

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

LOCAL AREA PLAN
FOR THE
NORTH DROGHEDA ENVIRONS

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

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PART A – THE CONTEXT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The town of Drogheda has, in recent years, been subjected to pressure for development, especially residential, as a result of its strategic location close to Dublin City on a major road and rail link. The areas under greatest pressure are those lands to the south of the town falling within the functional area of Meath County Council. However, driven by housing demand in the greater Dublin area and as a result of the improved rail and road network linking the town with the capital, developers have in more recent times shown a keen interest in developing lands to the north of the Boyne River and falling within the functional area of Louth County Council. The purpose of this local area plan is to facilitate and promote the development of the area while ensuring that such development is carried out in a manner that is sustainable and consistent with the orderly expansion of the town of Drogheda.

The Louth County Development Plan 2003 – 2009 acknowledges the role of Drogheda as a popular place to live within the Dublin commuter belt and supports the concept that the town should develop as a self sustaining settlement providing a wide range of recreational, commercial and community facilities and employment opportunities for its inhabitants. The county council proposes to work closely with Drogheda Borough Council and Meath County Council to ensure that the expansion of the town takes place in an orderly and sustainable fashion and to promote the town and its environs as a major urban development centre.

In order to facilitate, control and regulate development in a manner that is sustainable and consistent with the orderly expansion of the town of Drogheda, it is the policy of Louth County Council, as outlined in the County Development Plan, to prepare a local area plan for the Drogheda Northern Environs. This local area plan is prepared in the context of the Louth County Development Plan 2003- 2009 and is consistent with the policies outlined therein. If, for whatever reason, there is any inconsistency between

the policies as outlined in the County Development Plan and this local area plan, the provision of the County Development Plan will take precedence.

2.0 THE PLAN AREA IN THE CONTEXT OF DROGHEDA

2.1 THE DROGHEDA AREA

Drogheda, the largest town in county Louth, is situated approximately 30 miles to the north of Dublin City Centre at the mouth of the River Boyne. From a regional planning perspective, it is located within the Border Region and for EU Structural Funds purposes, falls within the Border, Midlands and Western Region (BMW Region). The town adjoins the M1 motorway, which is part of EO1 Route linking Rosslare, Dublin, Belfast and Larne, is on the Dublin/Belfast intercity rail link and is approximately 20 miles from Dublin airport. It also has its own sea port which has experienced considerable expansion in recent years. The population of the town, as recorded in the 2002 Census of Population is 28,308 persons.

Drogheda affords excellent potential for development arising from the following:

- Location in the Border, Midland and Western Region, with Objective 1 Status for Structural Funds in the period to 2006;
- Demand for housing in the greater Dublin Area
- Availability of land for development purposes
- Location within the Dublin commuter belt close to the Dublin Metropolitan Area;
- Location on the Dublin – Belfast economic corridor;
- Location on main existing and developing road and rail infrastructure;
- Its commercial port
- Modern Communications Infrastructure.
- Proximity to Dublin Airport
- Heritage town and excellent natural and physical environment
- Wide range of community facilities and services

Its economic and residential development potential is aided significantly by its attractive coastal topographical setting, its archaeological and historical associations and the vibrancy of the town itself.

The town enjoys a unique physical planning context, having its own Borough Council, with suburban environs located in County Meath and County Louth.

2.2 POPULATION TRENDS

In the ten years between 1986 and 1996 the population of Drogheda Municipal Borough increased by 1.6%, rising from 24,086 to 24,460 persons. Over the same period, the population in the environs rose by 35.8% from 595 persons to 822 persons. In aggregate, the population of the Borough and its environs increased by a modest 0.24 % per annum in the 1986 to 1996 period. The growth in 1991 – 1996 inter census period, reflecting the recovery from the population dip in the preceding 5 years period, averaged 0.50% per annum.

In comparison, the 2002 Census results show that the population of Drogheda Urban increased from 24,460 in 1996 to 28,308 persons in 2002. This absolute increase of 3848 persons represents an increase of 15.7%. This compares to a 10.5% increase in County Louth as a whole over the same period when the population in the county increased from 92,166 to 101,802, an actual increase of 9,636 persons.

This level of increase in population was not due to natural increase but rather to net immigration. It is anticipated that the current outflow of population from the Dublin Metropolitan Area to Drogheda will continue, fuelled by congestion, high house prices and the associated shortfall in the supply of houses in the Dublin Region, competitive house prices in Drogheda and the attraction of a short commuting time to Dublin.

It is anticipated that continuing population inflow to Drogheda will maintain housing demand provided that there is sufficient serviced lands to meet this demand. Within the Borough boundary itself, there are approximately 58 hectares zoned residential and

services available to accommodate an additional population of approximately 8,500. This is based on average densities of 50 houses per hectare and an occupancy rate of 3 persons per housing unit. Development of these lands alone would see the population of the borough area increase to 37,000.

The Economic and Spatial Study of the Drogheda Area, prepared by Bacon and Associates (2000), considers that while Drogheda can expand to cater for a population of 60,000 persons, much of this population growth will occur in the environs located in adjoining counties of Louth and Meath.

2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

The area of this Local Area Plan extends from the lands in the immediate vicinity of the motorway interchange at Mell in the west to the Beaulieu Demesne east of the town. It is defined on the north side primarily by the line of the proposed northern cross route and by the limit of the foul drainage catchment and on the south side by the Drogheda Borough Council boundary.

The topography of the lands to the east of the plan area is characterised by an undulating coastal landscape. The levels rise gradually from east to west and south to north. These levels range between 0 – 30m in the eastern area occupied by Natural Heritage Areas, Beaulieu Demesne and the Port and Docks Development Lands.

The central plan area exhibits a predominantly rural, agricultural landscape, with strong hedgerows and some areas of mature trees. Road and rail corridors cross the area.

Towards the west of the plan area, the land adjacent to the motorway is elevated to approximately 60-75m and contains sand and gravel ridges that have been excavated to exploit aggregate resources. The existing national primary road is located in this area.

The lands to the west of the plan area contain a complex archaeological, historical and ecological heritage, exhibiting a fine and largely undisturbed agricultural and wooded landscape.

Throughout the broader hinterland area, a number of long established country houses and more recent urban generated development are to be found. Of particular note is Beaulieu House and Demesne located to the east edge of the plan area. The House and grounds are open to the visiting public. The grounds are located adjoining the heritage areas on the north bank of the Boyne Estuary and together represent an area worthy of protection and preservation.

The main access and distributor roads in the area include the R166 from Drogheda to Termonfeckin and the former N1 Belfast to Dublin Road. The new M1 motorway which by-passes the town is located within the western part of the plan area.

3.0 STATUTORY PLANNING CONTEXT

In preparing this local area plan, account has been taken of the various other plans prepared for the Greater Drogheda area. These are as follows:

3.1 DROGHEDA DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1999

The Drogheda Development Plan states that it is the policy of Drogheda Borough Council to consolidate the town's role within the region and to this end, encourage the development of the industrial, commercial, shopping, entertainment and communication sector within the town to the extent justified by its location in the hierarchy of urban settlements within the North East and the B.M.W. Regions.

It is also policy to encourage and facilitate the town's wider function as a centre of economic, social and cultural activity for the benefit of both the town and its hinterland. More specifically, it is the aim of the Borough Council to reinforce the central core of Drogheda as the commercial, social and cultural centre of the area and to realise its potential by encouraging development and conservation.

As part of its sustainable economic development policy, the Borough Council proposes to facilitate the expansion of Drogheda Port by the provision, in the medium term, of new berthage facilities, the improvement of accessibility to and from the Port by road and rail and the development of the New Port Terminal Industrial Park.

Drogheda Borough Council is committed to meeting the employment needs of a growing labour force. Industrial growth is to be facilitated through the creation of a land bank, the acquisition of land as necessary to provide for small businesses and starter activities, and in co-operation with the Industrial Development Authority, to promote the locational and human resources advantages of the town for industrial development.

As stated previously, there is sufficient lands zoned for residential development within the borough boundary to provide for an additional population of approximately 8,500 persons.

