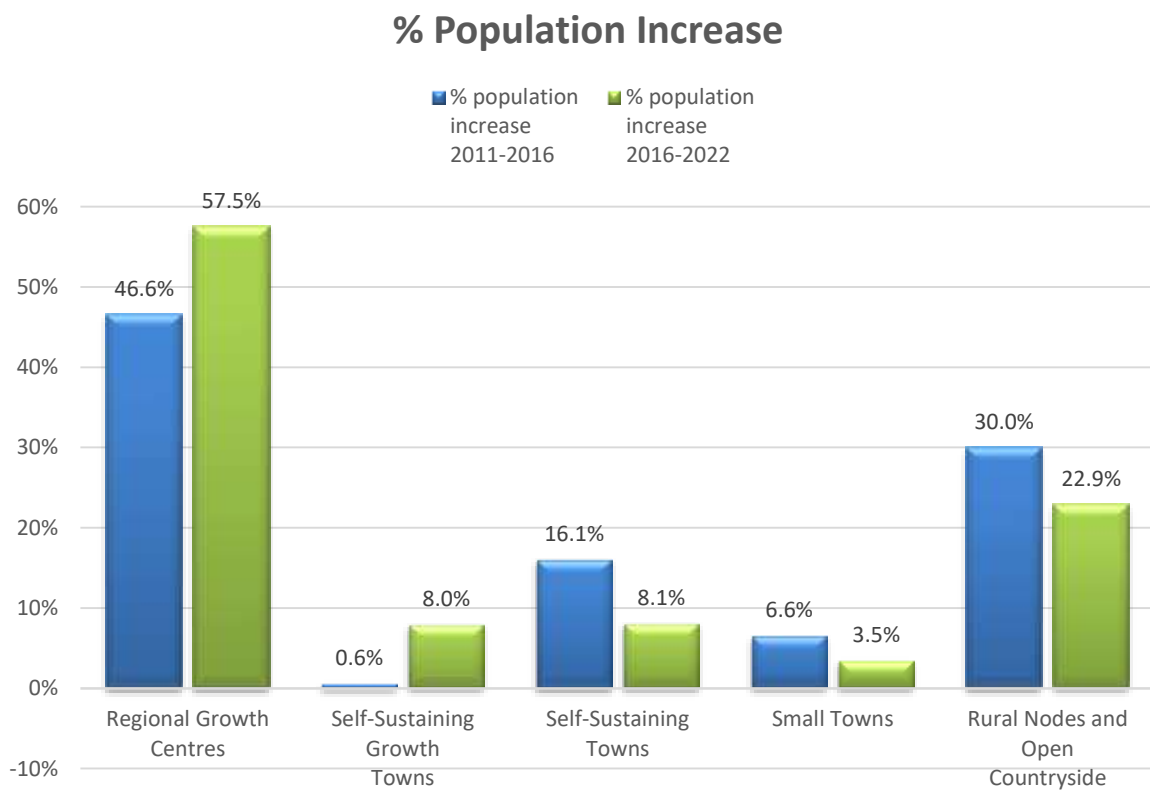


### 1.4.2 WHERE IS POPULATION GROWTH TAKING PLACE?

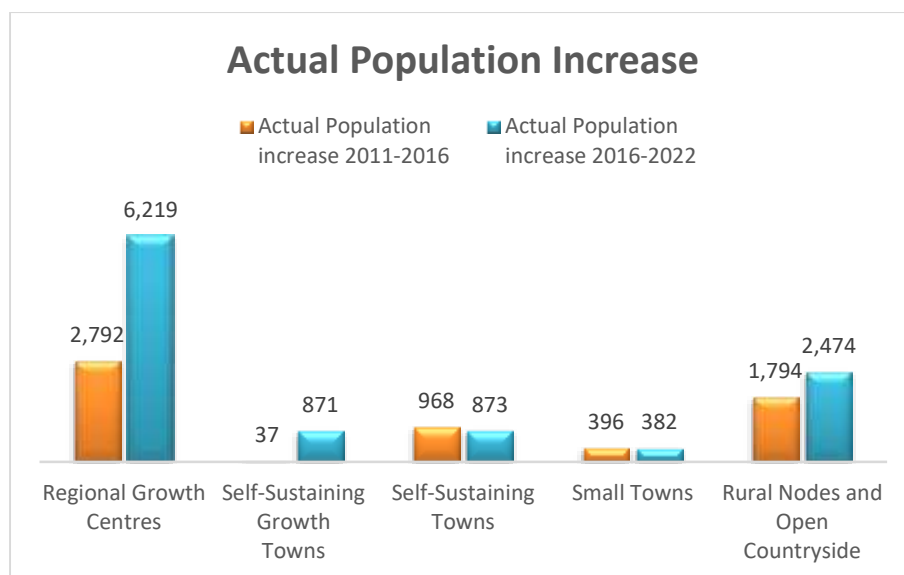
Population growth in the County has been concentrated in the large urban settlements, with 57.5% (6,219 persons) of the population growth taking place in Drogheda and Dundalk. This is consistent with the growth strategy of the County Development Plan, which seeks to create a critical mass of population in the Regional Growth Centres.

The smaller urban centres in the County are also experiencing strong levels of growth with almost 20% of the population increase occurring in the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns, and Small Towns. The population of the open countryside also continues to grow with 22.9% of the population growth (2,474 persons) taking place in the open countryside.

Fig 1.1: Percentage of Population Increase by Settlement Category 2011-2016 and 2016-2022



**Fig 1.2: Actual Population Increase by Settlement Category 2011-2016 and 2016-2022**



#### 1.4.2.1 ELECTORAL AREAS

The Haggardstown electoral area in Dundalk had the largest population increase between 2016 -2022, increasing by 2,369 persons (37.2%) while the electoral area with the highest population decrease was St. Mary's in Drogheda where the population decreased by 105 persons (1.5%).

### 1.5 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Chapter 1 of the Development Plan includes 19 strategic objectives. These strategic objectives provide the framework for the Plan and cover a range of themes including maximising the competitive advantage of the County, promoting the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as regional economic drivers, supporting the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County, conserving and enhancing green infrastructure, protecting the built and natural heritage, supporting the creation of vibrant, sustainable communities, and the sustainable development of rural areas.

The examination of the Development Plan chapters and the policy objectives included in this report will give an indication of the progress made to date in the implementation of the strategic objectives. A review of the following chapters will be carried out:

- Chapter 2 Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy;
- Chapter 3 Housing;
- Chapter 4 Social and Community;
- Chapter 5 Economy and Employment;
- Chapter 6 Tourism;
- Chapter 7 Movement;
- Chapter 8 Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure;
- Chapter 9 Built Heritage and Culture;
- Chapter 10 Utilities;
- Chapter 11 Environment, Natural Resources and The Coast; and
- Chapter 12 Climate Action.



The Core Strategy projects that the population of the County will increase from 128,884 in 2016 to 149,966 in 2027. This represents an increase of 21,082. Figures from Census 2022 indicate that the population increased from 128,884 in 2016 to 139,703 in 2022, which is an increase of 10,819 persons. This is broadly aligned with the trajectory of population growth projected in the County Development Plan, which provides for an average population increase of 1,916 persons per annum. If the population continues to increase at this rate it is anticipated that the population in 2027 will be closely aligned with that projected in Table 2.15 of the County Development Plan. The Census data for the population in 2022 validates the growth rate projected in the County Development Plan. Investment decisions for infrastructure, services, and facilities should therefore continue to use the 2027 population projection as a baseline for future growth in the County.

**Table 2.1: Comparison of population projected in the CDP and actual growth recorded in Census 2022**

	Population 2016	Population 2022	Annual Average Population Increase	Projected Population 2027
Louth CDP 2021-2027	128,884	140,380 (projected)	1,916	149,966
Census 2022	128,884	139,703 (actual)	1,803	148,717

### 2.2.1 GROWTH AT A SETTLEMENT LEVEL

Policy Objective	
<b>CS 1</b>	To secure the implementation of the Core Strategy and the Settlement Strategy in so far as practicable, by directing sustainable growth towards the designated settlements, subject to the availability of infrastructure and services.

An analysis of the population growth at a settlement level confirms that the pattern of growth is broadly following that projected in the County Development Plan. This is confirmation of the successful implementation of the growth strategy and Policy Objective CS1 in the Development Plan which prioritises urban areas and in particular the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk for population and economic growth.

Table 2.2 provides a comparison of the growth rate between 2016-2022 as detailed in Census 2022 with the projected population growth in the County Development Plan. This comparison further demonstrates the close alignment of where the actual population growth is taking place and the locations prioritised for growth in the County Development Plan.

Table 2.2: Comparison of Growth Rate between 2016 – 2022 [Census 2022]

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H	Column I
Settlement Category	Settlement	Population 2016	Projected Population Increase to 2027	Annual average projected population increase	Actual Population 2022 (CSO)	Actual annual average population increase 2016-2022	Projected Population 2027 as per CDP	Projected population 2027 based on continuation of growth rate in Census 2022
County	Louth	128,884	21,082	1,916	139,703	1,803	149,966	148,718
Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda (Louth only)	34,199	6,914	629	37,118 <sup>1</sup>	487	41,113	39,553
	Dundalk	39,004	7,660	693	43,112	685	46,664	46,537
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Ardee	4,928	1,655	150	5,478	92	6,583	5,938
	Dunleer	1,822	935	85	2,143	54	2,757	2,413
Self-Sustaining Towns	Carlingford	1,445	200	18	1,528	14	1,645	1,598
	Castlebellingham / Kilsaran	1,126	110	10	1,232	18	1,236	1,322
	Clogherhead	2,145	300	27	2,275	22	2,445	2,385
	Termonfeckin	1,579	250	23	1,983	67	1,829	2,318
	Tullyallen	1,547	220	20	1,697	25	1,767	1,822
Small Towns & Villages	Level 4 Settlements	5,103	785	71	5,417	51	5,888	5,672
Rural Nodes	Level 5 Settlements	35,986	300	27	37,720	288	38,039	39,160
Rural Area	Rural Area		1,753	159				

<sup>1</sup> Note at the time of writing the population of Drogheda in the administrative boundary of Drogheda was unavailable. The figure provided is based on the proportion of population located in Louth in 2016 i.e. 84.1% which equates to 37,118 persons in the 2022 census figures

## 2.3 HOUSING

The challenges in the delivery of housing are well documented. Within Louth there continues to be a pent up demand for housing with demand continuing to outstrip supply. It is important to note that the Development Plan can only facilitate the delivery of housing through the identification of appropriate lands for development, the inclusion of relevant policy objectives and design guidance and standards that will enable the creation of quality developments and neighbourhoods. There are, however, a range of external factors that are impacting on the delivery of housing in Louth. This includes rising costs due to inflation, supply constraints associated with rising costs of goods and energy, a shortage of labour and addressing infrastructure constraints.

### 2.3.1 PLANNING PERMISSIONS SINCE THE PLAN CAME INTO EFFECT

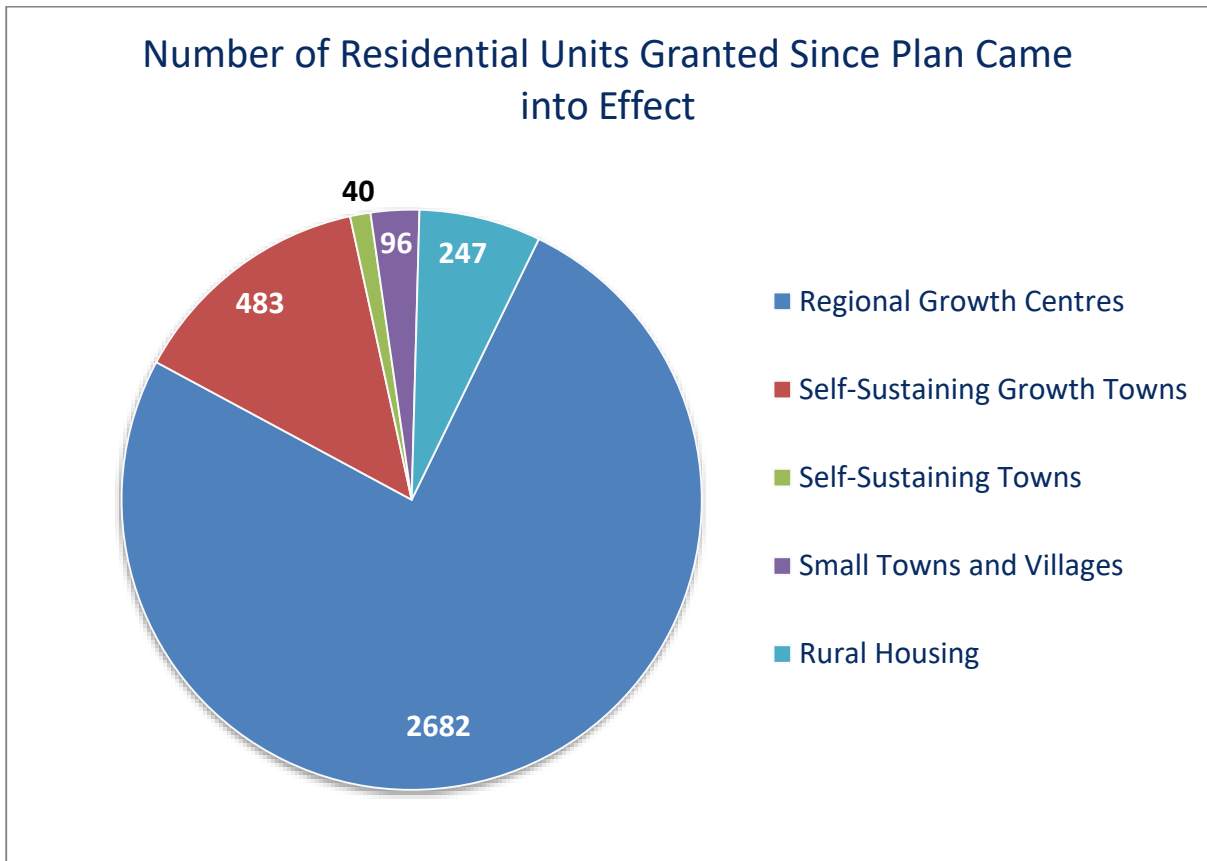
Between the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 (date the County Development Plan took effect) and the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023, 1,932 planning applications have been received. The range of applications continues to be broad and includes residential, commercial, business, industrial, and agricultural related developments.

The focus in this chapter will be on residential units that have been granted permission. A total of 3,548 residential units have been granted of which 3,301 units have been granted in urban settlements between 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023. The majority of these units (75.6%) are located in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk. This is consistent with the growth strategy of the Development Plan which prioritises growth in these settlements. The volume of applications in the smaller settlements is commensurate with the size of the settlements and is in accordance with the policy objectives in the Development Plan that are promoting consolidation and the regeneration of towns and villages. A breakdown of permissions granted since the Development Plan came into effect by settlement category is set out in Table 2.3 below.

**Table 2.3: Residential Units Granted Since Plan Came into Effect**

Settlement Category	Number of Residential Units Granted Since the Plan Came into Effect
Regional Growth Centres	2,682
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	483
Self-Sustaining Towns	40
Small Towns and Villages	96
Rural Housing	247
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,548</b>

**Fig. 2.1: Number of Residential Units Granted Since Plan Came into Effect**



**2.3.1.1 RECENT LEVELS OF RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION**

When a comparison is made between the number of residential units granted permission and completed, the challenges of constructing and delivering housing becomes apparent. It is important to acknowledge that there is often a significant lead in time between getting planning permission and commencing development. This can be due to a range of factors including accessing finance, appointing contractors, finalising detailed construction drawings, and dealing with legal and infrastructure issues.

The Covid-19 pandemic also had a significant impact on the delivery of housing due to the restrictions in place during that time which had a substantial effect on the construction sector. Following the removal of the majority of Covid related restrictions in January 2022, the economy began to return to normal, however it took a significant period of time before construction activity began to reflect pre-Covid levels.

The CSO Housing completions data that is published on a quarterly basis is the primary source of data for monitoring housing completions. Tables 2.4 and 2.5 overleaf provide details of the housing completions in the County between Q4 2021 (when the plan took effect) and the end of Q2 2023. 1,330 new dwellings have been completed in the County during this period.

The rate of completions is consistent, ranging between 167 and 200 units per quarter. It is acknowledged however, that the level of housing activity will need to increase if the housing allocation as set out in the Core Strategy is to be achieved.

Table 2.4 provides details of housing completions per quarter/annum. When broken down on a quarterly basis the Development Plan provides for the completion of up to 279 units per quarter. It is, therefore, clear that if housing completions continue at the current rate the housing allocation, as provided for in the Core Strategy, will not be achieved. It is acknowledged, however, that the level of construction on residential sites is continuing to increase, particularly in Drogheda and Dundalk. This increased level of activity, combined with the completion of major infrastructure projects during the life of the Development Plan, including Phase 1 of the PANCR in Drogheda and the Mount Avenue Link Road in Dundalk, will provide opportunities to increase housing completions.

