

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The *Louth County Development Plan 2009 – 2015* outlines an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Louth over the timescale of the Plan. Spatial planning through the development plan endeavors to achieve balance between the common good and the interests of individual persons. To date there is an excellent record of participation and partnership at local level between Louth County Council, public agencies, service providers, the private sector and the community in general.

This Plan builds on the review of the *Louth County Development Plan 2003 – 2009*, taking account of recent key development trends, national, regional and local policy developments and EU legislative requirements, including the application of Strategic Environmental Assessment to certain plans and programmes. The Plan, addresses the planning authority's specific areas of responsibility such as roads and sanitary services, housing, settlement strategy, conservation, heritage, community and social infrastructure. It also sets out a longer term vision for the manner in which the county can be developed and its environment protected and enhanced, employing the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development is at the core of the planning process reflecting increasing environmental concerns which have become the focus of national and international policies over recent years. Sustainable development is defined by Brundtland as, '*development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'. Further detail on Louth County Council's commitment to sustainable development is contained throughout the Plan.

1.1.1 Plan Coverage

The area of the Plan covers the administrative area of County Louth, excluding the municipal boundaries of Dundalk Town Council together with Dundalk's environs which are the subject of the *Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009 - 2015*. The municipal boundaries of Drogheda Borough Council are also excluded. The Plan does not set out detailed policies for individual towns and villages within the county with the exception of the Category II (a) and II (b) Settlements. The detailing of policies for individual towns and villages throughout the county will be achieved through a review of the existing local area plans which will commence during the Plan's operating period.

1.1.2 Plan Title

The Plan shall be titled *Louth County Development Plan 2009 - 2015*.

1.1.3 Legal Status

This Plan is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning and Development Acts 2000 - 2006*. Upon adoption, it will supersede the existing *Louth County Development Plan 2003 – 2009*. In accordance with Section 9(1) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, every planning authority is required to review its existing development plan and make a new development plan every six years.

Under the above legislation, the new plan is required to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. It must also be consistent with such national plans, policies or strategies that relate to proper planning and sustainable development. The Plan must also include a number of mandatory objectives for the:

- Zoning of land (within urban areas only)
- Provision of infrastructure
- Conservation and protection of the environment
- Integration of social, community and cultural requirements with planning
- Sustainable development of the area
- Preservation of the character of the landscape
- Protection of structures and preservation of architectural conservation areas (ACAs)
- Renewal and development of areas in need of regeneration
- Provision of traveller accommodation
- Preservation, improvement and extension of amenities
- *Major Accidents Directive (Seveso sites)*
- Provision of community facilities

The *Planning and Development Act 2000* is the principal act pertaining to planning and development legislation in the country. This Act consolidated all previous planning legislation, clarifying and simplifying the legislative framework into one self-contained piece of legislation. The *2000 Act* remains the basis for the Irish planning code, setting out the detail of regional planning guidelines, development plans and local area plans as well as the basic framework of the development management system.

There have been some of changes to the legislation since 2000, the most significant of which are set out below;

- The *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002* which made changes to Part V of the 2000 Act and the preparation of local area plans.
- The *Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004*, which made substantial changes to Part V of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*.
- The *Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006*, which provided for, among other things, the establishment of a streamlined consent procedure for certain types of major infrastructure and the creation of a specialised division within An Bord Pleanála to make decisions in relation to such projects.

1.2 Review of the Louth County Development Plan 2003 - 2009

The years 2003 – 2009 witnessed a period of unprecedented economic growth and development across County Louth in tandem with the nation as a whole. *The 2003 - 2009 County Development Plan* sets a framework for the physical, social and economic development of County Louth and the preservation, protection and enhancement of the County's heritage and amenities. This enabled a strategic response in land-use terms, to sustain population growth over the plan period. The Plan contained a settlement strategy which recognized the considerable development pressures which Louth was experiencing due to its proximity to the greater Dublin area and furthermore, to its strategic position at the centre point of the Dublin - Belfast corridor. This geographic advantage has been further enhanced through the completion of a number of key transportation projects through the course of the current plan which contributed to County Louth becoming one of the most accessible locations in the state. These factors must be added to the inherent attractiveness of the county itself as a place to live, given the wealth of manmade and natural attractions which are contained within its borders.