3.2 MEATH ENVIRONS PLANS

A plan for the Meath Environs has already been made by Meath County Council. The plan recognises the dependency of the environs in Meath on the town of Drogheda for both physical and social infrastructure to sustain new residential communities and other developments in the area.

The Meath Environs Plan has provided for over 130 hectares of zoned land for residential purposes and 230 hectares for industrial purposes. This plan area could accommodate 13,000 persons at 100 persons per hectare.

Therefore, in common with the Drogheda Town Plan, it is an objective to facilitate and promote the development of Drogheda on the Dublin/Belfast economic corridor as a vibrant major development centre in cooperation with the adjacent planning authorities of Drogheda Borough Council and Louth County Council.

3.3 LOUTH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

The Louth County Development Plan 2003 to 2009 is the statutory development plan for the area covered by the Drogheda Northern Environs Plan. It is the policy of the council as expressed in the County Development Plan to work in close cooperation with Drogheda Borough Council to promote the development of the town and its environs as a major urban development centre. In order to control and regulate development within the environs of Drogheda in a manner that is sustainable and consistent with the orderly expansion of the town, it is proposed to prepare a local area plan for the northern environs of Drogheda extending into county Louth. The council recognises that in order for these lands to be developed, investment in infrastructure

will be necessary and that, by and large, this expenditure will have to be met by developers.

It has been estimated that approximately 500 hectares north of Drogheda within County Louth are potentially capable of being serviced by main drainage. As it is the policy of Louth County Council to facilitate the orderly outward expansion of the town of Drogheda into the lands north of the town, this local area plan sets out to examine how this policy will be implemented through the provision of appropriate sustainable development within the plan area, having full regard to its development potential and the constraints to development that currently exist.

There are a number of specific objectives in the Louth County Development Plan relating to the area of the study and its immediate hinterland.

- NH 1957 Boyne Coast and Estuary – Proposed Natural Heritage Area (N.H.A.).
- TP 20 Trees to be protected – Beaulieu House.
- TP 21 Trees to be protected - Drogheda / Baltray Road.
- TP 22 Trees to be protected - Newtown House.
- TP 29 Trees to be protected - Killineer (South of).
- NH 1862 Boyne River Islands - SAC.

- SR 4 Slane Road/Townley Hall Scenic Route.
- SR 5 King William’s Glen Scenic Route.
- TP 1 Townley/King William’s Glen Tree Protection.
- NH 1804 King William’s Glen.

3.4 DROGHEDA ENVIRONS STRATEGIC PLAN.

A draft strategic plan for Drogheda Environs, prepared on behalf of Louth County Council by McHugh Consultants in May 1999, identified that the Drogheda Environs were experiencing unprecedented demand and pressure for development due to the high level of economic activity and development currently occurring at a national level combined with recent improvements in the communications and transportation infrastructure on the eastern corridor.

In particular, it anticipated that the Drogheda Environs would experience significant pressure for residential development by commuters who work in the Dundalk – Drogheda – Dublin corridor.

The draft strategic plan suggested the need to utilise developable land available in the Borough of Drogheda to the optimum extent prior to any large-scale expansion onto green field sites in the adjoining counties. This draft plan did not go on public display nor was it adopted by the council. It, therefore, has no legal status and does not represent council policy.

3.5 STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR DROGHEDA

During the course of the preparation of this Local Area Plan for the North Drogheda Environs, an Economic and Spatial Study of Drogheda was under taken by Peter Bacon and Associates, Economic Consultants, in conjunction with Fergal McCabe, Planning Consultant.

This document provides a comprehensive review of the Socio Economic and demographic profile of the Drogheda area.

The significant findings of the study were:-

- Age of population is below the national average;
- Lower employment rate and higher unemployment than the national average;
- Low propensity for full time education among those aged fifteen plus;
- There is a shortfall of third level degree attainment;
- A socio economic divide with a greater than average percentage in the manual groups on the North side compared to national figures and percentages in the South Environs;
- High average disposable incomes compared to the national average;
- Most employment is in relatively small firms;
- Few firms in the leading economic sectors;
- No single manufacturing firm stands out of the potential driver of economic development;
- No major foreign owned service firms in the area;
- No national service firms headquarters in Drogheda;
- Drogheda's association with old industry and economic activities.

In assessing the economic and infrastructural needs of the area in the future, the report concluded that there is a need to address the issues arising from this socio economic and demographic analysis. Economic potentials and infrastructural requirements relating to the North Drogheda Environs area were identified as follows:

- The potential for the lands on the northern side of the Boyne to participate in the development objectives of the BMW region, despite proximity to the national capital, is a distinct advantage;
- Designation of Drogheda as a single 'development centre' in the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, gives it a favoured status as opposed to other competing centres;
- A major industry and the exiting and future port expansion is to the east of the town and does not have direct access to the motorway and national road network at present to the future national road / motorway network;
- New housing areas on the edge of town are remote from the shopping areas of the town centre;

- Heavy industry in the eastern sector may be incompatible with the preservation and the improvement of residential and visual amenity in that area;
- A lack of a large scale significant local/regional park proximate to existing and future housing;
- Dearth of active open space in comparison to other settlements;
- Storm water drainage constraints in potential development areas.

Recommendations were made to maximise the potential for Drogheda to exploit its potential to derive advantage from Ireland's economic and infrastructural progress. The main factors identified relate to: -

- Improving water supply and waste water treatment capacity;
- Strategic positioning as a self contained economic alternative to the Dublin region, based on a high quality environment and living conditions;
- Knowledge intensive industries that rely on intellectual skills are the future;
- Location decisions will be based on the most desirable living conditions;
- Desirability of location for new industry can be enhanced by provision of convenient sites in the vicinity of the M1 interchange;
- The need to develop towards new high value added, service and near service type industries, which require high specification locations, quality layout and comprehensive modern landscaping;
- Continued development of heritage based tourism will increase the tourism profile of the area;
- Proximity to the M1 route will make the tourism infrastructure more accessible;
- Industrial and tourism development is constrained by the need to conserve the area;
- Heavy industry on the north side will decline in importance in the long term and its role in the economic regeneration of Drogheda will be limited;
- Exploitation of Drogheda's location on the commuter rail transport infrastructure, including a north side rail station should be maximised to make best use of such high quality access to public transport;

- Locations in proximity to public transport corridors are recommended by the Residential Density Guidelines as being appropriate for the provision of higher densities;
- Sustainability considerations will require the future expansion of Drogheda to be based on a comprehensive land use and transportation plan that will seek to reduce reliance on the private motorcar.

Recommendations to capitalise on existing and future assets were recommended as follows, to maximise: -

- Capacities of new junctions on the M1 to take appropriate development in a planned fashion, both on the east and west, dependant on the provision of services and compatibility with the natural and historical amenities of the Boyne valley;
- Development of tourism, ‘New Economy’ industries and services sectors;
- Training to ensure that the benefits of growth are accessible for current residents;
- Creation of new residential neighbourhoods with their own local focus on future station;
- Utilisation of the disused quarry as a regional recreational use;
- Linkage along the riverbank between the sea and the high amenity – natural heritage areas;
- Potential for providing low density housing in planned and attractive semi rural contexts in the eastern sector;
- Provision of high quality educational facilities;
- Provision of good living environments;
- Provision of high quality local accessibility, public transport, cycling and walking;
- Potential as an attractive small city alternative to Dublin with a high value natural and built environment;

- A closing of the pronounced social divide in Drogheda and social rebalancing in the Housing Strategy to be prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000;
- The advantage of the location of the northern side within the BMW region to address the socio economic disparity.

These plans and studies provide the context within which this local area plan for the Northern Environs was prepared.

3.6 Regional Planning Guidelines

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area Published in 1999 identified the potential for Drogheda as a development centre to act as a counter balance to the continued concentration of growth in and around Dublin City.