**Table 2.4: New dwelling completions per Quarter in Louth**

Quarter	Housing allocation per quarter/annum in the County Development Plan	Dwelling completions as per CSO data
Q4 2021	Projected average of 279 units per quarter or 1,115 units per annum	167
Q1 2022		199
Q2 2022		200
Q3 2022		191
Q4 2022		199
Q1 2023		176
Q2 2023		198
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,953</b>

The majority of new houses are in multi-unit developments. The number of single houses, the majority of which are located in the open countryside accounts for 19% of all new homes completed. This highlights the pressure for housing and development activity in rural areas. Table 2.5 provides for a break-down of house types delivered.

**Table 2.5: New dwelling Completions by House Type**

Quarter	Single House	Scheme House	Apartment	All House Types
Q4 2021	35	113	19	167
Q1 2022	28	153	18	199
Q2 2022	29	154	17	200
Q3 2022	38	144	9	191
Q4 2022	47	140	12	199
Q1 2023	40	66	70	176
Q2 2023	33	134	31	198
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>1,330</b>

Data is also available on housing activity at a settlement level. This is set out in Table 2.6 below. The concentration of residential construction in the Regional Growth Centres is evident with two-thirds of new homes completed (879 units) located in Drogheda and Dundalk. Ardee and Termonfeckin have also experienced strong levels of development activity whilst the remaining towns and villages have experienced more limited levels of house building. There continues to be a consistent level of construction in the open countryside with 290 units completed. This equates to 22% of the total new homes.

**Table 2.6: Units Completed by Settlement Q42021-Q22023**

Settlement Category	Settlement	Housing allocation Q4 2021-Q2 2023	No. of units completed Q4 2021-Q2 2023
Regional Growth Centres	Drogheda (Louth only)	713	457
	Dundalk	713	422
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Ardee	128	68
	Dunleer	43	1
Self-Sustaining Towns	Carlingford	15	6
	Castlebellingham/Kilsaran	19	4
	Clogherhead	22	3
	Termonfeckin	20	57
	Tullyallen	19	0
Small Towns and Villages	Annagassan	67	0
	Baltray		11
	Collon		0
	Dromiskin		4
	Knockbridge		0
	Louth Village		2
	Omeath		0
	Tallanstown		5
Rural Nodes	Level 5 settlements	142	290
Rural Area	Open Countryside		
County	Louth	1901	1,330

## 2.3.2 COMPACT GROWTH

Policy Objective	
<b>CS 2</b>	To achieve compact growth through the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes in urban areas within the existing built up footprint of settlements, by developing infill, brownfield and regeneration sites and redeveloping underutilised land in preference to greenfield sites.

Policy Objective CS 2 requires at least 30% of all new homes in urban areas to be located within the existing built up area of settlements in order to support the creation of more compact settlements. The existing built up area is defined in the National Planning Framework as the CSO settlement boundary. An analysis of permissions granted since the Development Plan came into effect indicates that 51% of all new residential units granted in urban areas are on infill/brownfield lands. This demonstrates that the growth strategy of the Plan is consistent with national and regional policy, and is successfully delivering consolidation of the urban areas and promoting more compact patterns of development. Table 2.7 below provides a breakdown of the percentage of units granted on infill and brownfield lands by settlement category.

*Table 2.7: Percentage of units granted on infill and brownfield lands*

Settlement Category	% of Units Granted Located on Brownfield / Infill Lands
Regional Growth Centres	52%
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	46.4%
Self-Sustaining Towns	100%
Small Towns and Villages	100%

### 2.3.2.1 PHASING OF RESIDENTIAL LANDS AND CONSIDERATION OF THE NEED TO RELEASE LANDS ZONED 'A3 NEW RESIDENTIAL PHASE 2'

Policy Objective	
<b>CS 4</b>	To apply phasing to the delivery of new residential development as indicated on the zoning maps for the applicable settlements, whereby residential development, other than infill, brownfield or mixed use development will generally only be permitted on Phase 1 lands. Where lands zoned 'New Residential Phase 1' are not being brought forward for development in particular areas and this is impeding the achievement of Core Strategy projections and restricting the growth of the settlement as envisaged in national and regional policy, consideration may be given to releasing during the lifetime of this Plan appropriately located 'New Residential Phase 2' lands, subject to the lands contributing to compact and consolidated patterns of development.

Policy Objective CS4 relates to the phasing of residential lands. This policy objective includes a provision where residentially zoned lands are not being brought forward for development consideration maybe given to releasing appropriately located lands zoned A3 New Residential Phase 2, subject to compliance with criteria set out in Section 13.21.7 of Chapter 13 in the Development Plan being satisfied. The criterion is as follows:

**Table 2.8: Criteria for the Release of Lands Zoned A3 New Residential Phase 2**

Criteria Number	Description
<b>1</b>	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 500m from the subject lands).
<b>Or</b>	
<b>2</b>	The annual rate of residential completions in the settlement is less than 50% of the projected annual average output for the settlement. This is based on the housing allocation in the settlement as set out in the Core Strategy Table divided by the duration of the Plan i.e. 6 years.

The following are also required to be considered when assessing the requirement to release Phase 2 lands for development:

- Extant permissions;
- Infill and Brownfield lands;
- Lands zoned 'A1 Existing Residential';
- Quantum of lands available; and
- Compact growth.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the rate of completion of new housing is below that anticipated in the Development Plan construction activity has increased post-Covid and the level of planning applications remains strong ensuring an adequate pipeline of extant permissions.

## 2.4 REJUVENATION OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Policy Objective	
<b>CS 5</b>	To support the progression and delivery of projects that would facilitate the creation of vibrant, sustainable communities and the rejuvenation of towns and villages, including any project to be funded by the Urban or Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

A cross-cutting theme of this Plan is to make the towns and villages in Louth more attractive for people to live and businesses to invest. At a national level the government is promoting more compact and sustainable development and the regeneration of towns and villages through a number of funding streams including the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). The Council has been successful in funding applications for the following projects, identified in Table 2.9:

**Table 2.9: URDF Funded Projects in Louth**

URDF Funded Projects	
Project Description and Location	Current Stage of Project
<b>Westgate Vision</b> in Drogheda – funding was received for the implementation of the 'Westgate Vision – a Townscape Recovery Guide' published in 2018.	A planning application for public realm works is at an advanced stage and is due to be lodged with An Bord Pleanála in the coming months

URDF Funded Projects	
Project Description and Location	Current Stage of Project
<b>St. Nicholas' Quarter and Backlands Regeneration</b> in Dundalk – This project seeks to re-energise the northern area of the town by creating more usable spaces, improving connectivity and reconnecting the town centre with the Castletown River.	Consultants have been appointed for the first phase of the project, which received Part 8 approval in 2018. This will involve the enhancement of the public realm along Bridge Street, Linenhall Street and Peace Park.
<b>The Long Walk Quarter</b> , Dundalk – Funding was received for the progression of a regeneration project for the progression of a regeneration project for the Long Walk which will include the preparation of an Urban Framework Plan for the area	This project is at a preliminary stage.

### 2.4.1 URDF – THIRD ROUND OF FUNDING

The third round of URDF funding seeks to address long term vacancy and dereliction in towns and cities across the country. Louth County Council has received €7 million to target vacancy and dereliction in Drogheda and Dundalk. This funding will provide for the acquisition of vacant/derelict properties which are either not on the market for sale or to which the market has not responded. These properties could be acquired by agreement or under the CPO process and then offered for private sale to individuals, who will commit to bringing the property into use as a home.

### 2.4.2 RURAL REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT FUND (RRDF)

*Table 2.10: RRDF Funded Projects in Louth*

RRDF Funded Projects	
Project Description and Location	Current Stage of Project
<b>Ardee Castle</b> – This is a historical tourism project that will involve the renovation and alteration of the Castle	Part 8 approved and the Ministerial Consent application pack was sent to the DHLGH for approval In May 2023.
<b>Living in Carlingford Visiting Carlingford</b> – This project will develop a strategy for enhancing the quality of Carlingford for residents and promoting economic and employment opportunities through the creation of a sustainable tourism strategy.	Part 8 approved for the public realm scheme, car park, campervan parking, and 2no. tennis courts. Funding will now be sought for the delivery of the project.
<b>Omeath Placemaking Scheme</b> – This project will seek to regenerate the centre of Omeath and provide a shared space, pedestrian priority zone, and improved links to the Great Eastern Greenway.	Works are due to commence on this project in October 2023 on a phased basis with completion due in May 2024.

RRDF Funded Projects	
Project Description and Location	Current Stage of Project
<b>Ardee 2040</b> – This project seeks to improve the streetscape and amenity of Ardee with a focus on Main Street, Ash Walk, The Old Railway and amenity lands to the east of the town.	A planning application for public realm works is at an advanced stage and is due to be lodged with An Bord Pleanála in the coming months

### 2.4.3 DUNLEER – TOWN CENTRE FIRST

Dunleer is one of 26 towns across the country that has received government funding for the preparation of a Town Centre First Plan. This Plan will focus on a range of issues including place making, town centre living, the social and economic role of the town and emerging opportunities and challenges including remote working, climate action, and digitalisation. It is intended that the draft Plan will be placed on public display in Autumn 2023.

In summary, progress is being made on regeneration projects throughout the County. It is anticipated that the progression of these projects will act as a catalyst for further investment in town and village centres thus creating an attractive and sustainable communities close to existing services and facilities in accordance with national, regional, and county development plan policy.

### 2.4.4 CLOGHERHEAD REGENERATION PLAN

The Council is currently in the process of preparing a Regeneration Plan for Clogherhead. This Plan will seek to address the issue of vacant, derelict and under-utilised buildings in the town. There will be a focus on identifying public realm improvements and promoting the area as a sustainable tourist destination.

### 2.4.5 DUBLIN-BELFAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

Policy Objective	
<b>CS 12</b>	To promote and support the sustainable development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, safeguarding and improving accessibility and service by road, rail and communication and enhancing cross border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross-border network for regional development.

The Council continues to collaborate and engage with neighbouring local authorities on both sides of the border with regard to strengthening cross border links and maximising opportunities related to the locational advantage of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

There is also regular engagement with the various government departments and infrastructure agencies including Transport Infrastructure Ireland, The National Transport Authority, and Irish Rail with regard to improving connectivity and accessibility between and within the designated growth centres along the Corridor.

## 2.5 LOCAL AREA PLANS

As part of the Forward Planning Work Programme it is intended to prepare Local Area Plans for the following settlements during the life of the Development Plan:

- A Joint Local Area Plan for Drogheda in partnership with Meath County Council (Policy Objective CS 13);
- A Local Area Plan for Dundalk (Policy Objective CS 14);
- A Local Area Plan for Ardee (Policy Objective CS 15); and
- A Local Area Plan for Dunleer (Policy Objective CS 16).

### 2.5.1 JOINT LOCAL AREA PLAN FOR DROGHEDA

The County Development Plan recognises the benefits of a co-ordinated approach between Louth County Council and Meath County Council with regards to the future growth strategy for Drogheda and therefore supports the preparation of a Joint Local Area Plan for the town. Whilst preparatory work has been undertaken with respect to the draft Local Area Plan it has not been possible to progress this Plan as expected due to the Judicial Review of the Meath County Development Plan.

### 2.5.2 DUNDALK LOCAL AREA PLAN

An Issues Paper for the Dundalk Local Area Plan went on public display in June 2023. Forty-four submissions were received in response to the public consultation. It is anticipated that a draft Local Area Plan will be published in Q1 of 2024.

### 2.5.3 ARDEE AND DUNLEER LOCAL AREA PLANS

It is a policy objective of the County Development Plan to prepare Local Area Plans for Ardee and Dunleer. It is anticipated that preparatory work will commence on these Local Area Plans following the completion of the Local Area Plans for Drogheda and Dundalk.

## 2.6 ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

The Development Plan recognises the importance of enabling infrastructure that would open up strategically located lands for development. This includes transport and water services projects. The Council continues to work closely with the key agencies, landowners and other stakeholders in progressing infrastructure projects in the County including set out below.

### 2.6.1 DROGHEDA – PORT ACCESS NORTHERN CROSS ROUTE

Policy Objective	
<b>SS 9</b>	To support and protect the role of Drogheda Port as a Port of regional significance and to facilitate any investment, upgrade, or maintenance works to the Port, subject to appropriate environmental considerations.

The Port Access Northern Cross Route is an arterial road that will provide a direct link between Drogheda Port and the M1 Motorway.

It is a critical piece of enabling infrastructure that will have the dual benefit of releasing lands in the north Drogheda area for development whilst also removing HGVs and port related traffic from the town centre. The construction of this road will be developer driven and will be delivered in tandem with residential development. Phase 1 of this road is currently under construction. This includes the construction of the road from the Rosehall roundabout to the Ballymakenny Road and the upgrade of Twenties Lane and the Ballymakenny Road. A 450mm diameter watermain is also being laid along the route for Uisce Éireann along with ducting for the ESB and telecoms.

## 2.6.2 DUNDALK – MOUNT AVENUE LINK ROAD

Policy Objective	
<b>SS 30</b>	To secure the provision of the proposed Link Roads including the LIHAF funded Mount Avenue Link Road, and other road improvements, in co-operation with stakeholders and government agencies.

The Mount Avenue area of Dundalk is strategically located to the west of the town centre. In this part of the town there is a large parcel of land identified for the creation for a new neighbourhood that will consist of housing, neighbourhood, and community facilities and services. The construction of the LIHAF funded Mount Avenue Link Road will open up these lands for development. This project will consist of an upgrade and widening of the northern part of the Mount Avenue Road in addition to the construction of approximately 700 metres of new road. This road will improve connectivity between the Castletown Road and the Carrickmacross Road. Works are ongoing and are due for completion in Q2 2024.

## 2.6.3 NEWTOWN, DROGHEDA

To the south of the Marsh Road at Newtown, Drogheda an access road is currently under construction that will unlock a land bank of approximately 18 hectares for development. A residential development of 133 units is under construction on part of these lands.

## 2.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is considered that the Council has been successful in the implementation of the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy to date. Population growth is taking place in the settlements designated for growth and the current rate of population increase is broadly consistent with that projected in the Development Plan. Whilst the rate of completion of new housing is below that projected there are a large number of extant permissions for housing where development is yet to commence. In addition, there is a significant quantum of undeveloped lands zoned for residential use throughout the County. The Council will continue to liaise with key stakeholders and agencies to facilitate and support the release of residentially zoned lands in accordance with Development Plan policy to ensure the housing needs of the County are met.

## 3 HOUSING

This chapter sets out the strategy for the provision of housing in urban and rural parts of the County. It seeks to support the creation of vibrant and attractive neighbourhoods and communities that are adaptable and resilient to the impacts of climate change.

### 3.1 RECENT TRENDS IN THE DELIVERY OF HOUSING

The review of Chapter 2 of the Development Plan provides the most recent data in relation to housing completions in Louth. Permission has been granted for 3,301 units in towns and villages in the County and 247 units granted in the open countryside. The data on house completions highlights the fact that all planning permissions granted do not automatically translate into the construction of new homes. Indeed, there is often a significant lead in time between getting planning permission and when construction commences. This can be due to a range of issues including access to finance, construction costs, finalising detailed designs and specifications, legal issues, labour shortages, and supply chain issues/shortages of materials.

### 3.2 DENSITIES

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 15</b>	To promote development that facilitates a higher, sustainable density that supports compact growth and the consolidation of urban areas, which will be appropriate to the local context and enhance the local environment in which it is located.

As part of the strategy of securing more compact growth and consolidating development in central locations there is a focus in the Development Plan of delivering developments at a higher density. Closely linked to the density of a development is the quality of the design and layout. This requires a balance to be struck between quality and density as a higher density development should continue to be an attractive place to live. Through the Development Management process, the Council is seeking to achieve higher densities in appropriate locations.

### 3.3 DWELLING MIX AND ADAPTABLE HOMES

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 26</b>	To require the provision of an appropriate mix of house types and sizes in residential developments throughout the County that would meet the needs of the population and support the creation of balanced and inclusive communities.

The Development Plan recognises the importance of new developments providing a mix of house types and units sizes to meet the needs of people of all tenures and age groups. This includes apartments, duplex units, detached, semi-detached, and terraced properties. The Census figures for 2022 indicate that there are a total of 54,842 households in Louth comprising of 21,280 (39%) detached, (26%) 14,336 semi-detached and 14,833 (27%) terraced houses, as well as 4,393 (8%) apartments. Through the Development Management process, the Council are taking account of Policy Objective HOU 26 and are requiring developments to include a mix of unit types and sizes where this is considered appropriate and particularly in larger developments.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 29</b>	To seek that all new residential developments in excess of 20 residential units provide for a minimum of 30% universally designed units in accordance with the requirements of 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach' published by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.