The *2003 – 2009 County Development Plan* also played a key role in setting the context for the preparation of a number of important subject led instruments which were subsequently adopted by the council. These included the *Housing Strategy and Retail Strategy*.

1.3 Vision for County Louth

County Louth although, the smallest county in Ireland is one of the most populated and urbanised outside Dublin. This is due to the presence within its borders of two of the largest provincial towns in the country, Dundalk and Drogheda. The 2006 Census of Population gives the population of the county at 110,894.

By reason of its strategic location on the Dublin - Belfast economic corridor, accessibility to east coast ports and international airports and the much improved road and rail infrastructure, the county is well placed to continue to grow in population and economic terms into the foreseeable future.

The challenge facing Louth County Council, in partnership with Dundalk Town Council and Drogheda Borough Council, the private sector and voluntary groups, is to promote and regulate the future development of the county in a manner that will improve living standards and enable the social and cultural development of its inhabitants without jeopardising the ability of future generations of Louth people to do likewise. This in essence is the fundamental principle of sustainable development that is a recurring theme throughout the Plan.

The vision for County Louth into the future is of a place:

- Where people want to live, work, visit and invest now and in the future
- That is well planned, well managed, safe and inclusive
- Where there exists equality of opportunity for all

The vision for County Louth as enshrined in this Plan is attainable. It seeks to deliver through the planning process, in partnership with the community and other stakeholders, a prosperous and thriving county where no individual or social group is excluded from the benefits of development. It also enshrines the principle of environmental, economic and social sustainability including protection of the county's resources, heritage and the natural and built environment.

1.4 Strategic Objectives

The realisation of this vision will be sought by seeking to secure the following overall strategic objectives of the Plan:

1. *Direct new development in accordance with the settlement strategy which will provide for the sustainable development of the county for the period 2009 to 2015 and beyond. This will require development to be accessible, energy efficient and to include high quality infrastructure and services.*
2. *Facilitate the implementation of a countywide economic renaissance through implementation of the Economic Development Strategy for County Louth 2009 – 2015. This will, insofar as is possible, seek to provide employment opportunities at locations that are near to the majority of the county's inhabitants.*
3. *Facilitate and promote the economic development of the county, based on the exploitation of its favourable location on the mid point of Dublin – Belfast corridor and the connectivity which this provides to external markets and services.*
4. *Provide a framework for the management and regulation of development and use of land that will guide day to day planning decisions.*
5. *Protect and nurture the county's rich natural and manmade resources, heritage and other amenities in accordance with plans and policies developed to specifically address these areas, in order that the full potential of the county can be realised particularly in terms of attracting tourists and visitors to the county.*
6. *Planning for greater social inclusion and improvements to the quality of life of all the inhabitants of the county.*
7. *Protection of rural communities in a sustainable manner by encouraging compact development in the county's smaller towns and villages and by protecting the open countryside from urban generated and unsustainable one off housing.*
8. *Provide a framework for sustainable development through efficient energy use and facilitate an increase in the use of renewable energy.*
9. *Secure the provision of high quality physical infrastructure to trigger and support appropriate development within the county.*

10. *Recognition of the value of people as a human resource to be cherished within families, communities and the economy. This will be achieved in the Plan through optimising opportunities for health, education and welfare.*

1.5 Content and Format

1.5.1 Format of the Plan

The Plan comprises of this written statement with supporting maps. The written statement includes objectives where applicable and policies for the development and use of land. In the event of any conflict or ambiguity between what is contained within the written statement and the supporting maps, the written statement will take precedence.