However, the Guidelines had no legal status as Drogheda, being located in County Louth, falls outside the Greater Dublin Area as defined by the counties of Dublin, Wicklow, Kildare and Meath. The recently completed review of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area also acknowledges the role of Drogheda, not withstanding the fact that the town falls outside its remit.

Drogheda is located in the Border Region consisting of counties Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal. A planning Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region have recently been prepared.

Although Drogheda is not a designated gateway or hub in the National Spatial Strategy, its strategic location in close proximity to Dublin along the Dublin Belfast economic and transportation corridor is recognised.

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region also recognises Drogheda's unique position and acknowledges the towns significant development and growth potential, driven primarily by its strategic location vis-à-vis proximity to Dublin, excellent transport infrastructure and location on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor. The Guidelines have designated Drogheda as a primary development centre

with an anticipated population in the region of 50,000 – 60,000 for Drogheda by the year 2020.

PART B – THE PLAN

4.0 NEED FOR LOCAL AREA PLAN

4.1 PURPOSE OF LOCAL AREA PLAN

The pressure, primarily for residential development in the northern environs of Drogheda, has intensified over the years and whilst some development has been permitted, many applications have been refused on the grounds of (a) absence of a development policy for this area, (b) a deficiency in the provision of services and road infrastructure and (c) the consequent prematurity of development in this area.

The purpose of this local area plan is to address the issues of prematurity and uncoordinated development. The local area plan will seek to facilitate existing demand and to direct future development in an orderly, economic, sustainable and coherent manner. It will also define the northern development boundary to maintain a clear physical break between the edge of the urban settlement with the surrounding open countryside and the rural villages.

4.2 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The preparation of this local area plan has been directed by a Steering Committee with membership derived from the management and technical Departments of Louth County Council and the Drogheda Borough Council.

Consultative meetings were held with elected representatives and interested parties who were invited by newspaper advertisement to attend open meetings held to explore the needs of the business and general community in respect of the development of the northern environs of Drogheda.

The Elected Representatives have identified the following primary concerns to be considered in the preparation of this local area plan:

- The need for the integrated planning for Drogheda town and environs, with Drogheda town centre being the engine for development of the area;
- To provide for balanced land use development, including provision for employment generating land zonings to promote self sufficiency in the area and to guard against a mono culture housing developments based on a dormitory function;
- The provision of a Drogheda North railway station was considered desirable to service the expected population growth within the North Drogheda Environs area;
- The development of a northern cross/port access route, to provide an alternative access from the port to the M1 motorway was considered to be an essential ingredient in the development of these lands.
- Development of third level education facilities to integrate with information technology business;
- It was felt that a tourism concept, facilities and amenity development based on archaeology, history, amenity, facilities and accessibility should be developed.
- Recreational and social facilities should be provided in tandem with development.
- Additional shopping facilities to serve the new housing estates would be an important requirement.

Similar considerations were identified by business interest parties at a separate consultation.

5.0 OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

5.1 The northern environs of Drogheda have the potential to provide extensive areas of land adjoining the town which are capable of accommodating significant numbers of residential dwellings as well as support services such as shops, schools, churches etc. In addition, sufficient land is also available to provide sites for industrial and employment generating uses, thereby providing employment opportunities for the residents of the adjoining houses.

5.2 On completion of the proposed extension to the Drogheda wastewater treatment plant, there will be sufficient capacity to cater for short to medium term development in the area. With further expansion of treatment facilities, there will be capacity to cater for the projected population of 20,000 that can be accommodated on these lands, along with associated commercial and industrial developments.

5.3 The new Drogheda by-pass and motorway has recently opened with a major interchange at Mell, located within the western part of the plan area. This motorway interchange presents an opportunity for the development of lands adjacent to it and for the entire northern fringe of the town.

5.4 Moreover, there is a proposal to build a port access/northern cross route from the motorway interchange in the west across to the port in the east. This road will open up for the development all the intervening lands within the northern environs of Drogheda.

5.5 Finally, the Belfast/Dublin railway runs through the east of this area. The development of a railway station here offers great opportunities to serve the development of North Drogheda and to make this area accessible to the national rail network.

5.6 However, while these opportunities exist, there are also significant constraints on the development of these lands. While treatment capacity will be available, the sewerage collection network currently extends only as far as the lands adjoining the Termonfeckin road. The foul sewer will have to be extended from east to west across the railway line as far as the former N1 national primary route. The lands to the west of the former N1 and those lands adjacent to the motorway interchange cannot be considered for development until the above works are completed.

5.7 In addition, there are constraints on water supply and the disposal of storm water. Ushers stream, which drains the west of the area, has very limited spare capacity to cater for additional storm water runoff from further developments, while the Beaulieu stream, which drains the eastern part of the area, has no spare capacity and is susceptible to localised flooding. An uncontrolled increase in storm water runoff to either of these streams could lead to serious flooding problems. Considerable works are required to improve channel sections. In addition, a designated flood plain is required to cater for overflows in the Ushers stream while a large diameter overflow pipe will have to be laid from the Beaulieu stream to the Boyne to minimise potential flooding in that area. All future developments will be required to control runoff volumes and rates to specified levels.

5.8 Furthermore, works will also be required to augment the water supply to the overall Drogheda area, and more specifically, to provide a trunk network to service the northern environs plan area. A study is currently being carried out to address existing deficiencies in water supply in the Drogheda area. Currently, limited capacity exists to supply new developments in the east of the area from Drogheda Borough Council network, but no such facility exists in the west of the plan area. Thus, there is a requirement to augment water supply in the area and to construct a new trunk water main to service the area.

5.9 In summary, it is evident that the lack of an adequate foul sewerage drainage network, storm water drainage requirements and access to water supplies constrain

development of the lands to the west of the plan area, in the vicinity of the motorway, Twenties Lane and Ballymakenny road.

5.10 There are also constraints in relation to the road infrastructure. The lands that are being developed at present are in the east of the plan area. However these lands discharge their traffic into Drogheda Town and the road network in the town is incapable of accommodating any extra traffic deriving from development within the northern environs plan area. Any proposals to develop further housing in the vicinity of the Termonfeckin road will be seriously compromised by this constraint. In light of this, it is clear that the development of these lands would require that the port access/northern cross route should be in place before any further development is occupied. This route will allow the distribution of traffic to the motorway without having to go through Drogheda town.

5.11 In summary, the piped foul sewerage and water supply facilities exist to develop lands in the east, but the road network and storm water drainage facilities cannot accommodate further development. Alternatively, if it were proposed to begin developing the lands in west based on first building the Northern Cross Route from the Motorway N1 eastwards, then from a traffic viewpoint, this would be preferable. However, drainage is unlikely to be available in the short term to develop the lands towards the western end of the plan area.

5.12 It is clear from this analysis that a piecemeal approach to developing the infrastructure in this area will not be possible. It will be necessary to develop the Northern Cross/Port Access Route from the N1 to the Termonfeckin road, roll out the foul sewer from east to west through the area, develop the storm water drainage capacity in the area and augment the water supply. Development of any specific areas will thus be contingent on an adequate level of infrastructure being provided to sustain development within that area. These infrastructure requirements will be assessed on an area by area basis and provision of the required infrastructure shall be a prerequisite of development being permitted.

The total cost of providing this infrastructure is estimated to be in the region of €60 million at present day prices and this will have to be provided primarily by existing landowners and/or developers.

5.13 It will be necessary for all stake holders to work with each other to put together a financial proposal to raise the funds needed to install the necessary infrastructure on a phased basis or in its entirety, as development demands dictate. In the absence of this key infrastructure the development of these lands cannot go ahead. In addition, it will be necessary to develop a master plan for each of the three residential neighbourhoods. These master plans will have to accord with the zoning designations set out in Map 1 of this local area plan. Each individual development proposal will have to be consistent with the principles of that sectors master plan and no development will be permitted unless it complies with the master plan.