To ensure new homes are adaptable to meet the changing needs of residents at the different stages of their lives, the Council, through the Development Management process, are seeking that a minimum of 30% of developments of 20 units or more are universally designed in accordance with the requirements of *'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach'*.

### 3.4 SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 2</b>	To support the delivery of social housing in Louth in accordance with the Council's Social Housing Delivery Programme and Government Policy as set out in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 3</b>	To apply a social and affordable housing requirement, in accordance with the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Council continues to be proactive in the delivery of social and affordable housing and is working closely with the various government departments, agencies, stakeholders and developers in the progression of projects. *'Housing for All'* is the government strategy for addressing the ongoing shortfall in housing across the country. The Council has an important role in the implementation of the projects and initiatives in this strategy. A number of the schemes that the Council is involved in, is set out in the following paragraphs.

#### 3.4.1 RENOVATION OF VACANT SOCIAL HOUSING STOCK

Under the 'Voids Programme' renovation works are being carried out on existing social housing owned by the Council, with the properties being tenanted following the completion of the work. These works are funded by the DHLGH and Louth County Council's own resources.

#### 3.4.2 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Council has recently received approval from the Department for an affordable housing project, with several properties at Newtown Wood, Drogheda to be brought to the market by Lagan Homes in the coming months.

### 3.4.3 SURVEY OF VACANT HOMES

The Council has been carrying out a survey of vacant homes in the County. The information from this survey will be used to engage with the owners of properties that are vacant and to seek to bring them back into use.

### 3.4.4 TENANT IN SITU SCHEME

The Council is actively working with tenants and landlords under the Tenant in Situ Scheme where tenants have been given a Notice to Quit. In July 2023 the Council acquired 5 properties under this scheme.

### 3.4.5 VACANT PROPERTY REFURBISHMENT GRANT

Under this scheme a grant of up to €50,000 is available to renovate a vacant property, with up to €70,000 available to renovate a derelict property. At the end of July 2023, 72 applications had been received under this scheme.

### 3.4.6 CAPITAL HOUSING DELIVERY

The Council is continuing to progress housing projects on Council owned lands throughout the County. These projects are at various stages of development, with a number of projects currently on site in Drogheda, Dundalk, Collon, and Clogherhead. Site enabling works have commenced for a development of 93 social and affordable residential units at Mount Avenue, Dundalk. Housing is also being delivered through the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) whereby Approved Housing Bodies provide accommodation to meet special housing needs and social housing.

### 3.4.7 GRANT ASSISTANCE TO THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

The Council provides grants for older persons and for people with a disability. This includes grants for the adaptation of houses and improvements to the fabric of the home such as windows, doors, or heating. In July 2023, the Council received confirmation of an allocation of over €3 million, €609,000 of which will be funded from the Council's own resources.

## 3.5 PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE HOUSING STRATEGY

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 5</b>	To review the Housing Strategy as part of the mandatory Two Year Development Plan review.

A Housing Strategy was prepared as part of the County Development Plan in accordance with the requirements of *Section 94 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*.

The key objectives of the Housing Strategy are as follows:

- To identify the existing need and likely future demand for housing in the area of the County Louth Development Plan;
- To ensure Louth County Council provides for the development of sufficient housing to meet projected future demand over the lifetime of the County Development Plan; and
- To ensure that sufficient zoned lands are provided to meet the needs of different households of all types and tenures.

The Housing Strategy was updated as part of Variation 1 of the County Development Plan, which took account of the methodology and housing projections as detailed in the *Section 28 Guidelines 'Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning'* and the *'Projected Housing Demand by Local Authority Area 2020-2031 – ESRI NPF Scenario Housing Supply Target'* provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in December 2020.

The Housing Strategy determined that the social and affordable housing requirement in the County during the Plan period would be 1,949 units. This includes persons who would not qualify for a mortgage and those that cannot afford private rental.

The preceding section highlights the progress being made in the delivery of social and affordable housing in the County. The progression of these projects demonstrates the alignment of the Housing Strategy with the policy objectives of the County Development Plan and is a clear indication of the successful implementation of the Housing Strategy to date.

### 3.6 TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 14</b>	To secure the implementation of the Louth County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 and any subsequent programme prepared during the life of this Plan.

The Louth County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 sets out the Council's policy in relation to traveller accommodation. The Council are currently progressing a number of projects relating to traveller accommodation. This includes a project for a 3 bedroom and 4-bedroom bungalow at Hoey's Lane, Dundalk, which is currently at design stage. Extensions, renovations, and retrofitting/home energy improvements to properties have also been carried out.

### 3.7 RESIDENTIAL ZONED LAND TAX AND THE VACANT SITE LEVY

The Council recognises the importance of active land management through the re-use or redevelopment of vacant or under-utilised buildings or land and the contribution this can make to the regeneration of towns and villages.

The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) is a new tax that seeks to activate zoned and serviced land for residential purposes. In due course the RZLT is to replace the Vacant Site Levy.

As part of the process of identifying lands to be subject to this tax, Draft Maps were published in November 2022. Final maps are due to be published by the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023. The implementation of the RZLT will be a key element of the Active Land Management Strategy by the Council.

### 3.8 CREATING A WELL DESIGNED PLACE

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 18</b>	To develop sustainable and successful neighbourhoods through the consolidation and redevelopment of built-up areas and promote new compact mixed-use urban and rural villages served by public transport and green infrastructure.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 19</b>	To enhance and develop the fabric of existing urban and rural settlements in accordance with the principles of good urban design including the promotion of high quality well-designed visually attractive main entries into our towns and villages.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 20</b>	To require a design led approach to be taken to sustainable residential development in accordance with the 12 urban design principles set out in the ' <i>Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009)</i> ' and any subsequent guidance, to ensure the creation of quality, attractive, and well connected residential areas and neighbourhoods.

One of the cross-cutting themes of the Development Plan is the creation of attractive neighbourhoods where people feel safe, have access to services and amenities. Through the Development Management process architects and designers are required to design high quality schemes that promote sustainable living and create an inclusive and secure environment for people to live and businesses to invest.

#### 3.8.1 HOUSING IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 36</b>	To discourage urban generated housing in rural areas and direct proposals for such housing to the towns and villages in Settlement Levels 1-4 in the County as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy in Table 2.4.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 41</b>	To manage the development of rural housing in the open countryside by requiring applicants to demonstrate compliance with the Local Needs Qualifying Criteria relative to the Rural Policy Zone set out in Tables 3.4 and 3.5.

Policy Objective	
<b>HOU 42</b>	To manage the development of rural housing in the open countryside by requiring that any new or replacement dwelling is appropriately designed and located so it integrates into the local landscape and does not negatively impact or erode the rural character of the area in which it would be located.

The open countryside in Louth is a valuable resource to the County and the wider region. The Development Plan recognises the importance of rural life and the rural economy to the County and seeks to achieve a balance that will allow the countryside to be preserved for future generations whilst also meeting the needs of the rural community.

As set out in the review of the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy earlier in this document, the population of the rural area in Louth, which consists of the Rural Nodes and the open countryside, increased by 2,474 persons between 2016-2022, bringing the population to 37,720 persons. This equates to 22.8% of the population increase during this period. This clearly demonstrates that rural population in the County is growing at a strong rate.

There continues to be pressure for development in the open countryside with 427 applications being received since the Development Plan came into effect and the end of July 2023, 239 of these applications were granted permission. Since the Development Plan came into effect in Q4 2021 there have been 290 units completed in the rural area.

### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

To date, there have been notable achievements made in the progression and delivery of housing in the County. Whilst it is acknowledged the demand for housing continues to outstrip supply, the level of activity is gathering momentum and it is anticipated that the level of completions will continue to increase during the remainder of the Plan period. The implementation of the policy objectives in the Housing chapter are ensuring that the design and layout of new housing projects are adaptable and able to meet the needs of the entire community resulting in the creation of inclusive and sustainable communities.

## 4 SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the cross cutting themes of the Development Plan is the creation of healthy, strong and socially inclusive communities. In order to achieve this, the Plan advocates a two prong approach; the provision of a wide range of social infrastructure to serve the County's existing population and the timely delivery of necessary community, social, educational, recreational and cultural facilities, in tandem with new development.

#### Policy Objective

<b>SC 1</b>	To engage with the Local Community and Development Committee, development agencies, community groups and various stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the <i>Local Economic and Community Development Plan 2016-2021</i> and any subsequent plans.
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The *Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027* and the *Louth Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022 (LECP)* have common themes and objectives particularly with respect to providing for economic growth and sustainable communities. The *Louth Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022* is currently under review and a steering group has been established. Consultants have been appointed to assist in the preparation of this Plan. Extensive public consultations were undertaken in relation to its 'High Level Goals'. Following further consultation with the Louth Community Development Committee, the objectives and actions, which will form the basis of the *Louth Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029*, will be developed. It is expected that the draft *Louth Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029* will be published in Q4 2023.

#### Policy Objective

<b>SC 2</b>	To assist the implementation of the <i>Healthy Ireland for Louth Plan 2018-2022</i> and any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
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The actions in the *Healthy Ireland for Louth Plan 2018-2022* were closely aligned to the *Louth Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022*, and following a review of same it has been confirmed that the actions in the *Healthy Ireland Plan* have been substantially delivered.

#### Policy Objective

<b>SC 3</b>	To support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the <i>National Physical Activity Plan</i> , through integrating such policies, where appropriate and of an applicable scale.
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To date, three rounds of funding from the Healthy Ireland Fund have been awarded and delivered through the Council. Initiatives funded by Round Four of the Healthy Ireland Fund for Louth have commenced or are due to commence shortly.

The *Healthy Ireland Local Strategy for Louth 2023-2025* was submitted to Pobal in January 2023 and subsequently approved by Pobal and the Department of Health in May 2023.

### Policy Objective

<b>SC 4</b>	To assist the implementation of the <i>Louth Disability Inclusion Plan 2017-2022</i> and any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
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The actions in *Louth Disability Inclusion Plan 2017-2022* are closely aligned to the *Louth Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022*, and following a review of same it has been confirmed that the actions in the *Louth Disability Inclusion Plan 2017-2022* have been substantially delivered.

Under the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund 2021, funding of €25,000 was awarded to Disability Louth to provide for a wide range of mental health and well-being courses to support people with disabilities and their carers. The programme commenced in 2021 and was completed in March 2023.

## 4.2 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Louth County Council has pioneered the Age Friendly County Programme informing both national strategies and plans. The Council continues to promote age friendly strategies and programmes throughout the County.

### Policy Objective

<b>SC 5</b>	To assist the implementation of the <i>Louth Age Friendly County Plan 2017-2022</i> and any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
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The current *Louth Age Friendly Strategy 2016* continues to be implemented by the Age Friendly Programme Manager with support from the Age Friendly Alliance and the Older People's Council (OPC).

The Age Friendly Programme has supported projects and events to help and assist older people across the County. This includes projects to encourage social interactions, social engagement and creativity after the isolation/restrictions in meeting up during the Covid 19 pandemic. Funding was also secured to support events and activities to address issues with social inclusion and rural isolation.

The Age Friendly Programme has delivered the 'Super Connectors Project', and supported Smart Start and Smart Network projects to address issues with digital literacy.

In addition, the programme continues to support the delivery of the Mid Louth Security Programme, providing thumb locks and non-recording CCTV to older and vulnerable residents in Mid Louth.

The Age Friendly Business Programme continues to be rolled out across the County. A significant number of businesses have attained Age Friendly Business status and others are in the process of gaining accreditation.

The Age Friendly Programme, with support and assistance from Louth Sports Partnership, Healthy Ireland, community groups and statutory partners, continues to implement actions in the *Louth Age Friendly Strategy* to promote positive ageing, physical activity, and positive mental health for older people.

It is anticipated a new *Louth Age Friendly Strategy* will be prepared in 2023 and will be aligned with the new *Louth LECP 2023-2029*.

Policy Objective	
<b>SC 6</b>	To ensure the integration of age friendly and family friendly strategies in all new neighbourhoods including the provision for flexible housing typologies, buildings and open spaces that are designed so that everyone, including older persons, people with disabilities, and people with younger children can move about with ease, avoiding separation or segregation.

It is an ongoing policy objective of the Development Plan to provide a range of housing typologies, buildings and open spaces to provide a physical environment which enables all residents to participate fully in life. The Council are committed to providing a built environment which is socially inclusive. Part of the assessment of planning applications for multi-unit residential developments takes accounts the needs of existing and future residents.

The Development Plan requires residential developments of more than 50 units to incorporate a play area or play equipment, unless provision of same forms a condition of the permission or the site is located within a wider master plan area. This is being implemented on an ongoing basis through the Development Management process.

Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme is a new initiative which aims to enable older people to continue living in their homes or in a home more suited to their needs, for longer. A member of staff from the Council has been appointed to support the initiative and it is anticipated a Local Healthy Age Friendly Homes Coordinator will be in place by Q4 2023 to further enhance the programme.

### 4.3 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT

Policy Objective	
<b>SC 8</b>	To support the planning provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities and all ages have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve, are physically integrated with residential and employment areas and are provided concurrently with new residential development.

This policy objective is being implemented on an ongoing basis through the Development Management process whereby accessibility is a key consideration in the design of social and community projects. An example of a project where the Council has been proactive in the area of accessibility is, 'The Beach Accessibility Project' which is being delivered under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme. This project seeks to improve the accessibility to the beach areas at Templetown, Clogherhead and Port. The Preliminary designs are now complete.

Policy Objective	
<b>SC 11</b>	To require that all new residential development applications on lands greater than 1ha or for 100 units or more are accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Assessment to determine if community facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for all future residents. Where deficiencies are identified proposals will be required to accompany the planning application to address the deficiency, either through direct provision on site or such other means, and in a manner acceptable to the Council.

All Large Scale Residential Development's (LRD's) are accompanied by a detailed analysis of childcare provision and capacity in the vicinity of the application site, and the Louth Childcare Committee is consulted.

In instances where there is deemed to be a shortfall, the applicant is required to provide such facilities. Likewise, an analysis of school and community facility capacity is undertaken. The Council actively encourages the timely provision of the necessary social infrastructure to facilitate the creation of sustainable and inclusive communities.

#### 4.4 OUTDOOR RECREATION

##### Policy Objective

<b>SC 14</b>	To resist the loss of existing public open space, unless satisfactory alternatives in suitable locations are available.
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In the two years since the adoption of the Development Plan, the Council has not granted permission for any development on lands zoned as 'H1 Open Space'. The overall quantum of public open space provided throughout the County has therefore not been reduced. The Council continues to support opportunities to enhance public open spaces.

##### Policy Objective

<b>SC 15</b>	To facilitate and encourage open space areas and greenway corridors to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating measures to promote and protect ecosystems, climate change measures and to incorporate key landscape features including archaeological considerations into their design.
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It is an ongoing objective of the Council to support the provision and enhancement of greenways, walkways and public open spaces throughout the County. The Council is committed to expediting the progression of the greenways identified in the Development Plan, including the Great Eastern and Boyne Greenways. The importance of open space is fully recognised as an integral aspect of any regeneration scheme. The Westgate Vision and Ardee 2040 projects will include improvements to the public realm and the creation of high quality and inclusive public open space. Additionally, Fáilte Ireland is working in conjunction with Louth County Council and other local authorities to transform the 'Táin Trail' to create an international hiking and cycling route.

##### Policy Objective

<b>SC 16</b>	To support the provision of playgrounds in a variety of land use zoning categories where appropriate.
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The Council recognises the importance of play facilities for all existing and future residents, and fully supports their development, subject to the availability of funding. An example of an ongoing project is the provision of a new playground in Collon. The Part 8 for this playground went on public display in Q3 of 2023. Other projects include the refurbishment of the playground at St. Dominic's Park in Drogheda and the provision of a new playground in Termonfeckin. A Part 8 for a playground at Termonfeckin went on public display in September 2023.

## 4.5 SPORTS FACILITIES

Policy Objective	
SC 20	To support and facilitate the provision, improvement and expansion of sports and recreational facilities, in particular through land use zoning, where appropriate.

There are a number of sports and recreation projects throughout the County which are at various stages of design/construction. Some examples are as follows:

- Site development works commenced on Louth GAA stadium which was granted permission in 2020;
- The provision of a running track at Muirhevnamor is ongoing. Phase 1 of the development involved the levelling of the site and some funding has been secured to assist with Phase 2 which consists of the laying of the track. The Council will endeavour to secure additional funding to enable the completion of the running track;
- An upgrade to the swimming pool facility at Dundalk Leisure Centre is planned. This project is at a preliminary stage. It is anticipated that it will involve the provision of a ‘changing places’ wet room and improvements to the energy efficiency of the building. When complete the new facility will make a positive contribution to inclusion, equality and rights of people with disabilities and additional physical needs; and
- Refurbishment of tennis courts at Dundalk Sports Centre: This project is at an early stage of the design/inception process. The key objective of the project is the repair and redevelopment of the tennis court area and provision of a spectator area.