1.5.2 Formal Notification of the intention to prepare a Draft Plan

In accordance with section II of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000* and Article 13B of the *Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004*, a notice was published in the local press, namely the *Argus* (Dundalk), the *Dundalk Democrat* and the *Drogheda Independent* during the week commencing 1st April 2008. The notice outlined the intention of the council to review the *County Development Plan 2003 – 2009* and to prepare a new plan for 2009 - 2015. It also informed the public that the planning authority would carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as part of the review process and prepare an environmental report on the likely significant effects on the environment resulting from the implementation of the Plan together, with associated mitigation measures.

1.5.3 Pre-Draft Public Consultation

The review process of the Plan commenced with the council advertising its intention to review the existing development plan and to prepare a new one. Submissions in respect of the review and the making of the Plan were invited over a specified period. Consultation was carried out with the general public and other interested and relevant bodies during this period. This is commensurate with one of the key requirements of the *Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2006* which emphasizes the need for widespread public consultation and seeking submissions and observations on the content of the proposed plan from a wide range of stakeholders including service providers, developers, public agencies, government departments and members of the public. The council engaged in an extensive consultation process. Facilitated sessions with council staff and elected members were organised during March and April 2008. These sessions informed the preparation of the Issues Paper. The Issues Paper was then published and widely distributed to statutory bodies, stakeholders, service providers, elected members.

Flyers were delivered to every household within County Louth. These provided a brief summary of the main issues of what the review of the Plan and the making of a new one involved and details on how to make a submission. They included a tear-off postage paid reply card. The Issues Paper and comment sheets were also posted on the internet to enable comments and observations to be submitted through this medium.

An exhibition was placed on display in the lobby area of Louth County Hall, Dundalk, for the full duration of the eight week consultation period. Each Thursday, members from the forward planning team were available for 'drop-in' meetings to facilitate anyone who wished to discuss issues, policies or any matter which they considered to be important in formulating the new development plan. In addition, the forward planning team ran public consultation events in Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee. These events included formal presentations, question and answer sessions and meetings with members of the public.

Additional presentations and discussion sessions were organised to facilitate input from Louth Community Forum, Drogheda Chamber of Commerce and Ardee Town Council.

1.5.4 Stakeholders and Prescribed bodies

All prescribed bodies, stakeholders and service providers were contacted by letter and invited to make submissions. There were a number of subsequent meetings with individual bodies where issues that they considered important in the review and making of the Plan were discussed. Submissions received were included in the manager's report.

A list of all the bodies notified is set out in appendix 1 of the Plan.

1.5.5 Manager's Report

A manager's report was prepared by the county manager on the submissions and observations received (212) and on all matters arising from the above consultations. This contains a list of the persons who made submissions or observations, a summary of the issues raised, the opinion of the manager taking account of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and the statutory obligations of the local authority and finally, recommendations on the policies to be contained in the draft plan. The manager's report was circulated to elected members, who had a ten week period to consider it. On the 3rd October 2008 the members issued directions to the manager to proceed with the preparation of the draft development plan.

1.5.6 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan prior to its adoption. An Environmental Baseline Report examines the likely significant environmental impacts of the policies and objectives of the Plan.

1.5.7 Additions to and Deletions from the Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

Where the Plan includes provision relating to any addition to or deletion from the record of protected structures, the council will serve on each person who is the owner or occupier of a proposed protected structure or a protected structure to be deleted, a notice of the proposed addition to or deletion from the RPS. This will include the details of the rationale behind the proposal.

1.5.8 Local Area Plans

In accordance with Sections (18), (19) and (20) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, provision is made for the making of local area plans for any area falling under the jurisdiction of a planning authority. Section 19(1) (b) imposes an obligation on a planning authority to prepare local area plans in respect of any area which is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, has a population in excess of 2000 and is situated within the functional area of a planning authority. The Ardee Local Area Plan is the only mandatory local area plan required under the planning Acts.

In the context of Louth, the need for the creation of a series of local area plans grew out of the unprecedented levels of development. The purpose of these local area plans is to provide a more detailed framework and response to the development needs of specific towns and villages within the overall framework of the Plan. An important feature of this process is that it provides an opportunity for local communities to participate in the preparation of the plan for their own area. The plans also contain more specific proposals in terms of the use of land and zoning objectives.