6.0 STUDY AREA PROPOSALS

6.1 OVERALL STRATEGY

The potential to develop the northern environs of Drogheda arises from a number of factors. These are:

- The proposed building of the Northern Cross / Port Access Road from the Port in the east across the northern environs to the Old Dublin/Belfast Road in the west where it will meet the access road to the M1 motorway. This can only happen in tandem with the development of the area as it will have to be funded primarily from the private sector.
- Much of the area is located within the drainage catchment area of the foul drainage facility for Drogheda and spare capacity exists in the foul sewerage system to drain these lands. The proposed expansion of the waste water treatment plant will, when operational, cater for the increased population.
- The M1 motorway contains an interchange within the plan area. This generates potential to develop adjacent lands in order to maximise the potential of the interchange.
- The burgeoning demand from the Dublin area for additional housing within commuting distance of the capital and especially within existing railway corridor.

If the entire area between the Borough boundary and the Northern Cross / Port Access Road was to be zoned solely for housing, the population capacity would be between 27,000 and 40,000 persons depending on the density standard applied to the new housing areas, (i.e. 150 – 220 persons per hectare gross).

However, the public consultations carried out in preparing this local area plan, especially with the elected members, were quite clear in showing that it was not desirable that Drogheda develop as a dormitory town within the greater Dublin area. The elected members indicated that they required an approach that would develop the northern environs for a mixture of residential and employment generating uses with ancillary community, educational, recreational and social facilities.

The overall objective was to create a balanced community so that the new residents would have the option of local employment rather than commuting to Dublin. This approach has driven the preparation of this plan.

Accordingly, while the northern and western environs have the capacity to accommodate up to 40,000 persons, it has been decided to zone significant areas for industrial and other employment generating uses. This reduces the number likely to be accommodated in the plan area to approximately 20,000.

The residents of the houses in the initial phases of development are likely to have jobs elsewhere and will tend to commute out of the area thereby reinforcing the dormitory function of the town. However, commuting volumes will be reduced as more as employment opportunities become more readily available in the area. This will lead to a more balanced and sustainable form of development.

6.2 ZONING PROPOSALS

(A) INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATING USES

It is proposed to provide industrially zoned land in both the east and west of the plan area. The lands in the east adjoin Premier Periclase and other general industrial developments in the area. It is considered that these lands are suitable for port related industries and uses that could avail of the proposed road linking the port to the new M1 motorway.

It is proposed to provide a further concentration of industrially zoned land to the west of the plan area convenient to the Mell motorway interchange. This land can avail of the opportunities created by proximity to the motorway and should provide for the creation of business parks, logistics and distribution centres, warehousing and retail warehousing.

The quantum of land zoned for industrial development is designed to attract industrial development to Drogheda. This will provide employment opportunities for residents of the town and of the lands zoned for residential purposes. The location of these industrially zoned areas within the Border, Midlands and West Region, yet within a reasonable distance of Dublin, should make these lands particularly attractive to potential employers.

(B) RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Between the two areas zoned for industrial development, it is proposed to zone the bulk of the land for residential purposes. (See Zoning Map 1). As stated previously, it is likely that these lands will accommodate a population in the order of 20,000 persons, based on an average density of 35 houses per hectare and an occupancy rate of 3 persons per house.

Within these residentially zoned lands, three distinct residential neighbourhoods have been identified. The Master Plan Framework Map (Map 2) sets out an indicative master planning framework for the development of the area while more detailed design guidelines are addressed elsewhere in this document.

Master Plans

It will be necessary to prepare a master plan for each of the three residential neighbourhoods identified in the plan. The relevant master plan for each neighbourhood must be in place before planning permissions will be granted on foot of any individual application within that neighbourhood. It will be necessary for the land owners and other stakeholders to come together and in consultation with the planning

authority, prepare detailed master plans for each neighbourhood. All three master plans must be consistent with and compliment each other in the interest of orderly development.

The master plans must deal with all relevant aspects of the development including the provision of roads and piped infrastructure, distributor road layout, public open space, community facilities, design, densities, phasing and implementation of the development. In preparing these master plans, it will be necessary (a) to identify the route of the water courses travelling through the area, (b) identify clusters of mature trees and (c) runs of attractive hedgerows. This exercise will identify the areas best suited for the provision of amenity open space and the development of storm water attenuation facilities.

Open Space Provision

It is an objective of the plan that a centrally located public park be provided within the designated residential neighbourhoods. This will provide for a continual green area running from the Termonfeckin road to the Dublin Belfast road, incorporating pedestrian and cycle paths, playing fields and landscaped areas. The park should be opened out into larger regular shaped open spaces to facilitate the provision of significant areas for playing fields and other active recreational pursuits. As far as is practical, existing streams, clusters of trees and mature hedgerows should be incorporated within the park.

The proposed public park must be located centrally within the residential neighbourhoods roughly equidistant between the borough boundary and the Northern Cross road. As such, it will form a natural division between the development lands adjoining the borough boundary and those adjoining the Northern Cross road.

The overall public open space requirement is 20% of the total residential development area. This area must provide for the public park, playing fields and other smaller open spaces/play facilities dispersed throughout the development.

A minimum of 15% open space must be provided within the three residential neighbourhoods and the remaining 5% may be provided at accessible and convenient locations outside the plan area within the green belt designated in the Louth County Development Plan. Where a developer proposes to provide a portion of the open space requirement outside the plan area as provided for above, provision for this must be incorporated within the master plans and such open space shall be developed solely for use as playing fields and formal recreational pursuits.

Foul Drainage

The foul sewer is being rolled out in an east to west fashion and so far has been laid from the North Quay to the recently constructed Termon Abbey housing development. It is proposed to continue the foul sewer north of the borough boundary up to the Dublin/Belfast road. A preliminary design has been prepared for the above sewer. The development of these lands will have to be co-ordinated with the roll out of this sewer.

Water Supply

There is currently a deficit in water supply within the area and this will have to be addressed before development can take place. The council is currently in discussion with Meath County Council with a view to availing of further supply from the River Boyne. A new trunk water main will have to be provided within the area as part of any development proposal.

Storm Water

Storm water in the area currently drains to the River Boyne via Ushers and Beaulieu streams. There is also a major flood plain located close to the Dublin/Belfast road that attenuates overflow from Ushers stream. The flood plain within this area will have to be retained as part of any development proposal but this may, in certain circumstances, double up as public open space. This will be subject to the approval of the planning authority.

Road Access

Accessibility to the area is severely constrained by the lack of suitable access roads. All roads currently lead into Drogheda and the additional traffic generated by the development would lead to severe congestion within Drogheda. This can not be allowed to happen and consequently, the development of this area will be dependent upon the construction of the Northern Cross Route. The construction of this road must therefore take place in tandem with the development of the area.

Phasing

The master plan for each neighbourhood must provide for the phasing of the development over the period to the year 2020. The phasing will undoubtedly have to be linked to the proposed roll out of infrastructure, both physical and social. It will be a requirement that an infrastructure rollout schedule, as agreed with the planning authority, be incorporated within the master plans. The planning authority will not permit any development to take place until it is satisfied that sufficient infrastructure is in place or will be provided contemporaneously with the development. Because of the significant deficits that currently exist, it will be a requirement that, as far as is practical, the provision of all infrastructure be “front loaded” at an early stage of the development process.

No development shall take place until a binding legal and financial agreement is in place between the developer and Louth County Council, so as to ensure that the necessary road access, foul sewerage, water supply and/or surface water infrastructure, will be financed, constructed and operational before occupation of any dwelling.

As a minimum, the necessary road access shall be understood to include the Northern Cross Route from the development site to the former N1 Drogheda to Dundalk road and the connection to the nearest suitable point of the existing water supply and drainage infrastructure.

The above legal and financial agreement under Section 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 shall be such that no financial liability rests with either Louth

County Council or Drogheda Borough Council to repay the costs other than by means of contributions already received from other third parties under the respective Section 49 agreement.

Notwithstanding the above, the Planning Authority may grant planning permission for a limited number of one off houses to meet the needs of immediate family members of landowners within the plan area.

In summary, these lands cannot be significantly developed until the relevant sections of the northern cross route are built and the foul sewer is completed to service the development. Moreover, the water courses throughout the area will have to be improved, an overflow flood relief pipe laid from Beaulieu stream to the Boyne and land reserved for a flood plain in the Ushers stream catchment before these lands can be built upon.