The Community Section of the Council has sought Expressions of Interest for projects under the ‘Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme 2023’, which will see the development of natural amenities such as mountains, lakes, beaches, bogs, walkways, greenways and blueways and will place a particular focus on developing amenities for adventure tourism in rural Ireland.

The Strategic Policy Committee on Community, Quality of Life and Creativity recently agreed that following the completion of the Local Economic and Community Plan, the Council will develop complementary plans/ strategies including:

- Local Sports Plan, County Outdoor Recreation Plan;
- Play & Recreation Plan; and
- Local Sports Partnership Strategy.

These will underpin the provision of sport, play and recreation facilities across the County and will enable the Council to provide facilities in the most appropriate locations and improve the opportunities for funding for the Local Authority, community and voluntary groups.

## 4.6 ARTS AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

Policy Objective	
SC 21	To support and facilitate the provision, development and sustainability of arts and cultural infrastructure at appropriate locations throughout the County and which are accessible to all members of the community.

The Council continues to promote the development of arts and culture throughout the County by supporting and facilitating various events, festivals and initiatives. Examples of these projects are as follows:

- Annual SEEK festival in Dundalk;
- Annual Cultural Night with various events throughout the County;
- Week long Pride Festival in Dundalk;
- Various displays and workshops in the County Museum;
- Creativity in Older Age Funding: Louth County Council recently received €15,000 under the Creativity in Older Age fund. The project, in partnership with Music and Health Ireland, will educate the care workers in three nursing homes, on how to use basic musical instruments to enhance the daily well-being of residents; and
- In September 2023 the inaugural Sean Corcoran Series took place in Drogheda with workshops, live music events and literary readings taking place.

## 4.7 LOUTH LIBRARY SERVICE

Policy Objective	
SC 23	To support the development of County Louth's library services and the implementation of the actions and objectives of the Louth <i>Library Service Development Plan 2020-2025</i> and any subsequent plan to meet the needs of all members of the community and strengthen links with socially excluded members and groups of society.

Over the past two years the Council has continued to focus on the library's role in literacy support, supporting lifelong learning opportunities and establishing the library as a community hub.

**My Open Library:** Since the adoption of the Plan the 'My Open Library' initiative was rolled out in Drogheda and Ardee which enables users to access the library outside of staffed hours for browsing, studying, use of IT equipment, and for meetings.

**Housebound Service:** Louth Library Service currently offers a door to door service through housebound deliveries for those users not able to visit their local library. This service helps the most vulnerable in the community by keeping them engaged as active members of the library. In 2022, approximately 535 individual housebound deliveries were made throughout the County.

**Sensory Spaces:** Louth Library Service is committed to improving sensory spaces for children and adults with sensory needs, measures implemented include:

- Sensory walls in Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee libraries;
- Investment in sensory friendly book stock;
- Magic Tables in 3 full time branches. This interactive activity table gives adults with dementia, as well as adults and children with sensory issues the opportunity to socialise and engage in activities together and with their families;
- Custom made curtains in Dundalk Library to create a dedicated, adaptable space for the Magic Table and story time and activities for groups with additional needs, providing for privacy, decreased sensory stimuli and greater access; and
- Introduction of 'Quiet Time' in libraries to further strengthen our commitment to providing an inclusive and welcoming space.

The Council is committed to capital projects that provide further library infrastructure in the County. Following the announcement from the Department of Rural and Community Development of the new Libraries Capital Programme 2023-2027, Louth Library Service submitted two funding applications namely, the purchase of a new library van and the conversion of the Dominican Church in Drogheda to a library.

## 4.8 EDUCATION

Policy Objective	
SC 26	To reserve sites for educational use in those areas identified for significant population increase or where there is likely demographic demand for further school places and to ensure the development of educational facilities to meet the educational requirements of the citizens of County Louth.

The Council liaises with the Department of Education on an ongoing basis in relation to the capacity of existing schools in the County and the requirement to identify additional lands for extensions. Examples of ongoing projects include, St. Ita's Special School, Drogheda and St. Mary's School, Drumcar, whereby a site for the replacement of these schools has been acquired and the project has progressed to design stage. Works commenced on the construction of the Educate Together National School in Ardee in Q3, 2023.

Policy Objective	
SC 31	To maximise the use of and support the expansion of existing school sites in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The Council continues to support the ongoing investment in the national and secondary schools, including extensions to school buildings and provision of temporary classrooms. An example of this is the replacement two-storey, 24 classroom school at Marymount National School in Drogheda where planning permission was granted in 2021.

## 4.9 CHILDCARE FACILITIES

### Policy Objective

<b>SC 35</b>	To support and facilitate the sustainable provision of childcare facilities in appropriate and suitable locations and seek their provision concurrent with new residential development, all having regard to the <i>Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)</i> and <i>Childcare Regulations (2006)</i> and any subsequent guidelines, in consultation with the Louth County Childcare Committee. Such facilities will be directed to settlements identified in the Settlement Hierarchy.
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The Council recognises the importance of childcare facilities in driving local economies and facilitating parental participation in the workplace as well as promoting education, health care and wellbeing. Since the Development Plan came into effect planning permission has been granted for a number of new crèches and extensions to existing crèches in various locations in the County.

## 4.10 HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

### Policy Objective

<b>SC 39</b>	To co-operate with the HSE and other statutory and voluntary agencies and the private sector in the provision of appropriate health care facilities to all sections of the community, subject to proper planning considerations and the principles of sustainable development.
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There are a wide range of healthcare facilities available throughout the County including hospitals, general practitioners, health centres, dentists, physiotherapists, pharmacies, and other related facilities. The Council continues to provide on-going support for the provision of new health care facilities by the public, private and voluntary sectors. Examples of recent projects granted permission are; a medical/ health centre in association with a new neighbourhood centre on the Twenties Lane and, also at the Rathmullan Neighbourhood Centre, in Drogheda. Additionally, the Council granted permission for a Primary Care Centre at Carroll Village in Dundalk (decision under appeal at the time of writing) and a doctor's surgery at the Fairways Retail Centre in Dundalk. In Ardee, permission has been granted for a medical centre at Ash Walk.

### Policy Objective

<b>SC 40</b>	To support the provision of healthcare facilities on suitable lands within the existing Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements and on sites convenient to pedestrian and public transport.
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The Council continues to encourage compact walkable, sustainable communities and neighbourhoods thereby reducing the need to travel by private car and promoting place making.

#### 4.11 RESIDENTIAL CARE, RETIREMENT AND NURSING HOMES

Policy Objective	
<b>SC 42</b>	To require that residential care, retirement and nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation be located in Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements for reasons of sustainability, accessibility, social inclusion and proximity to services. In exceptional circumstances and where considered suitable, the re-use and conversion of existing buildings shall be considered.

The Council acknowledge that, with an ageing population and a longer life expectancy there is an increase in demand for residential care, retirement, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation. The Council, therefore, fully support these type of applications within Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 settlements.

#### 4.12 EMERGENCY SERVICES

Policy Objective	
<b>SC 43</b>	To provide an efficient and effective fire and rescue service and prevention service in Louth and to ensure an effective response to major emergencies and severe weather events.

The Council continues to provide a fire and rescue service and building control service throughout the County. One of the ongoing capital projects is the construction of a new Fire Station in Dunleer. At the time of writing this project was at the design stage.

#### 4.13 CONCLUSION

There has been considerable progress in the provision of new and the upgrade of existing social and community infrastructure throughout the County since the Development Plan came into effect. The Council will continue to promote delivery of the necessary community facilities in tandem with new development, promoting the creation of sustainable vibrant neighbourhoods thereby creating a strong, socially inclusive society.

## 5 ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the strategy for economic development in the County during the life of the Development Plan. It seeks to capitalise on the economic potential of the County and in particular its locational advantage along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

The Development Plan itself cannot create employment, however, it has a critical role to play in facilitating development and supporting economic growth. The Plan identifies that the primary locations for employment related development in the County will be in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

### 5.2 RECENT TRENDS IN THE ECONOMY

Since the Development Plan came into effect the Irish economy has continued to perform strongly. The removal of the majority of Covid restrictions in January 2022 was a welcome boost for businesses and particularly those in the retail and hospitality sectors as people began to return to shops and socialise more thus increasing consumer spending. The economy continues to face challenges with businesses having to deal with rising costs as a result of inflation and higher energy costs. Whilst Government supports have been provided the rising costs are impacting on the viability of some businesses.

### 5.3 WORKING WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

#### Policy Objective

<b>EE 5</b>	To work closely with the IDA and other agencies in promoting and facilitating foreign direct investment in Louth.
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#### Policy Objective

<b>EE 6</b>	To collaborate and work in partnership with infrastructure agencies including Irish Water, Gas Networks Ireland, ESB Networks, the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and the Office of Public Works in identifying and progressing infrastructure projects required to facilitate economic development in the County.
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#### Policy Objective

<b>EE 7</b>	To engage with the Local Community Development Committee, the Local Enterprise Office, Louth Economic Forum and various stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Development Plan 2016-2021 and any subsequent Plans.
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The Council continues to work with government agencies including the IDA and Enterprise Ireland in marketing and promoting Louth for economic investment. The Louth Economic Forum continues to meet on a regular basis. There is a significant land bank of strategically located undeveloped lands zoned for employment generating uses in Drogheda and Dundalk that would be suitable for a range of business and employment uses.

The Louth Local Enterprise Office continues to provide a range of business supports to assist people in the start-up, improvement, and growth of their business.

## 5.4 LOCAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PLAN (LECP)

The Louth Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 is currently being prepared. This Plan will seek to support economic and community development in the County. It will be closely aligned with the County Development Plan and is one of the key documents in the implementation of national and regional strategies at a local level. This Plan will be prepared in consultation with key stakeholders including people living and working in the County.

## 5.5 CO-WORKING FACILITIES

Policy Objective	
<b>EE 23</b>	To support the provision of co-working facilities and digital hubs that promote flexible working arrangements for established businesses, self-employed persons, and start up enterprises.

The Development Plan recognises the changing working environment which has resulted in an increase in people working remotely. Support is given for co-working facilities that provide flexibility in the working arrangements that meet the needs of both start-ups and established businesses. The Creative Spark Downtown Hub in Dundalk and the Brú Digital Hub in Drogheda are examples of recently opened co-working facilities in the County. This is in addition to the Mill Enterprise Centre in Drogheda, Creative Spark at Muirhevnamor in Dundalk, and the Business Hub in Ardee.

## 5.6 DUBLIN-BELFAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

Policy Objective	
<b>EE 1</b>	To maximise the economic potential of Louth by building on its locational advantage along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and promoting and marketing the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk for economic investment.

The Development Plan recognises the strategic location of Louth between Dublin and Belfast and the access to markets that this connectivity provides. The opportunities to strengthen cross border links between Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry and the potential for these links to act as a driver for economic growth are recognised. Regular meetings take place between the Council partners located along the corridor. This provides opportunities for networking, collaboration and innovation between the partners.

## 5.7 PORT FACILITIES

Policy Objective	
<b>EE 27</b>	To recognise that the Port facilities at Drogheda, Greenore, Dundalk, and Clogherhead are an important economic resource and to support any improvements or expansion to these Port facilities at Drogheda, Greenore and Clogherhead and the consolidation of Dundalk Port, subject to the preparation of a Masterplan and appropriate environmental considerations.

The Development Plan recognises the important role of the ports at Drogheda, Dundalk, and Greenore in enabling economic growth and providing international connectivity. Port Oriel at Clogherhead is also identified as an important fishing harbour. Any works carried out at these Ports are managed through the Development Management process.

## 5.8 AREAS IDENTIFIED FOR GROWTH

In accordance with national and regional policy the Development Plan has identified Drogheda and Dundalk as focal points for population and economic growth. The concentration of development in these settlements will create a critical mass of population and employment opportunities and will enable these settlements to develop as centres of scale and act as a counter balance to Dublin thereby supporting more balanced regional development.

Table 5.1 below details the undeveloped lands zoned for employment in the higher tier settlements. This table confirms the significant quantum of employment lands that are available in Drogheda and Dundalk.

*Table 5.1: Undeveloped Land in Higher Tier Zoned for Employment Uses*

Settlement Category	Settlement	Undeveloped Lands Zoned for Employment Uses
<b>Regional Growth Centres</b>	Drogheda	201.5ha
	Dundalk	387.6ha – 172.9ha zoned E1 General Employment and 214.7ha zoned E2 Business and Technology
<b>Self-Sustaining Growth Towns</b>	Ardee	75.5ha
	Dunleer	25.5ha

In Drogheda there are approximately 201ha of undeveloped lands. This includes a parcel of c.113ha at Mell to the north of the N51 and 52ha along the Boyne Road north of the Premier Periclase Plant.

In Dundalk there are approximately 172ha of lands zoned General Employment and 214ha of lands zoned Business and Technology that are undeveloped. This includes strategically located lands in the Mullagharlin area of the town in proximity to DkIT and the IDA Science and Technology Park.

There are also large land banks of undeveloped employment lands in Ardee (75.5ha) and Dunleer (25.5ha). In the Small Towns and Villages, the employment base is not as broad as the larger settlements. This is reflected in the quantum of lands available for employment generating uses.

The Development Plan also recognises the contribution rural areas make to the local economy. Whilst in the first instance new employment related developments are directed to zoned lands in the various towns and villages in the County, it is also recognised that there are instances where a development can be more readily accommodated or is more appropriate to a rural area.

### 5.8.1 RECENT ACTIVITY IN EMPLOYMENT GENERATING DEVELOPMENT

Notwithstanding recent economic challenges including higher energy costs and rising inflation, which is increasing the costs of materials and supplies and resulting in a higher cost of business and industrial operations, the level of activity in employment generating development has been strong.

The primary locations for new employment are in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk, where permission has been granted for various employment related developments including a digital innovation hub at the Boyne Mill in Drogheda and an enterprise park on the Armagh Road in Dundalk which will be for light industrial and warehousing uses. The table below provides a breakdown of permissions for employment developments in the County for the period since the Development Plan came into effect up to the end of July 2023. During this period over 137,000m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace for employment uses has been granted. Over 50% of this floorspace relates to the new enterprise park on the Armagh Road in Dundalk.

It is acknowledged that it will take a number of years for the developments recently granted permission to be developed, particularly the large scale developments, which will be constructed over a number of phases.

*Table 5.2: Breakdown of Floorspace Granted for Employment Uses Since the Plan Came into Effect*

Settlement / Area	Industrial Category				Total
	Office	Industrial	Warehouse	Industrial / Warehouse	
<b>Drogheda</b>	8,969m <sup>2</sup>	2,089m <sup>2</sup>	963m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	12,021m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Dundalk</b>	0m <sup>2</sup>	6,406m <sup>2</sup>	40,336m <sup>2</sup>	72,474m <sup>2</sup>	119,216m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Ardee</b>	0m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	653m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	653m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Dunleer</b>	0m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Small Towns and Villages</b>	370m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	370m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Rural Area</b>	0m <sup>2</sup>	4,797m <sup>2</sup>	711m <sup>2</sup>	0m <sup>2</sup>	5,508m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,349m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>13,292m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>42,663m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>72,474m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>137,768m<sup>2</sup></b>

### 5.8.2 RETAIL

Town and village centres continue to experience challenging times as a result of changes to the retail sector. Competition from online retailing in combination with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the retail sector has resulted in an increase in store closures.

Policy Objective	
<b>EE 68</b>	To promote the core retail area as the primary shopping area and generally discourage non retail or service developments within this area.

The Development Plan includes a Retail Strategy which identifies a Core Retail Area for Drogheda, Dundalk, and Ardee. Through the Development Management process, the Council will continue to promote the retail core area of these settlements.

### 5.8.3 TOWN CENTRE FIRST

In 2022, the government launched the Town Centre First policy initiative. This seeks to tackle vacancy and dereliction and breathe new life into town centres. Funding was received for the preparation of a Masterplan for Dunleer.

This Masterplan will create a vision and set out specific interventions to help re-imagine and revitalise the town centre. It is intended that the draft Masterplan will be placed on public display in autumn 2023.

#### 5.8.4 RECENT PERMISSIONS FOR RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS

Table 5.3 below details the total quantum of floorspace granted for convenience, comparison and bulky comparison retail developments since the Development Plan came into effect. The Council seeks to encourage an appropriate mix of uses in each settlement that is reflective of the position of the settlement in the retail hierarchy whilst also meeting the needs of the local/catchment population.

