

Part 8 Planning Report for Proposed Merryweather Museum at Meadow Grove, Dundalk, County Louth

August 2026

1.0 Introduction

This report supports a Part VIII application for the proposed re-development of the existing derelict pumping station at Meadow Grove, Dundalk, Co Louth to that of a museum to house and display the Merryweather Fire Engine. The nature and extent of the proposed development are described herein.

2.0 Project Objectives

- To bring the building to public use for the display of the Merryweather Fire Engine, along with other fire service memorabilia and artifacts.
- To promote the importance of the history of the Merryweather, through secure public display, in a prominent site close to Dundalk Fire Station.
- Open to schools, local historical societies, cultural groups and form part of the Old Dundalk Society walking tours and public events.
- To create a community hub for retired firefighters.
- Create a new cultural landmark in Dundalk, similar to other heritage projects supported by the Historic Towns Initiative and the Louth County Museum
- To encourage a sustainable and consolidated pattern of development that includes a mix of tourism, community facilities, and open spaces.
- To integrate the development with existing surrounding infrastructure and amenities.

3.0 Description of the Works

Louth County Council has given notice of its intention to carry out works at the old pumping station Meadow Grove, Dundalk, Co. Louth. The proposed works involves the redevelopment the existing building to allow for the creation of a museum, to house and display the Merryweather Fire Engine. The works do not increase the existing footprint of the building. These works will consist of the following:

- Demolition and reconstruction of the existing roof structure along with internal walls.
- Increase the existing roof height on one side by 2.3m. Proposed Monopitch Construction.
- Install additional glazing and access doors to the perimeter of the building.
- Provisions for new footpaths, kerbing, paving, landscaping and building signage.
- Proposed public sewer connection with the addition of 1no toilet.
- Inclusion of Nature Based Solutions for the management of surface water drainage

Detailed drawings of the proposed works are included within the planning documentation.

4.0 Development Context

The Pumphouse forms part of Dundalk Fire Station complex. The building fell into disrepair and was condemned in the early 2000's due to a section of the roof collapsing. It was previously used as a recreational space for on duty fire fighters. There is currently nothing inside it.

The Merryweather Fire Engine arrived in Dundalk in December 1932 and served the town and surrounding areas from 1933 to the 1960's.

Two of the most famous incidents involving Merryweather were when it turned out on the 16th April and 5th May 1941 during the Belfast Blitz. The Irish Government received a request for assistance from the Northern Ireland Government, within just two hours at least 70 men and 13 fire engines, including The Merryweather, were on their way north from Dundalk, Drogheda, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire. Each man was a volunteer.

Following its removal from service, the Merryweather passed through various ownerships until 1989 when it was sold back to Dundalk UDC with financial assistance from Fyffes and PJ Carrolls. The contract at the time stated that Merryweather was to be housed and maintained at Dundalk Fire Station by UDC.

The Merryweather was stripped down, sandblasted and then rebuilt by the Fire Service personnel in Dundalk to the magnificent vintage fire engine it is today. It is showcased at public events including Dundalk St Patrick's Day Parade.

The Merryweather Fire Engine is currently stored in the Dundalk Fire Station where it is not accessible to the public.

A committee is currently being assembled to manage the building when operational.



Existing view of the disused pumping station.

5.0 Tourism

There is current interest from local people, cross border, national and international visitors. On the 70th anniversary of the Blitz, the Dundalk Merryweather was given pride of place outside Belfast City Hall where it was on display. Further highlighting the importance of showcasing this piece of local history on a permanent basis.

The Old Dundalk Society (ODS) was established in 1964 and actively promotes the importance of local history. Having this unique historical artifact on permanent display could be a significant addition to the historical, cultural and tourism resources of Dundalk and Co Louth. Jim Kerley, a retired firefighter and member of the Old Dundalk Society, has compiled the history of the Dundalk Fire Service that could be used for displays.

6.0 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

The proposal is not a development as listed in Part 1 and 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended and through an examination of the proposal it is the opinion of the Planning Authority that the environmental impacts of the project given its nature, size and location are thought not to be significant and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) under current EIA legislation is not required in this instance.

7.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening & RSA

With regards to an AA Screening report, it was determined that given the limited nature of the impacts on the environment an AA screening report & RSA would not be required in this instance.

8.0 Planning Context

The Louth County Council Development Plan 2021 - 2027, identifies the land use zoning for the site as H1 Open Space. The proposed change of use of this building from a derelict pumping station to a display Museum for the Merryweather Fire engine is acceptable and is compatible with the overall policy objectives for the zoning category. The proposed display building does not conflict with other aspects of the Development Plan and would otherwise be consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The proposed use is also consistent with the following policy objectives of Louth County Council Development Plan 2021 – 2027:

- **TOU4** *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.*
- **TOU12** *To work with the relevant stakeholders including the OPW, the Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, the Arts Council, local communities and businesses to support the development of heritage and cultural tourism in Louth.*
- **TOU 17** *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.*

8.0 Document Register

Merryweather Museum - Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) – Part 8

- Planning Report
- Copy of advert – Irish & English
- Copy of site notice – Irish & English
- Site Location
- Existing Site Layout
- Existing Floor Plans
- Proposed Floor Plans
- Proposed Site layout
- Surface Water Drainage Design