In addition, additional trunk water mains will be required to service the entire area. Significant social infrastructure and community facilities will also have to be provided to support the growing population of the area.

Residential Neighbourhood 1

This proposed neighbourhood is located towards the western end of the residential zoned lands. Access to these lands is from the Twenties Lane and this will require substantial upgrading in order to facilitate development. In addition, the construction of a limited section of the northern cross route will link up with the Twenties Lane and thereby allow traffic to gain access to the Dublin Belfast Road and the motorway without the necessity of travelling through the town.

Constraints on development within this neighbourhood include the absence of a foul sewer connection, inadequate water supply and the need to preserve the existing flood plain located within the area.

A number of community facilities are already being developed in the Borough area adjoining this sector. Before development can commence, however, it will be necessary to upgrade the Twenties Lane, improve water supply, provide access off the northern cross route and await the arrival of the foul sewer up to a point where it can service these lands. An area will also have to be provided as a flood plain within this neighbourhood.

Residential Neighbourhood 2

Residential neighbourhood 2 is located in the central part of the residential zoned lands with access taken off the Ballymakenny road. Development constraints are imposed here also by reason of poor accessibility, inadequate water supply, storm water considerations and lack of connection to the foul sewer network.

Roll out of the northern cross route from the Dublin/Belfast Road will be required as far as the Ballymakenny road in order for this area to be developed. In addition, the foul sewer will have to be extended across the railway line, adequate provision made for storm water control and improvement to water supply.

Because of the scale of development provided for within this neighbourhood, it is considered that strict phasing will be required and this must be addressed in the master plan for the area

Residential Neighbourhood 3

Residential neighbourhood 3 is located between the railway line and the Termonfeckin Road. Some residential development has already been permitted in this area, amounting to approximately 600 units. Although the area has connection to foul drainage and surface water drainage is provided by means of the Beaulieu stream, access is a critical development constraint and no further development can be permitted within this neighbourhood until the northern cross route is in place, at least as far as the Termonfeckin road. The over flow surface water pipe from the Beaulieu stream will also be required.

In addition, it will be necessary to provide a new neighbourhood distributor road linking the Northern Cross route and the Termonfeckin Road. An indicative line for

this route is shown on map 2. Detailed design and final route selection shall be provided for in the master plan for Neighbourhood 3.

The existing road serving the Termon Abbey estate shall not form part of this neighbourhood distributor road but shall be linked thereto at both the northern and southern ends. Appropriate traffic calming measures shall be put in place to discourage through traffic through the Termon Abbey estate.

Summary

The development of the residential zoned lands in this local area plan will provide for an ultimate population in the region of 20,000 persons. This, however, will be dependent upon the provision of substantial additional infrastructure and development will only be permitted where the planning authority is satisfied that all the necessary infrastructure will be put in place as part of any development proposal.

In addition, a wide range of supporting services and social infrastructure will also be required. The requirements of the planning authority in relation to the provision and roll out of such services and infrastructure will be addressed in Chapter 7.

(C) DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH RAILWAY LINE

The Dublin / Belfast Railway line runs through the plan area. This affords the opportunity to create a new railway station in this area. The existing railway station is located to the south of Drogheda. If the northern environs of Drogheda are to be developed to the extent proposed, a strong argument can be made for the provision of a new railway station to service the newly developing communities to the north of the town.

It is, therefore, proposed in this plan that a new railway station be provided to the North of the River Boyne to service the new residential communities provided for in the plan. The preferred location for this is on lands in the ownership of C.I.E, located at the junction of the spur line to the former Irish Cement site east of the town.

These lands fall within the functional area of Drogheda Borough Council and it is the policy of Louth County Council to work in partnership with Iarnrod Eireann and

Drogheda Borough Council to secure the provision of this essential facility for the town of Drogheda and the sustainable development of its northern environs.

However, if the provision of a new railway station at this location does not prove feasible, an alternative site within the plan area will have to be identified and the new station provided for within the master planning process.

In view of the possible development of a new railway station in this location, the adjoining lands are zoned for a mixed use development appropriate to a transport hub. Part of this development should be developed for park and ride purposes. This park and ride facility will be accessed from the road serving the existing Manor Park housing development off the Termonfeckin road. This road was developed to district distributor road standard and so can accommodate the traffic likely to be generated. In conjunction with the park and ride facility, high density residential, commercial and leisure developments and other uses will be permitted with associated small scale convenience and comparison retail units.

The new railway station will provide for commuting to Dublin initially, but can also provide for reverse commuting by persons living outside Drogheda. In such circumstances, commuters can travel to work in the new enterprises to be located within the industrially zoned areas in the plan area. In accordance with mobility management plans, companies or groups of companies will be encouraged to provide a shuttle bus service along the northern cross route between the industrial estates and the new station.

(D) SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

As the population of the area increases, there will be a growing demand for additional educational facilities for the area. Provision has been made for three additional primary schools linked to neighbourhood centres within each neighbourhood. New second level schools have recently been built at Twenties Lane and the Termonfeckin Road. Existing schools within Drogheda will be able to absorb some of the increased demand as the population of the town expands but these are unlikely to be able to absorb all the additional demand. Therefore, expansion of existing, or indeed the provision of new

second level schools, may be required. It is proposed that such schools, if required, can be provided on lands outside the plan area to the north of the proposed northern cross road. These lands are zoned as greenbelt in the Louth County Development Plan 2003 – 2009. This zoning provision permits educational and other institutional uses.

The public consultations carried out as part of the local area plan preparation process and Bacon Drogheda Report indicates the need for a third level educational institution in Drogheda. It is proposed that lands to the north of the northern cross/port access route be investigated as a possible location for this facility. Such a location would be adjacent to the improved road system and areas of open space. It would also provide a site large enough to provide the necessary buildings and recreational spaces required to create a campus setting. It would be necessary that the campus be linked to the centre of Drogheda and the railway station by an improved level of public transport.

(E) RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The plan provides for three neighbourhood centres which adjoin primary school sites (one in each neighbourhood), in order to encourage and facilitate joint journeys to shops and schools. It is proposed in the plan that a neighbourhood shopping centre be provided within the three residential neighbourhoods to meet the needs of the local communities.

Provision is made for a retail park with a maximum floor area of 15,000 square metres to meet the need for retail warehousing in the environs area and the wider Drogheda area. The retail park is proposed where the Dublin/Belfast road meets the proposed northern cross / port access road and where there is sufficient spare capacity in the road network and access to the new motorway. The recommendation of the Retail Planning Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in January 2000 will apply. Only uses appropriate to retail parks will be permitted, such as bulky household goods, sports equipment and DIY stores. Up to a maximum of 10% of each unit area may be utilised for small scale higher value goods associated with the primary permitted use. Sub-division of units into stores less than 700m² or in excess of 6,000m² gross (including any ancillary garden centre) will not be permitted. In addition, food retailing will be not be permitted within this zone

(F) TOURISM AND AMENITY

The heritage town of Drogheda occupies a strategic location at the mouth of the Boyne River and is the gateway to Bru Na Boinne, an area of outstanding heritage value of world importance that includes the world famous passage graves at Newgrange, Dowth and Knowth.

The hinterland of the town, both in County Louth and County Meath, contains many fine beaches, golf courses and other amenities such as Beaulieu House and Demesne and Townley Hall. The site of the historic Battle of the Boyne and King William's Glen are also located just outside the plan area close to the village of Tullyallen.

The potential for the development of the tourism industry in the town and the Boyne Valley as a whole is recognised by the council. In order to facilitate and promote such development, lands west of the motorway interchange have been zoned for tourism related facilities and developments. This would include hotels, tourist accommodation as part of an integrated tourism complex and facilities, visitor facilities, interpretative centre, motorway service facilities, tourist retail outlets, restaurant, public house, tourist information, parking, cycle hire and other ancillary commercial and leisure facilities that support the development of the Boyne valley for tourism.