As expected, the applications have been concentrated in the higher tier retail settlements. Developments in Drogheda include an application for a new neighbourhood centre on the Ballymakenny Road (granted by Louth County Council but on appeal to An Bord Pleanála at the time of writing) that will serve the new residential population in this part of the town. One of the larger permissions in Dundalk was for a new Lidl store in Tom Bellew Avenue that will replace an existing store to the north of Avenue Road.

The Louth Retail Strategy provides broad guidance as to the indicative floorspace apportioned to Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee and the remainder of the County. The quantum of floorspace granted since the adoption of the County Plan is in accordance with the guidance provided in the Louth Retail Strategy.

*Table 5.3: Retail Floorspace Granted Since the Plan Came into Effect*

Settlement	Quantum of Gross Retail Floorspace Granted (m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Drogheda</b>	6,848m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Dundalk</b>	6,159m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Ardee</b>	653m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Rural area</b>	110m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total</b>	13,117m <sup>2</sup>

## 5.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion progress has been made in achieving the growth strategy for economic development, where priority is given to maximising the potential of Drogheda and Dundalk, which are the designated Regional Growth Centres in the County. The Council will continue to work closely with government agencies including the IDA and Enterprise Ireland in promoting Louth as a location of choice for economic development. The progression of public realm projects in towns and villages will assist in improving vibrancy and will provide opportunities that will instigate further investment in these areas which will assist in their rejuvenation making the town and village centres an attractive location for people to visit and operate a business.

## 6 TOURISM

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Louth has a strong tourism product with significant potential for growth. The County has much to offer as a tourist destination with its unspoilt natural environment, a rich and varied heritage and numerous cultural and built attractions. Harnessing these tourism assets has an important economic benefit to the local economy through increasing local employment, the vibrancy of our urban areas and exchequer revenue.

#### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 1</b>	To co-operate with all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the ' <i>Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020</i> ', and any subsequent strategy published during the life of this Plan.
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The Council continues to work closely with the relevant stakeholders, including Fáilte Ireland and Meath County Council, in maximising the tourism potential of the Boyne Valley and the progression of various projects included in the '*Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020*'. In partnership with Meath County Council, the Council are developing a five year Sustainable and Integrated Tourism Destination Strategy for the Boyne Valley until 2027. This will replace the '*Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016 2020*'. There is ongoing collaboration between the Planning and Tourism sections of the Council in facilitating and delivering projects identified in the Boyne Valley Strategy and through the protection of the County's tourism assets from inappropriate development.

#### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 2</b>	To support the implementation of the ' <i>County Louth Tourism &amp; Heritage Action Plan 2016 -2021</i> ' and any subsequent plans published during the life of this Plan.
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The Council continues to support the implementation of this Plan by working in partnership with the various sectoral bodies in the tourist industry such as Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. This partnership approach enables the opportunities for the County to promote and market its unique heritage, arts, and culture to be maximised.

#### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 3</b>	To support the implementation of the <i>National Climate Action Plan 2019, Climate Action Charter</i> and the <i>Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024</i> by integrating climate change action measures into future tourism plans.
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Climate change is a cross cutting theme of the Development Plan. Any tourism plans prepared by the Council will take account of the potential impacts of climate change and, if required, will include measures or actions to mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

**Policy Objective**

<b>TOU 4</b>	To promote and facilitate tourism as one of the key economic pillars of the County's economy and major generator of employment and to support the provision of necessary significant increase in facilities, visitor attractions and improvement in public spaces to promote attractive and vibrant town centres as key places for tourists.
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The Council recognises that a high quality public realm in towns and villages in addition to the availability of local services and amenities is required in order to make places attractive for people to visit and increase the likelihood of people making return visits. The Council has received funding for a number of projects under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) related to public realm improvements and the provision of local amenities including the following:

- Ardee Castle;
- Living in Carlingford Visiting Carlingford;
- Omeath Placemaking Scheme;
- Ardee 2040;
- St. Laurence's Gate Plaza, Drogheda; and
- Weatherproofing and outdoor dining (Fáilte Ireland) - The Green, Carlingford.

**6.2 BOYNE VALLEY STRATEGY WORKING GROUP****Policy Objective**

<b>TOU 5</b>	To support the work of the Boyne Valley Strategy Working Group and its core objective of making the Boyne Valley a leading sustainable tourism destination.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>TOU 6</b>	To support the implementation of the <i>Boyne Valley Food Strategy 2016-2021</i> and any subsequent plans published during the life of this Plan.
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'Discover Boyne Valley Flavours' is a network of food producers and hospitality providers who promote the local food offering in the area. The groups run numerous food experiences /tourism activities that continue to promote the tourism offering in the area.

2023 marked the 10-year anniversary of the Boyne Valley Food Series with a calendar of over 20 events taking place across the Boyne Valley including distillery tours, bee keeping, nature trails, local markets and cookery schools. These events are hosted by Boyne Valley Flavours members including food and craft drink producers, accommodation and experience providers and local eateries.

The Boyne Valley Food Strategy 2024-2029 was under preparation at the time of writing this Progress Report.

### 6.3 GREENWAYS - WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES

#### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 8</b>	To promote and facilitate the development of walkways and cycleways at appropriate locations throughout the County utilising disused transport links where feasible.
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#### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 9</b>	To protect the integrity and scenic quality of existing and future walking and cycling routes and their setting.
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#### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 10</b>	To work in conjunction with adjoining authorities including Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Meath County Council to extend and design new walking and cycling routes, including the Great Eastern Greenway and the Boyne Greenway. Ensure all proposals include appraisal of environmental impacts and take full account of the potential for negative impacts on European Sites through the process of Appropriate Assessment.
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#### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 11</b>	To continue the development of a network of greenways in County Louth in accordance with the <i>'Strategy for Future Development of National and Regional Greenways'</i> .
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Louth County Council continue progress several greenway schemes throughout the County:

**Carlingford Lough Greenway – Omeath to Newry:** The Omeath to Newry section of the Carlingford Lough Greenway is showing tangible progress with the compulsory purchase order advertised in January 2023. Land Owner engagement continues and a valuer has been appointed. It is anticipated that works will commence in Q4 2023.

**Dundalk Bay to Carlingford Greenway:** This is an amalgamation of the Carlingford Templetown Greenway with the Dundalk to Templetown Greenway projects. The Draft Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) has been approved by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). Grant funding of €700,000 has been allocated to the scheme. The allocation allows for the procurement of consultants for environmental studies.

### 6.4 BEACHES

#### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 15</b>	To protect beaches, and bathing areas as valuable local amenities and as a tourism resource and support the maintenance, protection and improvement of access to these amenities.
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In recognition of the need to improve accessibility at beaches and bathing water across the County, the Council is actively progressing the Beach Accessibility Report. This Project aims to improve the accessibility to the beach areas at Templetown, Clogherhead and Port. The preliminary designs are complete, consultants have made the final amendments and the project is now proceeding to detailed design.

## 6.5 ADDITIONAL TOURISM EXPERIENCES

### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 17</b>	To facilitate the sustainable development of the tourism sector and provide for the delivery of a unique combination of tourism opportunities drawing on the network of attractions in County Louth and potential future attractions.
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### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 18</b>	To enable, facilitate and encourage the growth and sustainability of the tourism sector through the provision of tourism enterprise developments in rural areas subject to the provision of adequate infrastructure and compliance with normal planning considerations.
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### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 19</b>	To co-operate with the relevant authorities and government agencies north and south of the Border in the provision of Narrow Water Bridge.
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### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 20</b>	To promote the sustainable development of County Louth as a quality tourist destination in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and associated agencies themed on heritage, culture and an unspoilt natural environment and support innovative tourism projects that would boost employment and promote County Louth as a tourism destination, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Development Zones as detailed in Chapter 3.
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### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 21</b>	To seek best-practice environmental management and climate proofing of tourism related developments and activities to include the circular economy, energy efficiency, waste management, procurement and recycling.
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There are several policy objectives relating to sustainable tourism within the County. The Council runs numerous events and festivals throughout each year, many of which relate to sustainable tourism. The Visit Louth website (<https://www.visitlouth.ie/>) allows for accessible viewing of events and festival for locations across the County.

The Narrow Water Bridge will be an iconic tourism asset which will provide access to a range of cross border active travel and recreational activities including greenways, mountain bike trails, walking routes and beaches. The Council are continuing to liaise with the government departments and agencies on both sides of the border to progress this Project. A tendering process was ongoing at the time of writing with a return date of October 2023.

## 6.6 TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 30</b>	To consider the provision of glamping/camping accommodation outside of settlements only where it can be demonstrated that there is a justifiable tourist product/demand or where it is proposed to re-use existing vernacular buildings. The need to develop in a particular area must be balanced against environmental, social and cultural impacts of the development and benefits to the local community. In such cases, documentary evidence shall be submitted to substantiate the proposed development and each individual application will be assessed on its merits.
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### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 31</b>	To facilitate the upgrade of existing caravan parks and camping sites in approved locations and to ensure that such upgrades are climate resilient.
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### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 32</b>	To support the provision of camper van facilities at appropriate locations in the County subject to any facilities being acceptable in terms of location, visual impact, and compliance with any environmental assessments required.
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### Policy Objective

<b>TOU 33</b>	To facilitate the provision of budget hostels within existing Level 1, 2 and 3 Settlements ensuring high quality design and architecture, provision of adequate infrastructure, compliance with normal planning criteria and subject to the protection of the unspoilt natural environment and landscape amenity.
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The implementation of these policy objectives is ongoing through the Development Management process. An example of tourist accommodation recently granted permission is a development of 14 glamping pods at Cornamucklagh House to the north west of Omeath. The provision of tourism accommodation in appropriate locations close to services and amenities and where they can be sensitively integrated into the landscape will ensure that visitors can have an enjoyable experience and the unique landscape of the County can be preserved.

## 6.7 CONCLUSION

Tourism continues to play an important role in contributing to a vibrant economy within the County. Projects such as Sea Louth, Brigid 1500 events, Táin Way and Boyne Valley Flavours demonstrate the realisation of part of the County's tourism potential and provides a strong platform to continue to create new experiences and attract more visitors to the County.

## 7 MOVEMENT

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

A sustainable transport network allows for the efficient movement of goods and people utilising active travel and sustainable zero and low emission technology, contributing to an environment where businesses can thrive and people can enjoy a more balanced lifestyle. Louth benefits from a well-developed physical infrastructure network that has capacity to provide efficient transport links at a national, regional and local level. The strategic location of the County along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor provides excellent transport links to these cities via the motorway, national roads, and inter-city rail line. The Council has made tangible progress in efforts to promote sustainable transport within the County; this chapter has identified a selection of policy objectives to demonstrate the progress made in the implementation of the Development Plan.

#### Policy Objective

<b>MOV 1</b>	To work with national transport agencies in supporting the delivery of a high quality, climate resilient and sustainable transport network in the County.
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It has been an ongoing objective over successive Development Plans to ensure that land use and transportation provision are fully integrated and that development is consolidated in areas that are well served by sustainable modes of transport. The County benefits from an excellent national and regional infrastructure network including the M1 and the Dublin-Belfast railway line. The Council have continued to liaise with the NTA, TII, Iarnród Éireann and other stakeholders to support the ongoing maintenance of existing infrastructure and to identify and progress ongoing and future projects to meet the needs of the increasing population in the County.

### 7.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

#### Policy Objective

<b>MOV 5</b>	To prepare a Local Transport Plan in consultation with the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and other relevant stakeholders <sup>2</sup> for Drogheda and Dundalk as part of the preparation of the Urban Area Plans / Local Area Plans for these settlements. The preparation of these Plans will be based on the guidance note on Area Based Transport Assessments published by the NTA/TII in 2019 and these Plans will be subject to screening for SEA and AA and full assessments will be undertaken if appropriate.
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Local Transport Plans will be prepared for Drogheda and Dundalk as part of the preparation of the Local Area Plans for these settlements. Consultants have been appointed to prepare the Local Transport Plan in Dundalk. It is anticipated that this Plan will be published as part of the Local Area Plan for Dundalk in Q1 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Including Meath County Council as part of the Joint Plan for Drogheda

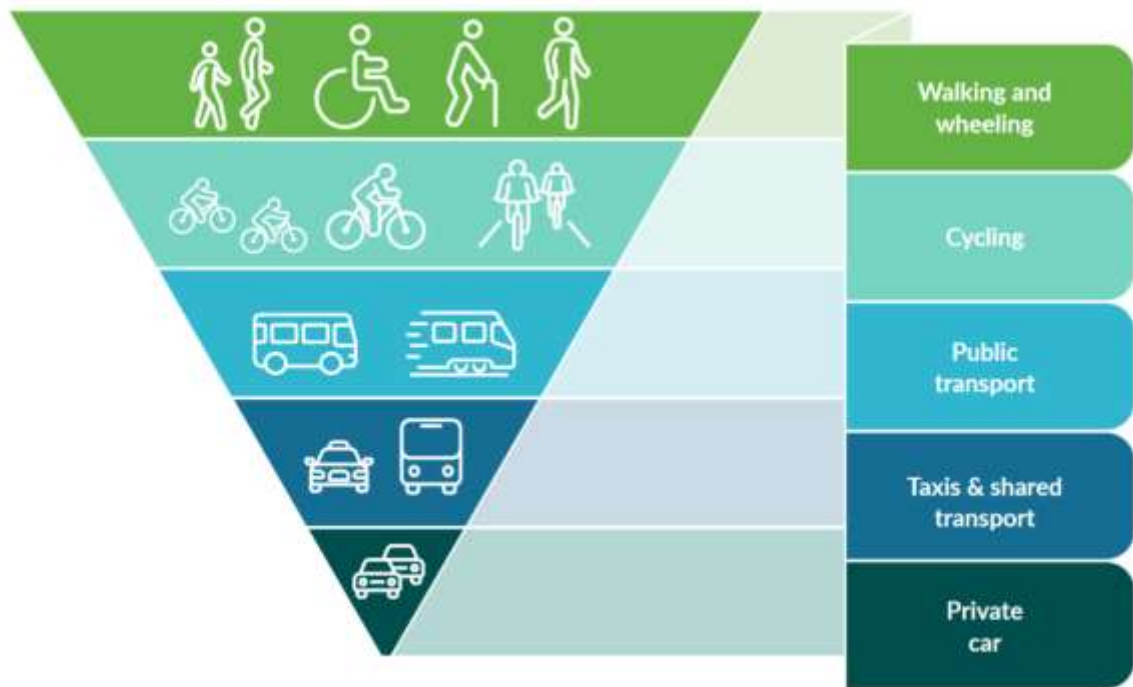
### 7.3 CURRENT TRAVEL PATTERNS

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 8</b>	To set modal share targets in each new Local Area Plan in cooperation with the NTA, CARO, EMRA and other relevant stakeholders in accordance with any relevant Guidelines or targets published during the life of this Plan.

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 9</b>	To support investment in sustainable transport infrastructure that will make walking, cycling or public transport more attractive and appealing, and facilitates accessibility for all, regardless of age, physical mobility, or social disadvantage.

Reducing our dependency on private car usage is vital to achieving a quality, sustainable and climate resilient transportation network. The 2022 Census data relating to travel patterns will be a useful evidence base in the preparation of the Local Transport Plans. Any modal shift targets included in the Local Area Plans will be developed in consultation with the National Transport Authority. Through the progression of Active Travel Projects, it is anticipated that more people will choose to walk and cycle.

Figure 7.1: Sustainable Transport Hierarchy



Source: National Sustainable Mobility Policy

### 7.4 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 13</b>	To engage and work closely with the relevant transport authorities and operators, both public and private in facilitating and securing improvements to and the expansion of public transport infrastructure and services in the County.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 14</b>	To encourage a modal shift from use of the private car towards more sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, and public transport.
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In February 2023 the Council was awarded €5.3 million from the National Transport Authority to progress 24 active travel projects in Louth. These projects will improve walking and cycling infrastructure in the County in order to promote sustainable transport and active travel. Funding has also been provided for transport studies in Drogheda and Dundalk.

As part of the preparation of the Local Transport Plans the Council will be engaging with transport operators to improve public transport services. There is also regular engagement with these providers to identify any opportunities for improvements and expansion to the public transport network across the County.

**7.5 RAIL SERVICES****Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 15</b>	To support the completion of the City Centre Re-signalling Project (CCRP) which will provide additional capacity in the rail network.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 16</b>	To support the DART Expansion Programme including new infrastructure and the electrification of existing lines along the northern rail line to Drogheda.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 17</b>	To support the provision of a higher speed rail service between Dublin and Belfast and any associated infrastructure investment and works required.
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The DART+ Coastal North programme will provide an extension of the existing electrified rail network from Malahide to Drogheda MacBride Station and will provide the infrastructure to facilitate an increase to the rail capacity on the northern line between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda MacBride Station. The Council engages with the Project team on the DART+ Project on a regular basis. A preferred option for the project has been agreed. The Council are working with the National Transport Authority in producing a complete design appraisal. It is anticipated that an application for a Railway Order will be made to An Bord Pleanála in Q4 2023.