Under the *County Development Plan 2003-2009*, a total of fifteen local area plans were prepared for the settlements listed below. In addition to these a local area plan was prepared for the North Drogheda Environs.

Table 1.1: Local Area Plans

Annagassan	Knockbridge
Ardee	Louth
Castlebellingham/Kilsaran	Tallanstown
Carlingford	Termonfeckin/Baltray
Clogherhead	Tinure
Collon	Tullyallen
Dromiskin	Omeath
Dunleer	

The council will commence the review process of the various local area plans upon completion of this Plan.

1.6 Development Plan Context

Policies and perspectives of international and national significance increasingly influence physical planning in Ireland and this filters down to local county level. At the international level, the global consensus on the need to promote sustainable development is the most overriding element in terms of this new approach to planning and as such will influence the policies and objectives contained in the Plan. The Plan therefore must have regard to a number of international treaties, European Union directives and national and regional policies as documented below.

1.6.1 European Plans and Programmes

Agenda 21	<i>Local Agenda 21 is a process which facilitates sustainable development at community level.</i>
European Spatial Development Perspective (1999)	<i>The main aim of the ESDP is to maintain the individual characteristics of the various countries within the EU while simultaneously increasing integration between the member states socially and economically with the protection of the environment as a core element.</i>
Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, 2000	<i>This Directive requires the preparation of river basin management plans by 2009. The bulk of County Louth falls within the Neagh Bann River Basin District and the remainder of the county, primarily to the south, lies within the Eastern River Basin District.</i>
Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations assessment	<i>The purpose of the SEA (Directive 2001/42/EC) is to ensure that environmental consequences of certain plans and programmes are identified and assessed during their preparation and before their adoption.</i>

1.6.2 National and Regional Level

National Spatial Strategy (2002)	<i>The NSS is a twenty year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. Its focus is on people, on places and on building communities.</i>
National Development Plan 2007-2013	<i>The National Development Plan (NDP) involves an investment of public, EU and private funds to provide for economic and social infrastructure, employment and human resources, the productive sector and the peace programme.</i>
Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland (1997)	<i>"Sustainable Development - A Strategy for Ireland" recognises the need for good spatial planning and the inclusion of sustainability in urban and environmental policies. It recognises that the pattern and density of urban development has a major influence on travel patterns and encourages high movement activities to locate in areas of maximum accessibility to public transport.</i>
National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)	<i>The NAPS is an initiative to place the needs of the poor and the socially excluded at the top of the national policy agenda. It recognises the scale of poverty and its impact on those directly affected and notes the distinct spatial aspects of poverty in urban and rural areas. The strategy emphasises the importance of a cross departmental policy response in dealing with the problem of poverty.</i>
Transport 21	<i>Transport 21 will see €34.4 billion invested over the next ten years in Irish transport. Connecting communities and promoting prosperity is the core aim of this strategy. The programme seeks to meet the transport needs of the country's citizens and also underpin competitiveness into the future.</i>
Sustainable Residential Development Planning	<i>The guidelines are focused on creating sustainable communities by incorporating the highest design standards and providing a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of essential infrastructure and services. They are accompanied by a best practice urban design</i>