These built facilities must be located immediately adjacent to the motorway as a gateway to the Boyne valley as provided for in the zoning provisions. Any buildings granted permission in this location will have to ensure that they have minimal visual impact within this sensitive area and are designed in a manner that fully reflects their sensitive location.

(G) PRIMARY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

In residential neighbourhoods, indicative locations for primary schools in association with local neighbourhood centre facilities have been indicated on map 2. An entry level primary school should be accommodated on a 1 hectare site adjacent to each neighbourhood centre.

Schools should be located within 500m walking distance of all residences and should be located adjacent to crèche facilities and open space areas. A network of pedestrian routes and cycleways from all residential developments in the neighbourhood should be designed to link safely to the primary school and neighbourhood shops.

Schools are a key community focal point and also contain a number of significant resources which can be of benefit to the wider community such as playing fields, school halls and sports facilities. Complementary use of facilities should be borne in mind in the location, planning and design of school facilities.

With greater female participation rates in employment, the need for childcare and family support facilities must be addressed. In all residential developments in excess of 75 units, crèche facilities will be required to be provided in accordance with the Louth County Childcare Strategy.

(H) AMENITY OPEN SPACE

It will be a requirement that each development proposal provide public and private open space in close proximity to all dwellings within the development. In addition, the public park identified in indicative form in Map 2 must be provided as part of the master plans for the residential neighbourhoods. Where appropriate, certain open spaces may be utilised as part of a storm water management and attenuation. The standards for the provision of public and private open space are set out in the accompanying appendix on residential standards.

In all, 20% of the total area zoned for residential development will be required as public open space. A minimum of 15% open space must be provided within the residential areas themselves while 5% may be located outside the plan area at convenient locations across the proposed Northern Cross Road. Such lands shall be dedicated and set out for use as playing fields, formal game and other active recreational pursuits.

(I) SERVICE CHARGES

Developers may be required to provide infrastructure or facilities in excess of the immediate requirements of the development proposed in accordance with the provisions of Section 34(4)(m) of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Contributions will also be levied on all developments in accordance with the provisions of Sections 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Charges in respect of roads, water supply, storm water and foul drainage infrastructure including the provision of trunk network, storage and treatment facilities, amenity and

community facilities will be levied in accordance with the Contributions Scheme adopted by Louth County Council in February 2004. Special and/or Supplementary Contributions Schemes under the provisions of Sections 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 will also apply in relation to all developments taking place within the northern environs plan area.

6.3 SUMMARY OF LAND USE OBJECTIVES

In summary, this plan proposes that the central area be developed for residential use, with ancillary retail, educational and community facilities. Within this area, it is an objective to develop a railway station around which high density housing commercial development and a park and ride facility will be developed. Second and third level educational institutions are advocated within lands to the north of the northern cross road.

It is proposed that significant lands be developed for employment generating industrial uses to the east and west of this residential area. The lands to the east are suitable for port related uses and those to the west, availing of their location close to the motorway interchange, will provide for business parks, logistics and distribution and warehousing developments. An area is also designated for a retail park to cater for the retail warehousing needs of Drogheda.

7.0 INFRASTRUCTURE

7.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

While the plan area under review is poorly serviced at present the development lands can be provided with sewerage and drainage facilities as set out hereunder.

(A) FOUL SEWERAGE

The plan area can be drained gravitationally by a main sewer line extending from the siphon inlet manhole on Doner's Green through Greenhills and running east to west, located approximately centrally through the lands in question, to a point close to the R132. The termination point would be just short of the R132 close to the Rosehall Reservoir. The lower section of the sewer, between the syphon inlet chamber and the Dublin/Belfast Railway Line has been constructed as part of the Manor Park Housing Development which is currently being developed on the lands off the along Termonfeckin road. The Manor Park section of the sewer is 750mm diameter and this trunk foul sewer line can be extended under the railway line and then continued as a 750 and 600mm diameter line to service the lands zoned residential in the plan.

The area west of the Dublin/Belfast road, extending as far as the motorway and including the zoned lands west of Mell interchange, can only be serviced with foul drainage facilities via a new purpose built pumping station located in the vicinity of the interchange. The effluent will then have to be pumped to the head manhole in the main drain servicing north Drogheda area. The main drain has been designed to take account of this additional discharge. Full servicing of the northern environs area will require the extension of branch lines by developers to service individual developments. Branch lines should be routed along estate roads where possible.

(B) STORM WATER DRAINAGE

The lands within the plan area are drained by two main streams; the Ushers stream draining the western side of the area and flowing through Greenhills to the river Boyne, and the Beaulieu stream in the east which flows towards Beaulieu House before also flowing into the Boyne.

These streams have inadequate capacity to cater for uncontrolled runoff from new developments and require substantial improvement works. These works include the protection of a flood plain in the Ushers stream area, the provision of an overflow pipe to the Boyne from the Beaulieu stream, channel improvement and protection works on both streams. In addition, restrictions on permissible rates of discharge of storm water runoff from development to the streams will apply.

All development proposals will be required to have separate surface water drainage arrangements which could incorporate source control and *Best Management Practices* in respect of controlling both the volume and quality of storm water runoff generated. Louth County Council is currently developing a policy regarding the control of storm water and when adopted, the provisions therein will apply to any new development.

(C) WATER SUPPLY

Total water available to Drogheda town is of the order of 15,000 m³ per day from the following sources:

The total water production of the Staleen water treatment plant in Donore is in the order of 30,000 m³ / day. Meath County Council retains approximately 15,000 m³ per day for its own use and therefore the remaining 15,000 m³ is available to Drogheda Borough Council. Additional supplies are also available from the Rosehall reservoir located to the north of the town but this is only a seasonal supply and is unavailable during the peak summer demand period.

The water demand of the town is approximately 15,000m³ per day and therefore there is no spare capacity during the peak summer period. This is a major constraint on development within the northern environs plan area and consequently, development can not go ahead until such time as this situation is addressed and resolved.

Top water level in the Rosehall Reservoir is 45.8m O.D. Malin Head and the Donore Service Reservoirs south of Drogheda have a top water level of 79.6m O.D. These operating levels would provide sufficient head to allow for extension of the existing supply mains to service the southern part of the plan area under discussion, where ground levels vary from 30m O.D. to 35m O.D. Malin Head. Boosting would be necessary to lift water into a tower on the northern boundary of the plan area to properly supply the upper reaches of this area where ground levels rise from 50m to 60m O.D. Malin Head. The 450mm line supplying water from Donore reservoir to Leonard's Cross could be extended into the plan area and routed to connect to the water pipeline on Termonfeckin road. Alternatively, as a temporary measure, the possibility of using the existing booster station located at Cement Road/Dundalk Road Junction, can be examined. Water from the Rosehall source, when available, could be used to supply certain parts of the plan area subject to adequate pressure and supply being available.

It will be necessary to carry out more detailed investigation of the existing system to decide how best to provide an adequate water supply to the plan area. Work is also ongoing on developing additional supply capacity for Drogheda, the lack of which would be a medium term constraint on development of the plan area. However, as previously stated, development within the northern environs can not proceed until such time as an increased supply is available.

(D) ACCESS TO THE DEVELOPMENT LANDS

While there are existing local roads and laneways giving limited access into the area, in order to provide adequate access, the proposed Northern Cross Route will have to be constructed to fully open up the lands in question. The existing road network, which includes the Dublin Belfast road, the Twenties Laneway, the Ballymakenny road, the

Termonfeckin road and the Baltray road, are incapable of handling the additional traffic generated as all of these lead onto the already congested roads and streets of Drogheda. The construction of the northern cross/port access route is an essential piece of infrastructure that will be required so that the development within the northern environs can proceed in an orderly and sustainable manner.

(E) TRANSPORTATION

The pursuit of a sustainable transport policy is fundamental to the transportation objectives contained in the plan. These include objectives to promote the use of public transport, pedestrian walks and cycle paths throughout the area.