**7.6 BUS SERVICES**

**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 20</b>	To support the National Transport Authority (NTA) and other stakeholders and community groups in improving bus services and infrastructure in the County.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 21</b>	To engage with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and other stakeholders and community groups in encouraging bus operators to provide improved services in and through the County.
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Bus services in the County are provided by public and private operators. Services include express coaches to Dublin, regional services between towns, a town service in both Drogheda and Dundalk and the Local Link service in the rural area.

The Council continues to work alongside the various public transport providers to improve bus services in the County and make it a more attractive and accessible mode of transport.

**7.7 GREENWAYS****Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 33</b>	To continue the development of a network of Greenways in the County in accordance with the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 34</b>	To continue to engage and work closely with Meath County Council and other stakeholders in the development and expansion of the Boyne Greenway.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 35</b>	To continue to engage and work closely with Newry, Mourne, and Down District Council and other stakeholders in the development and expansion of the Great Eastern Greenway from Carlingford to Newry.
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**Policy Objective**

<b>MOV 38</b>	To engage in the Compulsory Purchase Order process when required in order to facilitate the timely delivery of the Greenway and Cycleway Projects in the County.
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**Carlingford Lough Greenway - Omeath to Newry:** The Omeath to Newry section of the Carlingford Lough Greenway is showing tangible progress with the Compulsory Purchase Order, published in January 2023. Land Owner engagement continues and a valuer has been appointed. It is anticipated that works will commence in Q4 2023.

**Dundalk Bay to Carlingford Greenway:** This project is to be funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). A Draft Strategic Assessment Report has been approved and the process to appoint the preferred consultant is ongoing. It is anticipated that a public consultation event for the overall study area will take place in Q4 of 2023.

**Boyne Greenway – Drogheda to Mornington:** The planning application for a new pedestrian and cycle greenway from Drogheda to Mornington was refused by An Bord Pleanála in August 2023. An Bord

Pleanála were not satisfied that the development would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Area) in view of the conservation objectives of these sites.

## 7.8 ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 40</b>	To support the design and implementation of public realm projects in town and villages throughout the County that will make these locations more attractive and liveable spaces which are climate resilient and facilitates accessibility for all, regardless of age, physical mobility, or social disadvantage.

Creating a quality sense of place is vitally important in encouraging people to live, work and visit our towns and villages. The principle of universal design plays an important role in promoting the attractiveness of public spaces. This policy objective is implemented on an ongoing basis through the Development Management process.

## 7.9 NATIONAL ROADS

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 43</b>	To protect the strategic transport function of national roads, including motorways through the implementation of the 'Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' and any subsequent guidelines.

The National Primary Roads that travel through Louth are the N2 Dublin-Derry road, N1/A1 Dundalk-Belfast road, and the N33, which runs from the Charleville Interchange (Junction 14 of the M1) to Ardee. These roads are critical in supporting more balanced regional development as they provide a vital connection to the north-west of the country. The National Secondary Roads in the County are the N51 Drogheda-Slane, the N52 Dundalk-Nenagh (via Ardee and Kells) and the N53 Dundalk-Castleblayney. These roads provide an important level of connectivity between the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and key service centres in the wider region and beyond. The Development Management process actively protects the functionality of the national road network. Transport Infrastructure Ireland are consulted on applications that are accessed via a national road.

### 7.9.1 N2 UPGRADE ARDEE TO CASTLEBLAYNEY

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 49</b>	To support the progression of the long term upgrade of the N2; and in particular to protect the preferred route corridor of the upgrade road scheme between Ardee and Castleblayney, and prohibit development that could prejudice its future delivery; and to continue to work closely with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Monaghan County Council, property owners, and residents affected, and other stakeholders in the delivery of this project.

This project is part of a long term upgrade of the N2 which will improve links between Dublin and the north-west of the country. Work on the Phase 3 design of the scheme has stalled, as the €600,000 allocation received for 2023 was to meet current project commitments and was not sufficient to allow

the design process to continue. The Council will continue to liaise with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Monaghan County Council and the other stakeholders to seek the progression of this project.

### 7.9.2 N52 ARDEE BYPASS

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 52</b>	To support the progression of the N52 Ardee Bypass and to continue to work closely with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Meath County Council and other stakeholders in the delivery of this project.

The need for a bypass of Ardee has been identified and included in national, regional and local policy for a number of years. A local environmental group were granted leave in the High Court for a Judicial Review against An Bord Pleanála (ABP) and the Bord directions to Louth County Council concerning the preparations of an EIAR and NIS. The matter came before the High Court in July 2023 for mention and was adjourned until October 2023. The Court ordered that the Applicant be given until September 2023 to file any opposition papers.

### 7.9.3 THE DROGHEDA PORT ACCESS NORTHERN CROSS ROUTE (PANCR)

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 52</b>	To support the progression of the Drogheda Port Access Northern Cross Route and to continue to engage with stakeholders and local landowners in securing the funding to deliver the project.

The Drogheda Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) is an arterial road that will provide a direct link between Drogheda Port and the M1 Motorway. It is a critical piece of enabling infrastructure that will have the dual benefit of releasing lands in the north Drogheda area for development, whilst also removing HGVs and port related traffic from the town centre. The construction of this road will be developer driven and will be delivered in tandem with residential development. Phase 1 of this road is currently under construction. This includes the construction of the road from the Rosehall roundabout to the Ballymakenny Road and the upgrade of Twenties Lane and the Ballymakenny Road. A 450mm diameter watermain is also being laid along the route for Uisce Éireann along with ducting for the ESB and telecoms.

### 7.9.4 THE DUNDALK LINK ROADS

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 53</b>	To support the progression of the identified Link Roads required in Dundalk and to continue to engage with stakeholders and local landowners in securing the funding to design and deliver these links.

These link road projects relate to the provision of a new road network linking neighbourhoods or industrial/business areas to the main access roads in and out of Dundalk. These roads will include, where appropriate, provision for priority bus lanes, cycle paths and pedestrian facilities. The delivery of these link roads will be developer driven and are likely to be constructed in sections.

LIHAF funding was secured for the Mount Avenue Link Road. This project will consist of an upgrade and widening of the northern part of the Mount Avenue Road in addition to the construction of approximately 700 metres of new road. This road will improve connectivity between the Castletown Road and the Carrickmacross Road. Works are ongoing and are due for completion in Q2 of 2024.

### 7.9.5 THE NARROW WATER BRIDGE PROJECT

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 54</b>	To support the progression of the Narrow Water Bridge Project in association with Newry, Mourne, and Down District Council and key stakeholders and funding agencies subject to the requirements of any environmental assessments.

The Council are continuing to liaise with the government departments and agencies on both sides of the border to progress this Project. A tendering process was ongoing at the time of writing with a return date of October 2023.

### 7.9.6 PROTECTED NATIONAL ROUTES

Policy Objective	
<b>MOV 56</b>	To safeguard the capacity and safety of the National and Regional Road network by restricting further access onto National Primary, National Secondary, and Protected Regional Roads in accordance with the details set out in Tables 7.9 and 7.10. <sup>3</sup>

In order to maintain the efficiency and functionality of the national and regional road network it is important that the number of new accesses and the intensification of existing accesses are restricted. The Development Management process will continue to manage the development proposals that may in adversely impact National and Regional roads and restrict direct access onto same.

## 7.10 CONCLUSION

Louth County Council has made significant progress in the implementation of the County Development Plan policy objectives relating to active travel, sustainable travel and transport infrastructure. The Council will continue support the modal shift from private car usage towards more sustainable means of transport and liaise with key stakeholders and agencies to facilitate and support the development of sustainable transport network in accordance with Development Plan policy to ensure the transport needs of the County are met.

<sup>3</sup> Tables 7.9 and 7.10 found on Page 7-32 of Louth County Development Plan

## 8 NATURAL HERITAGE, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND BIODIVERSITY

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

County Louth boasts a wide variety of natural heritage and biodiversity assets which contribute positively to the County's character and sense of place. Chapter 8 of the Development Plan outlines the contribution green infrastructure makes to the climate change mitigation, tourism, placemaking and eco systems.

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG 1</b>	To promote the implementation of the <i>draft Louth Heritage Plan 2021-2026</i> and any subsequent Louth Heritage Plan endorsed during the life of this Plan.

The Council recognises the importance of Louth's heritage and has supported numerous heritage related projects throughout the County, examples of which are set out Table 8.1 below. Louth's natural heritage is a significant aspect of the County's culture and is an important asset to the County.

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG2</b>	To promote and implement the objectives of the <i>Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021 -2026</i> and any subsequent Louth Biodiversity Action Plan published during the life of this Plan.

Since the adoption of the County Plan, the Council continues to support measures which promote and enhance biodiversity throughout the County. Funding has been obtained for projects which improve and create habitats for a variety of flora and fauna and offer opportunities to increase biodiversity, refer to Table 8.1.

*Table 8.1: Projects which Enhance Biodiversity.*

Project	Year of funding allocation	Funding Body	Amount Awarded (€)	Status of Project
Little Tern Conservation Project at Baltray	2021	NBAPF	10,000	Complete
Hedge-laying Demonstration at Blackrock Park	2021	NBAPF	1,021	Complete
Support of LNT Little Tern Project at Baltray	2022	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	28,000	Complete
Support of Louth Barn Owl Project	2022	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	8,033	Complete
Survey of Nesting Swifts in Louth	2022	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	8,500	Complete
Grazing and Visitor Management Plan for Clogherhead	2022	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	8,500	Complete

Project	Year of funding allocation	Funding Body	Amount Awarded (€)	Status of Project
Baltray Little Tern Conservancy	2023	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	100,000	On going
Hedgerow Survey and Laying	2023	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	17,000	Commence Q4 2023. Survey to be repeated 2024
Swifts Conservation	2023	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	17,000	On going
Biodiversity Enhancement Plans	2023	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	12,750	Not commenced
Dune Protection Plan	2023	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	12,750	Not commenced
Barn Owl Survey and Conservation	2023	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	30,000	On going
Biodiversity Awareness panels at Ginnety's Pond	2023	Local Biodiversity Action Fund	3,604	On going

## 8.2 EUROPEAN SITES IN COUNTY LOUTH

### Policy Objective

<b>NBG 3</b>	To protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives.
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There are 11 European sites in Louth, their protection and conservation is of paramount importance to Louth County Council. The Council will continue to screen all plans and projects for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment, under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, including those arising from the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.

In July 2023 the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, issued notification that it is considering classifying the site known as the North-West Irish Sea (Reference 004236), as a Special Protection Area, under Regulation 15 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. The Council will continue to have regard to the candidate SPA and all European Sites when carrying out screening for Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment.

## 8.3 PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY VALUE IN NON –DESIGNATED SITES

### Policy Objective

<b>NBG 9</b>	To ensure that proposals for development, where appropriate, protect and conserve biodiversity sites outside designated sites and require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professionals to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such sites.
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As part of the Government's strategy assist in the delivery of actions and projects to support biodiversity conservation funding has been provided for a Biodiversity Officer in the Council. The Biodiversity Officer will advise on issues relating to biodiversity and the Council's obligations relating to biodiversity. This will assist in the integration of biodiversity conservation into policies, plans, and projects being prepared by the Council.

## 8.4 LANDSCAPE

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG 23</b>	To ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to its character, value and objectives in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the <i>Louth Landscape Character Assessment</i> and by ensuring that new development meets high standards of siting and design and does not unduly damage or detract from the character of a landscape or natural environment.

The Landscape Character Assessment divides the County into 9 Landscape Character Areas and essentially describes, maps, and classifies landscapes, providing an understanding of the value and sensitivity of the County's landscapes and future management needs. The assessments are used to inform decision making in relation to the protection of the environment, natural resources and heritage, and to monitor change and guide development.

The Council will continue to ensure that Louth's unique landscapes are protected and contribute to the future sustainable development of the County thereby ensuring that the natural landscape is protected whilst managing change.

## 8.5 TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG 33</b>	To assess the implications of proposed development on significant trees and hedgerows located on lands that are being considered for development, seeking their incorporation into design proposals where appropriate and in compliance with procedures detailed in Appendix 6.

The Council fully recognises the contribution that all trees including those covered by Tree Preservation Orders and those identified as of Special Amenity Value, make to provide a sense of place and to climate change mitigation. The Council will continue to manage development in a manner that contributes positively to tree coverage throughout the County.

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG 34</b>	To increase native tree coverage in the County to also act as carbon sinks by promoting the planting of suitable native trees and hedgerows along public roads, residential streets, parks and other areas of open space.

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG 35</b>	To encourage initiatives supporting private and community driven native tree and woodland planting schemes throughout the County, utilising available funding schemes.

The Council will continue to support and implement a wide variety of local landscape improvements in open space throughout the County, including the provision of tree planting along streets and in areas of public open space. Tree planting will continue to be an integral part of public realm and regeneration schemes, where appropriate.

## 8.6 ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG 36</b>	To protect the unspoiled natural environment of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) from inappropriate development and reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place, for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG 37</b>	To protect the unspoiled rural landscapes of the Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ) from inappropriate development for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

The Council will continue to carefully manage development, in a manner that does not cause harm to the character of Louth's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Scenic Quality, thereby ensuring that Louth's unique heritage and character is maintained and preserved for future generations.

## 8.7 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Policy Objective	
<b>NBG 41</b>	To support the green infrastructure network of County Louth and ensure its implementation in the assessment of all development proposals to prevent adverse impact on the ecological connectivity of County Louth's Core Areas.

The Council has undertaken a number of initiatives that promote and develop a coherent integrated Green Infrastructure.

## 8.8 CONCLUSION

Since the adoption of the Development Plan the Council has continued to protect and enhance Louth's natural heritage assets through its Development Management and Forward Planning functions as well as, through the administration and implementation of various projects and initiatives. The delivery of the policy objectives in this Chapter will ensure that Louth's natural environment is protected for future generations.

## 9 - BUILT HERITAGE AND CULTURE

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

Louth's built heritage is both rich and varied and manifested in the physical traces left in the landscape by previous generations in the form of archaeological sites and monuments, townscapes, historic buildings and vernacular structures. This archaeological and architectural heritage is an intrinsic part of Louth's identity, and contributes significantly to the character and attractiveness of the County. In County Louth there are a wide variety of built heritage assets which are afforded protection under various legislation and / or the County Development Plan. These are set out in Table 9.1 below.

**Table 9.1: Louth's Built Heritage Assets**

Type of Built Heritage	Number
National Monuments in State Care	23
National Monuments Subject to a Preservation Order	11
Zone of Archaeological Potential	13
Archaeological items on Record of Monuments and Places/ Register of Historic Monuments	Numerous
Walled Towns	4
Battlefield Sites	1
World Heritage Site	1 (part of)
Protected Structures	1473
ACA's	37
Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes	93
Vernacular Buildings	Numerous

## 9.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

### Policy Objective

<b>BHC 1</b>	To protect and enhance archaeological sites and monuments, underwater archaeology, and archaeological objects listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and/or the Register of Historic Monuments and seek their preservation (i.e. presumption in favour of preservation in situ or in exceptional cases, at a minimum, preservation by record) through the planning process and having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the principles as set out in the <i>'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage'</i> (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands 1999).
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Protection of Louth's archaeological heritage is an ongoing process through both the Development Management system and through the various spatial planning documents prepared by the Council, as well as through the application and administration of funding schemes.

Applications received within the 'zone of notification' for archaeological objects listed in the Record of Monuments and Places Register of Historic Monuments, in the sites and monuments record and/or those within a 'Zone of Archaeological Potential' are referred to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. All comments received are considered when assessing a planning application.

In terms of spatial planning, the Council ensures that any new plans or strategies protect, integrate and enhance any features of archaeological interest.

Since the Development Plan came into effect, the Council has secured funding from numerous sources to assist with the conservation and preservation of various monuments and sites. The funding enables conservation works to be carried out on archaeological monuments in need of urgent support, to encourage access, to improve presentation, and build resilience to withstand the effects of climate change. Details of the projects funded are outlined in Table 9.2 below.