Chapter 1 Introduction

Guidelines	<i>manual, which illustrates how the guidelines can be implemented effectively and consistently across the different scales of urban development around the country.</i>
Retail Planning Guidelines (2005)	<i>These guidelines provide a framework to guide planning authorities in preparing development plans, assessing applications for planning permission, and guide retailers and developers in formulating development proposals.</i>
Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Area (2004) (under review)	<i>The vision for the Region is “By 2020 the Border Region will be a competitive area recognised as, and prospering from, its unique interface between the two economies, where economic success will benefit all, through the building of distinct sub regional identities, in an outstanding natural environment with innovative people, which in themselves will be our most valuable asset”.</i> <i>County Louth is located in the east sub-region which is focused on Dundalk Gateway and contains the hub towns of Monaghan and Cavan.</i>
Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines (2005)	<i>The guidelines include the criteria to be applied when selecting protected structures for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). It also contains guidance to support planning authorities in their role to protect the architectural heritage, when a protected structure, a proposed protected structure or the exterior of a building within an ACA, is the subject of development proposals and when a declaration is sought in relation to a protected structure.</i>
National Biodiversity Plan	<i>This Plan was published in 2002. It aims to secure the conservation, including where possible the enhancement and sustainable use of biological diversity in Ireland and to contribute to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally.</i>
National Climate Change Strategy (2007)	<i>Under Kyoto Protocol, Ireland agreed to a target of limiting its greenhouse gas emissions to 13% above 1990 levels by the first commitment period 2008 – 2012. Ireland ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2002, along with the EU and all other Member State and is legally bound to meet the challenging greenhouse gas emissions reduction target. To ensure Ireland reaches its target and building on measures put in place following the publication of the first National Climate Change Strategy in 2000, the Government has published this new National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012.</i>
Making Ireland's Development Sustainable (2002)	<i>This document focuses on the link between economic activity and pressures on the environment. At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, world leaders agreed to implement an action programme for sustainable development called Agenda 21. A Strategy for Ireland (1997), applies Agenda 21 in Irish circumstances. Making Ireland's Development Sustainable reviews progress, assesses the challenge we now face and sets out policies and actions to meet that challenge.</i>
Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006)	<i>These guidelines provide advice to planning authorities on planning for wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission.</i>
Flood Risk Guidelines for Local Authorities 2008	<i>These guidelines detail appropriate action to be undertaken by planning authorities in response to flood protection and managing the risk related to potential developments.</i>

Chapter 1 Introduction

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)	<i>The purpose of the NIAH is to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, uniformly and consistently as an aid in the protection and conservation of the built heritage. NIAH surveys provide the basis for the recommendations of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the planning authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures (RPS).</i>
Delivering A Sustainable Energy Future For Ireland - The Energy Policy Framework 2007 – 2020	<i>This White Paper sets out the Government's energy policy framework to deliver a sustainable energy future for Ireland. It is set firmly in the global and European context which has put energy security and climate change among the most urgent international challenges. The Paper sets out the actions to be taken in response to the energy challenges facing Ireland.</i>

1.6.3 Local Level

Waste Management Plan for the North East Region 2005 - 2010 (WMP)	<i>This is a joint waste management plan for the counties Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan. The WMP identifies the current position, policy for future improvement and development and the means to implement and monitor progress. The objective for the region is to develop a sustainable approach to managing resources, by minimising waste and managing the waste that is generated in a safe and environmentally sound manner.</i>
County Development Board Strategy: Louth–Working together for our Future 2002 -2012.	<i>This strategy sets out a stratagem for the social, economic and cultural development of the county. Implementation and monitoring is an integral part of this strategy to ensure that it is responsive to circumstances as these change.</i>
Louth Heritage Plan (2007-2011)	<i>The Heritage Plan is a strategic framework plan which aims to co-ordinate the conservation, management and sympathetic development of the county's heritage.</i>
Biodiversity plan for Louth 2008-2012	<i>The purpose of the Biodiversity Plan is to provide a framework for nature conservation at local level, to create awareness and appreciation of local flora and fauna and to integrate consideration of biodiversity into all local authority activities.</i>
Louth County Housing Strategy 2009	<i>This strategy aims to ensure that sufficient land is zoned and serviced to meet housing needs, establish requirements under Part V for social and affordable housing and that there are a range of house type and sizes.</i>
Locating Industry in County Louth 2002	<i>This strategy aims to provide for economic growth through the identification of appropriate locations for industrial and commercial activities through the county.</i>
Interchange Strategy for County Louth 2002	<i>This strategy examines the potential of the motorway interchanges for development in order to maximise the benefits accruing to the county from the motorway.</i>
Louth Local Authorities Disability Implementation Plan 2008 – 2015	<i>This plan governs Louth Local Authority's development, in ensuring universal access to its services, public spaces and buildings across the entire county.</i>