The integration of public transport modes and provision of facilities to serve the developing communities is essential in this regard. The areas of highest population concentration, and the primary retail and commercial facilities should therefore be located at the point of conjunction of rail, bus and roads infrastructure

Mobility studies and proposals to maximise use of public transport will be required for all significant development proposals.

(F) ROAD PROPOSALS

The original line of the northern cross route road ran predominantly inside the urban boundary, as shown in the 1997 Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan. This route has been replaced by the proposed northern cross/port access route along an alignment sufficiently separated from the town to allow properly structured and well-planned development to take place extending northwards into the Louth County environs.

The northern environs are traversed on the west side by the M1 motorway. Within the plan area, the Dublin/Belfast road and the R166 regional route to Termonfeckin are the major routes.

To link Drogheda Port to the motorway, the northern cross/port access route is proposed. The initial construction will be single carriageway in a corridor reservation sufficient to accommodate a dual carriageway in the future.

All intersections shall be developed as roundabouts.

(G) RAIL

Improvements to the Dublin/Belfast rail line have reduced travel times to Dublin city centre to 30 minutes, thereby increasing the attractiveness of Drogheda as a commuter town.

It is an objective of Louth County Council, in consultation with Iarnrod Eireann, to seek the provision of a new railway station north of the river Boyne. This is considered as essential in order to provide sustainable transport options to serve the needs of new communities within the northern environs arising from the implementation of this plan. The preferred option for the location of the new station is on lands currently in the ownership of C.I.E. located on a spur line within the functional area of Drogheda Borough Council. The Council will investigate, in partnership with Iarnrod Eireann and Drogheda Borough Council, the technical feasibility of this site for the new station. If it proves not technically feasible, provision shall then be made for the reservation of an alternative site for a railway station in the preparation of the Master plans.

(H) BUS

In addition to the provincial services linking Drogheda to Dundalk and Dublin, there is a limited town bus service. This internal service will have to be expanded to serve the new residential communities that will emerge within the northern environs. Designers and developers will be required to provide for bus routes and shelters within developments and the integration of bus and railway services will be encouraged.

(I) PORT

Drogheda Port Company has developed a second port terminal on the north bank of the River Boyne at Tom Roe's Point to the east of the town.

In response to future demand, the terminal facility can be extended, with associated further warehousing units and an industrial park.

The expansion requirements of the new terminal facility could amount to some 20 – 40 hectares.

This plan recognises the importance of the development potential of Drogheda Port and its role in the strategic development of the area as outlined in the documents

1. Enterprise Strategy Group's "Ahead of the Curve, July 2004"
2. National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

Both these documents recognise the important role that the port of Drogheda currently plays and its potential for future expansion in the national interest. Louth County Council fully supports and endorses this view.

The plan also provides for the zoning of lands adjacent to the port for a wide range of port related activities. The development of these lands will also be dependent on the provision of the northern cross/port access route.

SUMMARY

The northern environs has considerable potential for development but is severely constrained by significant infrastructural deficits in terms of both piped services and accessibility. The extent to which development can proceed in the short term will depend upon the degree to which these deficits can be adequately addressed and put right. The next section will seek to address how the infrastructure can be in order that the area can be developed going forward.

PART C – PLAN ASSESSMENT

8.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 POLICIES

It is the policy of Louth County Council, in cooperation with Drogheda Borough Council and Meath County Council, to facilitate and promote the development of Drogheda as a vibrant and sustainable primary development centre.

It is also the policy to cooperate with Drogheda Borough Council to consolidate the town's role within the region and to encourage the sustainable development of the industrial, commercial, shopping, and entertainment, recreation and communication sectors and to maximise its strategic location on the Dublin/Belfast economic corridor.

It is also policy to encourage and facilitate the town's wider function as a centre of economic, social and cultural activity for the benefit of both the town and its hinterland. More specifically, it is the aim to reinforce the central core of Drogheda as the commercial, social and cultural centre of the area and to realise its potential by encouraging development and conservation.

The purpose of this local area plan is to address the issues of prematurity and uncoordinated development on lands to the north of the town. The local area plan seeks to facilitate existing demand and to direct future development in an orderly, economic, sustainable and coherent manner. It also defines the northern development boundary in line with the northern cross route in order to maintain a clear physical break between the edge of the urban settlement with the surrounding open countryside and the rural villages.

It is considered appropriate to encourage the development of lands adjacent to the borough boundary so that areas that are closer to existing services can be substantially

developed in preference to more peripheral locations. The phasing provisions contained within the master plans must address this issue by ensuring that priority is given to the development of lands contiguous with existing development within the borough boundary.

8.2 OBJECTIVES

The overall planning objectives contained within this local area plan are as follows.

- The need for integrated land use and transportation planning for Drogheda town and environs, with Drogheda town centre being the engine for development of the area.
- Provision for industries, business parks, information technology and logistics land uses to provide employment opportunities for the existing and future population of the town and to maximise the benefit deriving from location within the BMW region.
- Balanced land use development, including provision for industrial and residential land zoning to promote self sufficiency and to guard against a mono culture dormitory function.
- The development of three residential neighbourhood areas to cater ultimately for a population in the vicinity of 20,000 persons.
- The creation of residential neighbourhoods which will provide a range of house designs and types (houses, duplex units, apartments) to cater for single persons, families, disabled and elderly persons. These neighbourhoods shall be developed to densities consistent with the Residential Density Guidelines and shall provide a network of walkways and cycleways which give access to schools, shops, other services and open spaces.

- A Drogheda North railway station as an essential infrastructural element to promote growth in the north Drogheda urban and environs areas.
- Development of a new port access route to relieve traffic congestion in Drogheda.
- Development of third level education facilities to support with information technology businesses.
- Tourism concept, facilities and amenity development based on archaeology, history, amenity, commercial and visitor facilities and accessibility.
- Development of recreational and social facilities.
- The need for neighbourhood convenience retail outlets and retail warehousing shopping opportunities.
- Establishment and protection of Heritage and Environmental Conservation areas.
- Provision of requisite infrastructure to support the development of the area in an environmentally sustainable fashion.

8.3 IMPLEMENTATION

There are significant constraints to development within the northern environs plan area due to the deficit in infrastructure that currently exists and the council will require that this deficit is made good as development progresses.

In order to address these constraints, the council will, on the adoption of this plan, invite all relevant landowners and developers to participate in discussions as to how best the development of the area can be achieved, given the infrastructure deficit that

exists and having regard to all matters relevant to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It will be a strict requirement that a master plan be prepared in respect of each neighbourhood that will set out detailed design considerations such as road layout, public open spaces and parklands, playing fields, schools, community facilities, neighbourhood shopping facilities and other matters as may be determined by the planning authority. The master plans shall also contain details in respect of housing densities, pedestrian and cycle paths, bus routes, phasing, not only of the development itself, but also of the required infrastructure and the financial and other arrangements considered necessary for the implementation of the Plan. In this regard, the master plans shall focus on appropriate delivery mechanisms such as public private partnerships, serviced land initiatives, strategic development zones, sections 48 and 49 contribution schemes or any other proposed means of achieving the orderly and sustainable development of the area in line with the strategy outlined in this local area plan. Each master plan will be required to be supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).

The planning authority will not, however, permit piecemeal development by individual landowners or developers in the absence of an agreed comprehensive and integrated approach for the development of each neighbourhood as a whole and without significant progress being made on the provision of the necessary infrastructure to support the development.

The council will expect all those landowners and developers who will benefit from the designation of their lands for development purposes in this plan to contribute their share of the cost of the provision of all the infrastructure both social and physical and the necessary infrastructure for the implement the plan, including the provision of the designated linear parking and the flood plain.

8.4 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL AREAS

In designing residential developments the following factors should be taken into account.