*Table 9.2: Projects which Conserve and Enhance Louth's Archaeological Monuments and Sites*

Project	Year of funding allocation	Funding source	Amount Awarded (€)	Status of Project
Featherbed Lane Conservation Works	2021	Community Monuments Fund	€21,330	Complete
Glaspistol Castle Conservation Study	2021	Community Monuments Fund	€2,829	Complete
Taaffe's Castle conservation Study	2021	Community Monuments Fund	€25,000	Complete

Project	Year of funding allocation	Funding source	Amount Awarded (€)	Status of Project
Conservation Management Plan for Drogheda's Millmount	2021	Heritage Council, Heritage Plan Fund	€23,000	Complete
Conservation Plans for three Council-owned monuments Cappocksgate in Ardee, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darver Graveyard,</li> <li>• St. Mary's Priory, Louth</li> </ul>	2021	Heritage Council, Heritage Plan Fund	€22,693	Complete
Conservation works Glaspistol Castle, Clogherhead	2022	Community Monuments Fund	€100,000	Complete
Cill Mhuire, near Templetown Conservation Study	2022	Community Monuments Fund	€11,070	Complete
Conservation Assessment of Drogheda Town Walls	2022	Community Monuments Fund,	€20,000	Additional funding required
Conservation Assessment of Drogheda Town Walls	2022	Heritage Council, Heritage Plan fund		Additional funding required
Archaeological study of Darver Graveyard Wall	2022	Louth County Council	€3,300	Complete
Taaffe's Castle	2023	Community Monuments Fund	€100,000	On going
Glaspistol Castle	2023	Community Monuments Fund	€100,000	On going
Cappocksgate Ardee	2023	Community Monuments Fund	€100,000	Not commenced
Drogheda Town Wall Defences	2023	Community Monuments Fund	€30,000	Walls to be surveyed in 2023

Policy Objective	
<b>BHC 8</b>	To protect and preserve in situ all surviving elements of medieval town defences (both upstanding and buried) and associated features in accordance with the Conservation and Management Plans as applicable and with 'National Policy on Town Defences' (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2008).

Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda, and Dundalk are all former walled towns in the County. The Council recognise that the conservation and management of historic walled towns contributes to an enhanced quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Carlingford and Drogheda are both members of the Irish Walled Towns Network. The Council has been awarded funding to undertake a conservation assessment of Drogheda's town wall and to carry out some of the work deemed necessary for its conservation and preservation.

### 9.3 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Policy Objective	
<b>BHC 20</b>	To ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a protected structure and / or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, is compatible with the special character and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, density, layout, and materials of the protected structure.

In Louth there are 1473 protected structures in the Record of Protected Structures as listed in Volume 4 of the Development Plan. Since the Plan came into effect 75 planning applications have been received in relation to protected structures as well as 26 Section 57 declarations.

Section 57 declarations allow for the owner or occupiers of a Protected Structure to apply to the planning authority for a declaration as to the type of works which it considers would or would not materially affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure. When determining the planning applications and Section 57 declarations, the Council has regard to the protection and enhancement of the character of the Protected Structure.

Furthermore, the Council has, through the administration of the Historic Structures Fund and Built Heritage Investment schemes, provided financial assistance to the owners and custodians of protected structures to undertake essential conservation works including joinery and roof repair, lime rendering, draught-proofing windows and repairing stained glass. Details of the projects funded are set out in Table 9.3.

*Table 9.3: Projects which Preserve and Enhance Louth's Protected Structures:*

Fund	Funding Proposal (name and brief description)	Date of Funding Application	No. of Projects	Amount Awarded (€)	Status of Project and Next Steps
Historic Structures Fund	Conservation of Historic Structures	2021	4 Projects	75,400	Complete
		2022	5 Projects	94,000	Complete
		2023	5 Projects	150,500	Ongoing
Built Heritage Investment Scheme	Conservation of Historic Structures	2021	11 Projects	91,933.20	Complete
		2022	14 Projects	115,818.70	Complete
		2023	19 Projects	Pending	Ongoing

The Council actively promotes heritage led regeneration to improve the quality of our historic towns and villages for both residents and tourists. Examples of recent the projects which the Council are/have been involved in are as follows:

- **St. Peters Hill:** Site is within the ACA of Saint Peter’s Church and its Environs. It is also within a zone of archaeological potential. Works included provision of public meeting space at St Peter’s Hill. The project was completed in 2022;
- **Louth County Council Civic Office Drogheda:** Work on the restoration and extension of Louth County Council Civic Offices (Protected Structure within Fair Street ACA) is advancing, with the €12 million project on target for completion by the end of 2023. The project is set to bring the historic Fair Street building back to life, whilst embracing the rich heritage of the area;
- **Ardee Castle Refurbishment and Access Improvement Works:** Funding was secured under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund and Part 8 subsequently approved for the refurbishment of the Ardee Castle and associated Judges Chambers to enable public access for all. An application for Ministerial Consent was submitted to the DHLGH in May 2023;
- **Living in Carlingford Visiting Carlingford Regeneration Scheme:** Part 8 approved for public realm improvements within the town centre area of Carlingford will result in a reduction of car parking spaces and the change of use of an existing tarmac public tennis court area to a new public realm focal point. It is anticipated that the public realm improvements will enhance the setting of Carlingford’s ACA;
- **Old Abbey:** At the Old Abbey in Drogheda works were ongoing in Q3 2023 on the installation of wayfinding signs and laying of new paving; and
- **St Laurence’s Gate Plaza:** Conservation reports are in progress and it is anticipated that a Part 8 for the St. Laurence’s Gate Plaza will be on public display during Q4 2023.

## 9.4 LINGUISTIC CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Policy Objective

<b>BHC 44</b>	To support initiatives promoting the Irish language within the County
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The Council recognises the importance of, and will continue to support initiatives in, promoting the Irish language in the County. Since the Plan came into effect the Council has translated a range of documents and strategies into Irish, thereby promoting the language throughout the County and beyond.

## 9.5 CONCLUSION

Louth’s built heritage forms an intrinsic part of the County’s identity. The Council continues to protect and enhance the County’s built heritage assets whilst managing change. The Council also provides funding for and administers financial assistance for projects and actively promotes and facilitates heritage led regeneration throughout the County.

## 10 INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

A robust physical infrastructure network and the provision and maintenance of associated environmental services are pivotal in developing sustainable and attractive places, promoting community health and wellbeing, safeguarding the environment and securing investment. Infrastructure services include water supply, wastewater disposal and treatment, surface water discharges, as well as utilities including electricity supply, waste management, broadband and telecommunications. The efficient and cost effective provision of infrastructure must be planned so they have the capacity to support the level of development envisaged.

### 10.2 IRISH WATER

#### Policy Objective

<b>IU 1</b>	To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water in identifying, prioritising and progressing the implementation of water and wastewater projects throughout County Louth over the lifetime of the Plan, in accordance with the Core and Settlement Strategies.
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The *Irish Water Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024* sets out where investment is prioritised to deliver the most urgently needed improvements in drinking water quality, leakage reduction, water availability, wastewater compliance, efficiencies and customer service. The County will benefit from a number of national waste water programmes including the Drainage Area Plan Programme which provides a detailed plan for drainage catchment areas that prioritises a list of interventions based on risk. The *Capital Investment Plan* identified 9 local capital projects within Louth, 3 water and 6 waste water. At the time of writing the *Uisce Éireann Draft Capital Investment Plan 2025-2029* was on public display. The Council made a submission identifying the priority projects to be included in this Plan to enable population and economic growth to take place at the level anticipated in national and regional policy.

### 10.3 WATER CONSERVATION

#### Policy Objective

<b>IU9</b>	To support the commitment to water conservation and leakage reduction in accordance with best practice, and through the implementation of the National Leakage Reduction Programme, in order to conserve valuable resources and reduce wastage.
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Water conservation and leakage reduction present a significant opportunity to reduce our water consumption and increase the efficiency of our water usage. The National Leakage Reduction Programme has invested €500 million upgrading the underground network across the country. Towns and villages across the County benefit from this investment. The Council continues to support Uisce Éireann in the progression of water conservation and leakage reduction projects in the County.

## 10.4 WASTEWATER TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

### Policy Objective

<b>IU 13</b>	To require that all development taking place within an area served by a public wastewater treatment system connects to that system.
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### Policy Objective

<b>IU 14</b>	To require that on lands identified for non-domestic development where no public waste water facility exists or is proposed, that the wastewater be adequately treated and discharged to suitable receiving water, subject to a discharge licence.
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The provision of robust wastewater treatment infrastructure is critical to mitigating the potential adverse impact of a development on the environment and promoting the overarching theme of sustainability. These policy objectives are implemented on an ongoing basis. Any discharge license issued by the Council includes conditions to ensure the discharge is treated and controlled in a manner that protects the receiving environment.

## 10.5 SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS

### Policy Objective

<b>IU 19</b>	To require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of SuDS measures be incorporated in all new development (including extensions to existing developments). All development proposals shall be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment including run-off quantity, run off quality and impacts on habitat and water quality.
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Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) are a system of practices and control structures designed to minimise the impact of surface water runoff by replicating, as close as possible, the natural drainage of the site prior to the development. The Council continues to promote the implementation of SuDS through the Development Management process.

## 10.6 ON-SITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS

### Policy Objective

<b>IU 16</b>	To require that proper supervision, installation and commissioning of on-site wastewater treatment systems by requiring site characterisation procedures and geotechnical assessments be carried out by competent professionally indemnified and suitably qualified persons.
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### Policy Objective

<b>IU 17</b>	To require that the construction and installation of all wastewater treatment systems are supervised and certified by a suitably qualified competent person as fit for the intended purpose and comply with the Council's requirements.
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### Policy Objective

<b>IU 18</b>	To require that private wastewater treatment systems for individual houses where permitted, comply with the recommendations contained within the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems, Population Equivalent $\leq 10$ (2021).
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Louth County Council is the designated Water Authority for the assessment and approval of individual private domestic on-site wastewater treatment systems in the County. The above policy objectives are implemented on an ongoing basis through the Development Management process whereby a site suitability assessment submitted as part of a single house application in an unsewered rural area is evaluated to determine whether or not the site and proposed development meets the requirements of the EPA Code of Practice.

## 10.7 FLOOD RISK

Policy Objective	
<b>IU 27</b>	To ensure all proposals for development falling within Flood Zones A or B are consistent with the “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” 2009. Proposals for development identified as being vulnerable to flooding must be supported by a site specific Flood Risk Assessment and demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the development and its infrastructure will avoid significant risks of flooding and not exacerbate flooding elsewhere. In Flood Zone C, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%), site specific Flood Risk Assessment may be required and the developer should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. The County Plan SFRA datasets and the most up to date CFRAM Programme climate scenario mapping should be consulted by prospective applicants for developments in this regard and will be made available to lower-tier Development Management processes in the Council. Applications for development in flood vulnerable zones, including those at risk under the OPW’s Mid-Range Future Scenario, shall provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures, such as those relating to floor levels, internal layout, flood-resilient construction, emergency response planning and access and egress during flood events.

The Zoning and Flood Zone Maps in the Development Plan identify lands that are at risk of potential of flooding. The management of flood risk is carried out on an ongoing basis through the Development Management process in accordance with the requirements of *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009*.

Policy Objective	
<b>IU 29</b>	To implement the Flood Risk Management Measures as detailed in the Neagh Bann Flood Risk Management Plan, the Eastern Flood Risk Management Plan and the Dunleer Flood Risk Management Plan, ensuring that proposals for development support and do not impede the progression of these measures. Louth County Council will, in partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW) deliver the following Flood Relief Schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dundalk, Blackrock and Ardee;</li> <li>• Drogheda and Baltray; and</li> <li>• Carlingford and Greenore.</li> </ul>

As the impact of climate change becomes more pronounced the increased precipitation, increasing severity and frequency of storms combined with sea level changes result in the increased likelihood of river and coastal flooding. As a result, implementing flood risk management is a priority for many statutory authorities. Louth County Council is currently working on a number of flood defence and coastal erosion projects, including:

- **Dundalk/Blackrock and Ardee Flood Relief Schemes**

The Office of Public Works (OPW) and Louth County Council (LCC) alongside the project consultants are progressing with Stage I of the Dundalk and Ardee Flood Relief Schemes. Progress is being made in terms of environmental surveys and assessments, flood modelling and optioneering for both schemes;

- **Drogheda and Baltray**

The consultant engineers are continuing work on the identification and development of a 'Preferred Option'. The draft hydrological report has been issued and reviewed by OPW/LCC and the Options assessment has begun and will continue into Q4 of 2023. The fieldwork elements of the ground investigation works have been completed and the laboratory works with the gathered samples is underway; and

- **Carlingford and Greenore**

The Carlingford and Greenore schemes remain under consideration by the OPW and the Council, as to how best to progress the project.

## 10.8 COMMUNICATIONS

### Policy Objective

<b>IU 36</b>	To promote and facilitate the sustainable delivery of a high quality ICT infrastructure network throughout the County taking account of the need to protect the countryside and the urban environment together with seeking to achieve balanced social and economic development.
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### Policy Objective

<b>IU 37</b>	To support the delivery and implementation of the National Broadband Plan.
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The *National Broadband Plan* aims to deliver high speed broadband service to all premises in Ireland. National Broadband Ireland is responsible for the rollout of the *National Broadband Plan*. In County Louth, there are approximately 9,000 premises including homes, farms, commercial businesses and schools that will benefit. As of April 2023, almost 1,600 homes, businesses and farms near Drogheda and 800 premises in the Riverstown deployment area benefited from enabling works. In total, County Louth will see an investment of €33 million in the high speed fibre network. The Council will continue to support the implementation of *National Broadband Plan* projects through the Development Management and licensing processes.

## 10.9 RENEWABLE ENERGY

### Policy Objective

<b>IU 49</b>	To support international, national and County initiatives for limiting and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, utilising the natural resources of the County, in an environmentally acceptable manner subject to normal proper planning considerations including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.
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Preparation of a Baseline Emissions Inventory for County Louth is ongoing. The Climate Action Team have been collecting information on how much CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted by all business, buildings, houses, industry, transportation, and agriculture in the County. This will assist in informing the Local Authority Climate Action Plan for Louth. The Development Management process also ensures proposals for renewable energy are situated at appropriate locations.

#### Policy Objective

<b>IU 52</b>	To produce a Renewable Energy Strategy for County Louth within one year of adoption of the Revised Wind Energy Guidelines. This strategy shall have regard to 'A Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies', (SEAI) and shall be compliant with the requirements of the SEA & Habitats Directives.
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The Department of Housing, local Government and Heritage published *the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines* in December 2019. The final Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines were not published at the time of writing this Progress Report. The Council will continue to monitor the progression the Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines with regard to the production of a Renewable Energy Strategy.

## 10.10 OFF SHORE WIND DEVELOPMENT

#### Policy Objective

<b>IU 57</b>	To facilitate the development of wind energy in an environmentally sustainable manner ensuring proposals are consistent with the landscape preservation objectives of the Plan, the protection of the natural and built environment and the visual and residential amenities of the area.
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#### Policy Objective

<b>IU 60</b>	To support the development of off shore windfarm developments subject to normal planning considerations, including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.
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County Louth, with its coastal location presents significant opportunities for economic development in servicing off-shore wind developments and a great opportunity to increase local renewable energy production. There were four Off-Shore Wind Projects proposed off the Louth coastline at the time of writing. These projects are at an early stage with surveys and preliminary designs ongoing. No project was at the planning application stage.

One of the projects was successful in the wind energy auction under the Offshore Renewable Energy Support Scheme (ORESS) in Q2 2023. This is the North Irish Sea Array Project. The unsuccessful projects may still find a route to market via a Corporate Power Purchase Agreement (CPPA). An overview of each project is set out in the Table 10.1.

Table 10.1: Off Shore Wind Projects Off the Louth Coastline

Project Name and General Location	Description	Status
<b>North Irish Sea Array (NISA) – it would be off the coast off Clogherhead extending south off the Meath and Dublin coastline.</b>	The production capacity of the windfarm will be the equivalent of c.500,000 homes	Surveys and studies are ongoing. It is anticipated a planning application will be lodged in Q4 2023/during 2024
<b>Oriel Windfarm – it would be Located east of Blackrock and south east of Cooley Point.</b>	The production capacity of the windfarm will be up to 375MW – equivalent of c.300,000 homes	The project has received Maritime Area Consent. An application for a Foreshore Licence to carry out further studies and surveys has also been made to the DHLGH.
<b>Mainstream North East Offshore Wind would be located east of Drogheda extending south off the Meath and Dublin coastline Drogheda and furthest of the four project from land.</b>	Projected capacity of windfarm not indicated at this stage	Project at an early feasibility stage. Application for a foreshore licence pending.
<b>Setanta Wind Park – it would be off the coast off Clogherhead extending south off the Meath and Dublin coastline</b>	Proposed production capacity of 1GW – the equivalent of 1 million homes	Surveys and studies are ongoing. A geophysical survey was conducted between April and May 2023.

The Council continues to support and liaise with the various stakeholders and project leads on each project.

### 10.11 SOLAR ENERGY

Policy Objective	
<b>IU 64</b>	To support the development of solar energy infrastructure in the County including commercial scale ground mounted solar PV ‘Solar Farms’ subject to environmental safeguards and the protection of natural and built heritage features, biodiversity and views and prospects.

Policy Objective	
<b>IU 65</b>	To encourage and support the development of solar energy infrastructure for onsite energy use, including solar PV, solar thermal and seasonal storage technologies.