Louth Anti-Racism and Diversity Plan 2007 – 2010 (ARD)	<i>The ARD plan is an inter-agency county-wide three year action plan to provide strategic direction and leadership in countering racism and in developing a more inclusive, intercultural society in the county.</i>
Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2007 – 2012	<i>The Sports and Recreation Strategy, aims to increase the level of general participation in sport and physical activity over the period 2007-2012.</i>
Cooley Walking Strategy 2009	<i>This strategy identifies maps and promotes walking routes in the Cooley Peninsula.</i>
County Louth Economic Development Strategy 2009-2015	<i>In assessing Louth's economic strengths and weaknesses, this strategy identifies economic opportunities, potential funding sources and the mechanisms and challenges facing the county.</i>
Retail Strategy for County Louth 2009	<i>The primary aims of this strategy are to promote a vibrant retail sector, protect the viability and vitality of existing town centres and ensure access to convenient centres of retailing in new residential areas.</i>

The impact of these documents and other relevant local plans and strategies which have relevance to development plan policy will be dealt with more specifically under the relevant chapter headings of the Plan. Regard has also been had to the development plans of adjoining local authorities both within and outside the county. These include the *Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2003 - 2009* which is currently being reviewed, the *Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2005 - 2011*, the *Meath County Council Development Plan 2007 - 2013*, the *Monaghan County Council Development Plan 2007 - 2013* and the *Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015*.

1.7 Social Inclusion

Despite the relative wealth of the country over the past decade and rising standard of living, many marginalized groups were left behind. Hence the challenge to counteract this trend has been adopted by the government with renewed impetus and thus social inclusion has come to the forefront of policy.

1.7.1 Planning for Social Inclusion

The Council endeavours to ensure its policies and objectives are fully inclusive. It aims to:

- Ensure that as far as possible, access for the less able is provided to all new developments including the council's buildings and services, as detailed in the *Louth Local Authorities Disability Implementation Plan 2008 – 2015*.
- Facilitate and promote the Rural Transport Initiative to enable the socially excluded to gain access to employment and services.
- Facilitate the provision of small-scale enterprise start-up units throughout the county.
- Encourage the provision of suitable and appropriate accommodation for all, in keeping with Louth's age friendly ethos.

- Ensuring that new initiatives do not decrease local community access to services through cost or location.
- Seek to target anti-racism and promote inter-culturalism in accordance with *Louth Anti-Racism & Diversity (ARD) Plan 2007 – 2010*.

1.7.2 Age Friendly Society

In 2007, Dundalk participated in the Age Friendly Cities Project, an initiative piloted by the World Health Organisation along with a selected number of other urban centres across the world. An age-friendly society encourages active ageing. It adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities and benefits large sections of the population beyond those inhabitants who are elderly.

The age friendly approach will also benefit those people with impaired mobility including those with physical disabilities, parents with young children and children themselves. From a planning and land use perspective the study has provided a guide of a broad range of characteristics of the urban landscape and built environment that contribute to age-friendliness. The *Checklist of Essential Features of Age-Friendly Cities* are set out in appendix 2 of the Plan.

The Plan seeks to embrace the age – friendly society concept and the policies therein are reflective of the objectives of the Age Friendly Project.

1.8 County Profile

County Louth has a rich medieval past and figures prominently in the epic tales of ancient Ireland. It is a county steeped in myth, legend and history, going back to the pre-historical days of the Cattle Raid of Cooley. Later it saw the influence of the Vikings as seen in the name of Carlingford Lough. The most famous conflict was the Battle of the Boyne which occurred in 1690 on the outskirts of Drogheda and it has become an integral part of Irish history.