- The contours of the land, presence of hedgerows and individual or groups of mature trees should be plotted. The amenity open space for the development should be designed having regard to these factors.
- A walkway and cycleway system should be designed to run through these open spaces. This system should link to cycleways and walkways on neighbouring sites and should give the shortest possible and most direct access to schools, shops and other services in the vicinity. In time, as each estate develops a comprehensive network of cycleways and walkways should be developed.
- Housing should be developed to densities compatible with the Guidelines on Residential Density issued by the Department of Environment and Local Government. In the case of Drogheda North, most estates should be developed in the range of 35 to 50 dwellings to the hectare, depending on design and locational considerations.
- In as far as possible, each development should have a mixture of conventional houses, duplex units and apartments. Each of these three dwelling types should have a mixture of one, two or three or more bedroom units. This mixture of dwelling size and type is to ensure that estates in future contain a mixture of single persons, old people as well as families thereby avoiding the practice in the past that all persons living in an estate were at the same stage of the life cycle.
- The estate road network serving these dwelling units should seek to provide a varied layout and long straight stretches of road should be avoided. The internal roads should be overlooked by housing in order to provide informal supervision.

- The total quantum of public open space shall not be less than 20% of the total area zoned for residential development. This open space shall be provided at convenient locations within the three neighbourhoods in proportion to the number of new housing units being provided. The main body of open space in each neighbourhood shall be linked by pedestrian and cycle paths in the form of a linear park. A minimum of 15% of the public open space requirement shall be provided within the residentially zoned lands. The remaining 5% may be provided outside of the area on lands zoned as greenbelt in the county development plan. Such areas, if provided, shall be set out as formal playing pitches and for the purposes of active recreational pursuit and the precise location of such shall be clearly identified and incorporated within the master plans for the area.

- Provision for private open space/garden area attaching to individual or multi residential units shall be in accordance with the standards set down in chapter 5 of the Louth County Development Plan 2003 to 2009.

- Car parking shall be provided in accordance with the standards contained in table 8.4 of the Louth County Development 2003 – 2009. The exact layout of parking to be provided will depend on the design of the estate and the building type and will be subject to agreement with the planning authority. Grouped car parking is less wasteful of land and may be more appropriate in some cases.

- A high standard of design will be expected and each development should seek to create its own unique “sense of place” by providing a unique design. This can be achieved by way of (a) changing window and door proportions and relationship, (b) materials (varying brick, painted plaster walls, window frames, roof treatment etc.), (c) building height (two, three and even in some appropriate locations four storeys), in individual units or groups of dwellings and then reinforcing those effects by providing interesting and varied relationships for groups of houses one to another. In this latter regard, it will be acceptable in certain cases where grouped car parking is provided, to reduce the front garden area to a minimum in order to provide enclosure and to create streetscape in certain locations.

- It may be appropriate to provide certain buildings and areas within each estate as focal points. Designers should be conscious of the changing design as the circulation routes through the estate (cycleways, walkways and roads) are travelled.
- Child care facilities must be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Louth Childcare Strategy 2002. These, by and large, should be provided within neighbourhood centres, close to schools and places of employment.
- In designing estates, there should be an awareness of orientation so as to ensure that dwelling units are orientated in a manner that maximises passive solar gain through windows. In addition houses should be built in the most energy efficient manner.
- Communal open spaces within each development shall be attractively landscaped and shall be informally supervised by way of overlooking dwelling units.
- Each development must contain an element of social and affordable housing in line with the requirements of the Louth Housing Strategy 2001 and in compliance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. These units shall be integrated into the development and it should not be possible to identify this type of housing by way of design quality or location.
- The planning authority in considering residential schemes in excess of 0.1 hectare or in excess of 4 dwellings will have regard to whether the development incorporates a reasonable mix of housing types in order to match housing type supply to demographic trends. In particular the provision of increased numbers of units for one or two persons, starter homes, affordable housing and units designed or capable of easy adaptation for housing for the elderly and people with disabilities, will be required. The provision of nursing homes and other appropriate accommodation, subject to normal planning assessment criteria, will be permitted within residentially zoned lands. Master plans will be required to make provision for such facilities.

The Housing Strategy for County Louth recommends the following residential mix:

Residential Mix

House Type	Social Housing %	Private Housing %
1 bedroom & 2 bedroom	37 & 39 respectively	35 total
3 bedroom	14	35
4 bedroom plus	10	30

9.0 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PLAN

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 states that: “A local area plan shall contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan.”

The process of identifying potential significant effects and evaluating their economic, social and environmental consequences is called Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

This differs from the usual Environmental Impact Statement in so far as it relates to the wider spatial ambit defined by a local area plan / development plan rather than the more narrowly focused analysis of an individual development proposal.

Effectively, SEA facilitates a systematic analysis whose function is to:

- (A) Ensure that all relevant planning issues are included in the plan.
- (B) Raise awareness of the potential outcome of the plan.
- (C) Influence proposed policies and strategies to maximize beneficial and minimize possible adverse effects of the plan.

The process involves:

- (A) Setting the strategic environmental aims.
- (B) Approving the main planning goals and strategic planning principles against these environmental aims.

Finally, in formulating goals and policies the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002 requires that “a local area plan shall be consistent with the objectives of the Development Plan.”

This plan can be assessed in terms of considering what would be the adverse environmental impacts if the pressure to develop the northern environs of Drogheda was conceded in the absence of a co-ordinating Plan. What would happen if the planning authority was to simply grant planning permission for a series of housing estates as the applications arise. The possible adverse environmental impact is set out below together with the mitigating measure proposed in this Plan.

Possible Adverse Environmental Impact	Outcome Following Local Area Plan
1. A series of un-coordinated housing estates spread across the north of Drogheda.	1. Development to occur in a co-ordinated manner according to agreed master plans.
2. Housing Estates as dormitory suburb of Dublin	2. Zoning of land for employment generation offers potential for local employment.
3. Housing estates adding to traffic congestion in Drogheda.	3. Requirement that development incorporates Northern Cross Route reduces need to travel through Drogheda Town.
4. Existing water courses unable to handle surface water runoff leading to flooding within the town.	4. Plan requires water courses to be improved and flood plain to be provided before significant development can occur.
5. Excessive development can overload treatment facilities.	5. Development required to be in tandem with improvements to sewerage infrastructure.
6. New housing to reduce water pressure for existing users.	6. Water supply facilities required to be upgraded in tandem with provision of development.
7. Additional housing estates put pressure on existing primary schools.	7. A new primary school is required to be provided in each of the three neighbourhoods.
8. A shortage of shopping facilities to cater to increased population.	8. Requirement to provide convenience shopping in each of the three neighbourhoods.
9. A lack of childcare facilities.	9. Opportunity to provide crèches adjoining neighbourhood centre and a requirement to provide them in tandem with housing.
10. Excessive use of car for most of journeys in the area.	10. (a) requirement to provide cycleways and pedestrian routes from homes to neighbourhood centres. (b) the arrangement of a shuttle bus service in the

	area, (c) designation of a site for a new railway station.
11. Badly designed housing estates.	11. Requirement to provide mix of house types (houses, duplexes, and apartments), varying building heights, focal points along curving estate roads
12. Housing estates all occupied by persons in the same age group	12. Requirement to provide within each estate, a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed units to cater to single persons, couples, families and older persons.
13. Socially segregated housing estates.	13. A requirement under Part V of Planning Act 2000 to provide for a mix of private, affordable and social housing.
14. A lack of amenity open space and play areas for children.	14. A requirement to provide within each neighbourhood open space of sufficient quantity and quality.
15. Unregulated development to damage tourism potential.	15. The proposed development areas are confined to avoid Beaulieu and coastal areas to the east and archaeological and historical areas in the west.
16. A lack of opportunities for third level education.	16. The Plan offers the potential of a third level institute on lands north of the Port Access route.
17. Uncontrolled growth of Port industry.	17. Lands are zoned adjacent to the Port to provide for port industries.
18. Retail warehousing being developed in poor locations on roads with limited capacity.	18. Land is zoned for a Retail Park on a main road with spare capacity.
19. Companies wishing to avail of BMW locating on unsuitable sites.	19. Lands zoned for business uses adjacent to motorway interchange.

In summary, it can be seen that this Local Area Plan provides a framework for development that will ensure that the adverse environmental impacts associated with un-coordinated development will be avoided. The Plan is therefore consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

*Strategic Planning Alliance
February 2004*