As solar energy technology has become more effective, Ireland’s temperate climate has become viable for technology including solar panels and solar farms with storage facilities.

Louth has great potential to utilise solar energy due to an amenable terrain and built infrastructure to accommodate retro fitting. At the time of writing there were five extant 10-year solar farm permissions across the County, including a large site in the town lands of Toomes, Tullycahan, Drumgoolan, Muff, Drumgowna and Hoarstone, that covers approximately 81.4 hectares.

## 10.12 ENERGY SUPPLY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Policy Objective	
<b>IU 83</b>	To support Eirgrid's Implementation Plan (2017-2022) and the Transmission Development Plan (2016) and any subsequent plans prepared during the lifetime of this Plan, subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

The *Eirgrid Implementation Plan 2017-2022* set out how Ireland's Grid Development strategy will be implemented. The Implementation Plan 2017-2022 has also had regard to the Transmission Development Plan 2016, which is a plan for the development of the Irish transmission network and interconnection over a ten-year period.

Following the expiration of the *Eirgrid Implementation Plan 2017-2022*, Eirgrid published the SEA Final Scoping Report in February 2023 for the next plan *Grid Implementation Plan 2023-2028*. At the time of writing the Draft Grid Implementation Plan 2023-2028 had not been published. The Council recognise the importance of a secure and reliable energy supply and will participate in the public consultation process of the forthcoming Draft Grid Implementation Plan.

## 10.13 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN BUILDINGS

Policy Objective	
<b>IU 84</b>	To support the implementation of National and County initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases by incorporating energy efficiency measures into the design of new buildings and retrofitting of existing buildings.

Policy Objective	
<b>IU 87</b>	To promote innovative new building design and retrofitting of existing buildings where possible, and encourage the design and construction of buildings that are functionally adaptable, to improve building energy efficiency, energy conservation and the use of renewable energy sources, in accordance with national policy and guidance.

The revised Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme is now in the third year of a ten year programme which is expected to grow to meet the Programme for Government retrofit commitment. The new programme sees a significant up scaling on what has been completed by Local Authorities to date. The Council has received official notification, from Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage, of its 2023 allocation for the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme for 105 units.

The Energy Efficiency Grant offers 50% of the eligible costs up to a maximum grant of €5,000 for investments in technologies and equipment to reduce the impact of enterprises on the environment thereby increasing the agility and resilience of these businesses e.g. meters, installation costs and smart energy controls.

## 10.14 CONCLUSION

The provision of infrastructure continues to play an important role to enable sustainable development throughout County Louth. The Council continue to improve provision in the County through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, administration of energy efficiency grants, and progression of flood relief schemes.

## 11 ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE COAST

### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

The natural environment is an invaluable part of our heritage as plants and soils help to purify our water and produce our food, and trees and forests act as natural carbon sinks. A healthy natural environment is vitally important for our society and economy. The Development Plan includes policy objectives which seek to facilitate development in appropriate locations while ensuring the conservation of the natural environment.

#### Policy Objective

<b>ENV 1</b>	To implement European, National and Regional policy in relation to the protection of the environment, climate action and the pursuance of sustainable development principles in respect of the Council's policies and procedures.
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#### Policy Objective

<b>ENV 4</b>	To support the goals and objectives of the <i>EU Green Deal</i> , the <i>Climate Action Plan 2019</i> and the <i>Climate Action Charter</i> in ensuring sustainable development across the County.
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#### Policy Objective

<b>ENV 5</b>	To promote the future sustainable development of County Louth in such a manner as to support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures through the implementation of infrastructure in designated settlements.
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Climate action and protection of the environment are cross cutting themes of the Development Plan, echoing the Council's organisational commitment to addressing climate change at a local level. Louth County Council's *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 -2024* was adopted in September 2019. The *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy* represents a proactive step by the Council in the process of adaptation planning to build resilience and respond effectively to the threats posed by climate change. This Adaptation Strategy commits to aligning with national commitments on climate change adaptation. The Council formally began the preparation of the Climate Action Plan in Q1 2023 after receiving funding for the post of Climate Action Co-ordinator in 2022. The Plan will translate to a local level the national legislation provided in the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* which commits Ireland to a legally binding target of net-zero emissions no later than 2050.

### 11.2 NOISE ACTION PLAN 2018 - 2023

#### Policy Objective

<b>ENV 6</b>	To implement the Louth County Council <i>Noise Action Plan 2018-2023</i> (and any subsequent Plan) in order to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to environmental noise exposure.
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This *Noise Action Plan 2018-2023* primarily considers the long term environmental noise impact from road traffic noise sources, and sets out an approach to review noise impact levels near to the major sources assessed during strategic noise mapping. The implementation of this policy objective is carried out on an ongoing basis through the Development Management process.

### 11.3 AIR QUALITY

#### Policy Objective

<b>ENV 12</b>	To promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the <i>EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC)</i> and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the <i>Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011)</i> , or any updated/superseding documents.
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The latest *Environmental Protection Agency Air Quality Report 2021* identifies Ireland as having generally good air quality, but there are concerning localised issues. Air quality monitoring results in 2021 showed that fine particulate matter mainly from burning solid fuel in our homes, and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) mainly from road transport, remain the main threats to good air quality. According to the EPA Bulletins in 2021 and 2023 there were no exceedance events for PM10 (particles with a diameter of 10 micrometres or less), NO<sub>2</sub> or Ozone. The implementation of this policy objective is ongoing through the Development Management process. Certain developments may give rise to air quality issues which would require an analysis of the potential impacts on air quality to be carried out. These impacts would be evaluated as part of the assessment of the planning application.

### 11.4 RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT

#### Policy Objective

<b>ENV 15</b>	To implement the recommendations contained in the <i>River Basin District Management Plans for Ireland 2018-2021</i> or any subsequent plan. Proposed plans, programmes and projects shall not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface waters, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated woodlands. Also, to have cognisance of, where relevant, the <i>EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Document No. 20 and 36</i> which provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the <i>Water Framework Directive</i> .
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In September 2021 the *Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022 – 2027* was published. The Plan sets out the measures that are necessary to protect and restore water quality in Ireland. The overall aim of the Plan is to ensure that our natural waters are sustainably managed and that freshwater resources are protected so as to maintain and improve Ireland's water environment. The implementation of this policy objective is ongoing through the Development Management process.

### 11.5 GROUNDWATER

#### Policy Objective

<b>ENV 17</b>	To implement the recommendations contained in any Groundwater Protection Scheme prepared under EU Ground Water Directives and to protect ground water resources in County Louth, nutrient sensitive areas and the designated shellfish growing areas within Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay.
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Groundwater is an important water source for use in a range of commercial activities. Good quality groundwater is a key natural resource, which directly and indirectly contributes to and sustains a variety of important ecosystems.

The County's rural areas are under significant development pressure from rural housing, agricultural activities and rural based enterprises, all of which have the potential to adversely impact upon groundwater resources. As part of the Development Management process consideration is given to the potential impacts of such developments on groundwater.

## 11.6 NITRATE VULNERABLE ZONES

Policy Objective	
<b>ENV 20</b>	To ensure compliance with and to implement the provisions of the Nitrates Directive in so far as it falls within the remit of the Council to do so.

Ireland's Fifth *Nitrate Action Programme 2022-2025* was introduced in January 2022. There have been a number of measures added to strengthen the programme since the Fourth Nitrates Action Programme to create a more holistic approach to controlling nutrient and sediment losses from agriculture. The Development Management process seeks to implement the *Nitrate Action Programme* objectives through the assessment of agricultural proposals to ensure compliance with the Nitrates Directive.

## 11.7 REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT PLANS

Policy Objective	
<b>ENV 24</b>	To implement and support the provisions of the <i>Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021</i> or any subsequent plan and EU Directives/Policies.

The three Regional Waste Management Plans in the country have been replaced by a national waste management plan, 'A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy: Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020-2025'. This 'Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy' is an action focused plan that will place Ireland at the forefront of EU efforts. It is a roadmap for Ireland to embrace the opportunities in becoming a circular economy in the decade ahead. The Plan aims to shift away from waste disposal to ensure that materials and products remain in productive use for longer, make producers of disposable products environmentally accountable, encourage an 'all sector' approach and to support clear and robust institutional arrangements through strengthened role of local government. Through the Development Management process planning applications relating to waste disposal/recovery will take account of the National Waste Management Plan.

## 11.8 FORESTRY

Policy Objective	
<b>ENV 31</b>	To support National policy in relation to forestry in order to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society, subject to normal planning criteria.

Project Woodland was launched in February 2021 to reform the regulation and vision for forestry in Ireland. 'Ireland's Forest Strategy 2023-2030' was published in September 2023.

This Forestry Strategy is about making the *Shared National Vision* a reality. It is a vision for significant change and is designed to provide an overriding framework to identify the actions needed to implement that change.

These actions are described in the *Forest Strategy Implementation Plan 2023-2030*. The Council will support the implementation of the Forest Strategy, which, if successfully implemented will have lasting benefits for climate change, biodiversity, water quality, and quality of life.

## 11.9 EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

Policy Objective	
<b>ENV 44</b>	To ensure that extractive developments do not adversely impact on environmental quality, including water quality, tourism value, existing infrastructure, residential amenity or the amenity value of neighbouring lands.

The aggregates and minerals created from the extractive industry play a critical role in construction and many other industries. The *National Planning Framework* recognises the importance of the extractive industry and aims to balance the process with environmental safeguards. County Louth contains a variety of natural resources such as raw materials critical to the construction industry in the form of sand, gravel and stone reserves, with substantial building sand reserves in the Cooley area. The Development Management process has an important role to ensure that the County's natural resources are fully and sustainably utilised which is achieved through the careful consideration of proposed locations and through ensuring appropriate mitigation measures are included.

## 11.10 CHANGING COAST & COASTAL PROTECTION

Policy Objective	
<b>ENV 48</b>	To implement the policies and objectives as set out within the <i>National Maritime Spatial Plan</i> to support the effective management of marine activities and more sustainable use of our marine resources.

*EU Directive 2014/89/EU* established a framework for a *Maritime Spatial Plan*. The *National Marine Planning Framework* and the *Maritime Area Planning Act 2021* has introduced the most significant planning reform since the foundation of the State. The *National Marine Planning Framework* is the forward planning component of the marine planning system and is a key consideration for decision makers on all marine authorisations. The *National Marine Planning Framework* contains a number of policy objectives that seek to improve our environmental, economic and social relationship with the marine environment. As a coastal County there is an exciting opportunity to harness the potential of marine related development. Off-shore wind in coastal areas and greater utilisation of the County's ports presents a great prospect for sustainable economic development.

## 11.11 CONCLUSION

There have been significant changes in the national legislative and policy provision relating to the environment since the publication of the County Development Plan which echoes and amplifies these policies at a local level. The Council will continue to ensure the application, in tandem with other prescribed bodies, of environmental policies and promote environmentally sensitive and sustainable development.

## 12 CHAPTER 12 – CLIMATE ACTION

### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

The Council are fully committed to supporting the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County. The Council continue to place a strong emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.

#### Policy Objective

<b>CA 1</b>	To promote, support and direct effective climate action policies and objectives that seek to improve climate outcomes across the settlement areas and communities of County Louth helping to successfully contribute and deliver on the obligations of the State to transition to low carbon and climate resilient society through the encouragement and integration of appropriate mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures into all development.
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A requirement of *the National Climate Action Plan 2021*, is that Local Authorities produce a Climate Action Plan for the County. Draft guidance documents were issued to assist Local Authorities in the preparation of Climate Action Plans, which will incorporate all the relevant National Climate Action targets at a local level.

Louth County Council have appointed a Climate Action Co-Ordinator to prepare a Climate Action Plan for Louth. The preparation of this Plan commenced in Q1 2023. The Climate Action Plan will identify measures to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and also adaption measures which address the challenges and risks for climate action.

The Climate Action Team have completed an emissions baseline for the County. Information was collected on how much CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted by business, buildings, houses, industry, transport / travel, and agriculture. This evidence base will inform the Louth Climate Action Plan and will assist in developing actions, which will allow the County to decarbonise in accordance with the 2030 national target of a 51% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> and to achieve net zero by 2050. The Climate Action Plan is due to be published by February 2024.

#### Policy Objective

<b>CA 3</b>	Actively implement policies that support and encourage sustainable compact growth and settlement patterns, integrate land use and transportation, and maximise opportunities through development location, form, layout and design to secure climate resilience and reduce carbon dioxide and greenhouse emissions
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In accordance with the policy objectives in the Development Plan the Council continues to promote higher density residential developments close to existing and proposed social and education amenities, employment opportunities and public transport facilities. This pattern of development will result in more compact settlements and will assist in the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient society.

### Policy Objective

<b>CA 4</b>	<p>Support the work of Louth County Council in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a robust comprehension of the key risks and vulnerabilities of the County to the negative impacts of climate change;</li> <li>• The implementation of adaptation and mitigation actions of the strategy aimed at building climate resilience across local communities; and</li> <li>• Promoting the integration of effective adaptation and mitigation considerations into decision making processes.</li> </ul>
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The *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024* represents a proactive step by the Council in the process of adaptation planning to build resilience and respond effectively to the threats posed by climate change. The Council continually works to mitigate against the causes of climate change by striving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Energy Section of the Council are actively working to reduce the Council's own energy emissions and in this regard have reduced the Council's energy emissions by 45.8% between 2006-2022 (9,921 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> to 4,524 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>).

Ongoing projects being managed by the Energy Section in the Council are as follows:

- Irish Public Bodies have a target to reduce energy-related greenhouse gas emissions by 51% (compared to the baseline) by 2030. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland has advised that, to comply with the 2030 emissions target, Louth County Council must achieve carbon emissions savings of 1,000t. To achieve the emissions target, Louth have developed a 'Gap to Target' plan. Energy saving measures include; undertaking behaviour changes (e.g. our participation in Office of Public Work's, 'Optimising Power at Work Programme' and by improving work vehicle fuel efficiency) combined with more efficient maintenance works (e.g. replacing high energy public light bulbs with low energy bulbs as they fail) and by undertaking new works; and
- The Energy Section is also overseeing the 'Varcities H2020 Funded Project'. The Council is in the process of procuring sensors for installation on the grounds of the Louth County Library in Dundalk. These will be used to measure microclimate parameters (temperature and humidity, VOCs, Barometric pressure, CO<sub>2</sub>, Oxygen, Particulate Matter) in the vicinity, as well as noise levels, and 'number of people' counters. The sensors will be deployed as part of the Council's Visionary Solutions, which will see the greening and regeneration at the pilot site and will be used to populate data in the upcoming Health and Wellbeing Platform.

### Policy Objective

<b>CA 6</b>	<p>To capitalise on the economic opportunities for County Louth that arise in association with the environmental and technological advances required to support the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy and in particular, opportunities arising from the implementation and translation of the European Green Deal and the post COVID-19 recovery plan Next Generation EU, to national policy.</p>
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Louth Local Enterprise Office continues to provide a key support for micro and small businesses to become more sustainable through promotion of the 'Green for Business' programme which gives small businesses access to a 'green' consultant. The Local Enterprise Office also encourages eligible businesses to apply for an 'Energy Efficiency Grant' which will assist in reducing the impact of enterprises on the environment thereby increasing their resilience.

#### Policy Objective

<b>CA 7</b>	Promote and encourage positive community led climate action initiatives and projects that seek to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, enhance green infrastructure and encourage awareness on climate change issues.
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The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications has established a Climate Action Fund directed towards community groups. Louth County Council has recruited a Community Climate Officer to deliver this programme. To date, Louth County Council has been allocated €604,000 to distribute throughout the County. The Community Climate Action fund will be available to non-profit community groups across Louth.

#### Policy Objective

<b>CA 8</b>	To seek to identify projects or initiatives that will assist in meeting national climate and energy targets and to seek funding or support any funding applications for the implementation of these initiatives from available sources including the Department of Environment, Climate & Communications Climate Action Fund.
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Various sections within the Council are involved in projects and initiatives that will assist in meeting national climate and energy targets.

The Climate Action Section continue to collaborate with the Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) to work towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 - 2024.

In addition, they deliver various initiatives including a climate action information session at Clogherhead Beach and the mapping of Council owned land to assess its suitability for tree planting.

Many national and local funding schemes including the 'Sports Capital Equipment Programme' now incorporate a climate action and sustainability element. The Council has received €48,000 in funding for a new creative climate action project, Louth Urban Food Sanctuary.

## 12.2 CONCLUSION

The 2021-2027 Development Plan was the first Plan to include a specific chapter relating to climate action. The Council will continue to deliver initiatives and actions which reduce energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions. The preparation of the Louth Climate Action Plan is ongoing and its publication, in Q1 of 2024 will align national climate policy and enable the delivery of effective local climate actions.



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