Louth's coastline, exceeding 120 kilometres, stretches from the River Boyne in the south of the county to Carlingford Lough in the north. Louth is the smallest county in Ireland; hence it is often referred to as the "Wee County". It is also a county of great natural beauty, sought after as an attractive place to live in and a county with many advantages. Louth is a great base for pursuing a range of activities including nature walks, salmon and trout fishing, golf and horse riding. It has many long established traditions which laid the foundations for the success of the present.

Louth is now a thriving county with a centre of activity and commerce in the major towns of Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Dunleer. In the past, industries such as the railway, shoe manufacturing and the brewing industry were very much part of the fabric of the Louth economy. Industry in the county has, however, evolved from being largely heavy engineering to more modern, technologically based work. This new focus set the scene for the development of inward investment, not just in industry but in agriculture as well. In broader terms, the current vibrant economy will mean an expansion of Louth's economic trade while the new impetus for cross-border co-operation provided further opportunity for growth and development.



All of these factors are augmented by Louth's strategic location, state-of-the-art infrastructural services and the existence of a primed, skilled and well-educated workforce. There are many long established multi-nationals in the county, which provide excellent employment opportunities and these are complemented by a large number of small companies which have successfully developed with assistance from the County Enterprise Board. Dundalk Institute of Technology has been significant in the development of the technology base in the county and in particular, its Regional Development Centre has helped many companies to develop.

Louth has seen considerable development and capital investment over the last decade; in particular Euro route E01, from Rosslare to Larne, transverses County Louth and the recently completed motorway has transformed travel to Dublin. In excess of €155 million has been spent in the last five years upgrading and providing sewerage schemes in the county. Drainage schemes in Dundalk and Drogheda together with smaller schemes in Carlingford and Dunleer, account for most of the expenditure. Up to date modern water treatment plants ensure that the drinking water in the county is of the highest quality.



Other significant developments in recent years include €1.2m improvement works at Clogherhead Harbour with further significant work planned, coastal protection works at a number of locations and the opening of swimming pool and leisure centres in both Drogheda and Dundalk and an annual housing construction programme which is based on quality design. The county is also well served by a fully integrated automated library branch network and the County Museum in Dundalk ensures that our heritage is well documented and displayed while the Arts Office in Dundalk and the Droichead Arts Centre in Drogheda are active in the promotion of the Arts in Louth.

Louth Local Authorities' record in working with the Voluntary and Community Centre is legendary with 330 groups registered who actively take part in the many campaigns organised by the various local authorities. The sustained high marking by participants in Louth in the National Tidy Towns Competition highlights the success of this partnership approach.

1.9 Population trends for the Future Development of County Louth

Population statistics and forecasts are vital for identifying the likely future requirements for the provision of social and physical infrastructure to serve the future needs of the community. Such projections are important in planning terms as they form the basis for policy to provide for future housing, employment, shopping, community and recreational needs.

County Louth one of the most populated and urbanised outside of Dublin. This is due to the presence within its borders of two of the largest provincial towns in the country, Dundalk and Drogheda. The population of County Louth has steadily increased in recent years as illustrated in table 1.2. Census figures show that the population of the county was 91,810 in 1986 and 110,896 in 2006, an increase of 20.7%. In the inter-censal period 2002 to 2006 the population grew from 101,821 to 110,894, representing an increase of 8.9 %. This is marginally in excess of the national average of 8.1% for this period.

Table 1.2: Population of County Louth 1986 to 2006

Population and Percentage Change					
Year	1986	1991	1996	2002	2006
Pop	91,810	90,724	92,166	101,821	110,894
% Change	+ 3.7%	-1.2%	+1.5%	+10.4%	+8.9%

Source: CSO

At sub county level there has been significant variations in growth as illustrated in table 1.3. Many of the county's villages have grown considerably while others have experienced only slight growth. The hinterland of Drogheda has seen the most significant growth, some 53.3% since the last census, which in numerical terms is 1,381 people. Of note is the rise in populations in Mansfieldstown and Drumcar which have seen increases of 41% and 30.9% respectively.

Table 1.3: Population Changes (excluding Drogheda Borough and Dundalk Town) 2002 to 2006

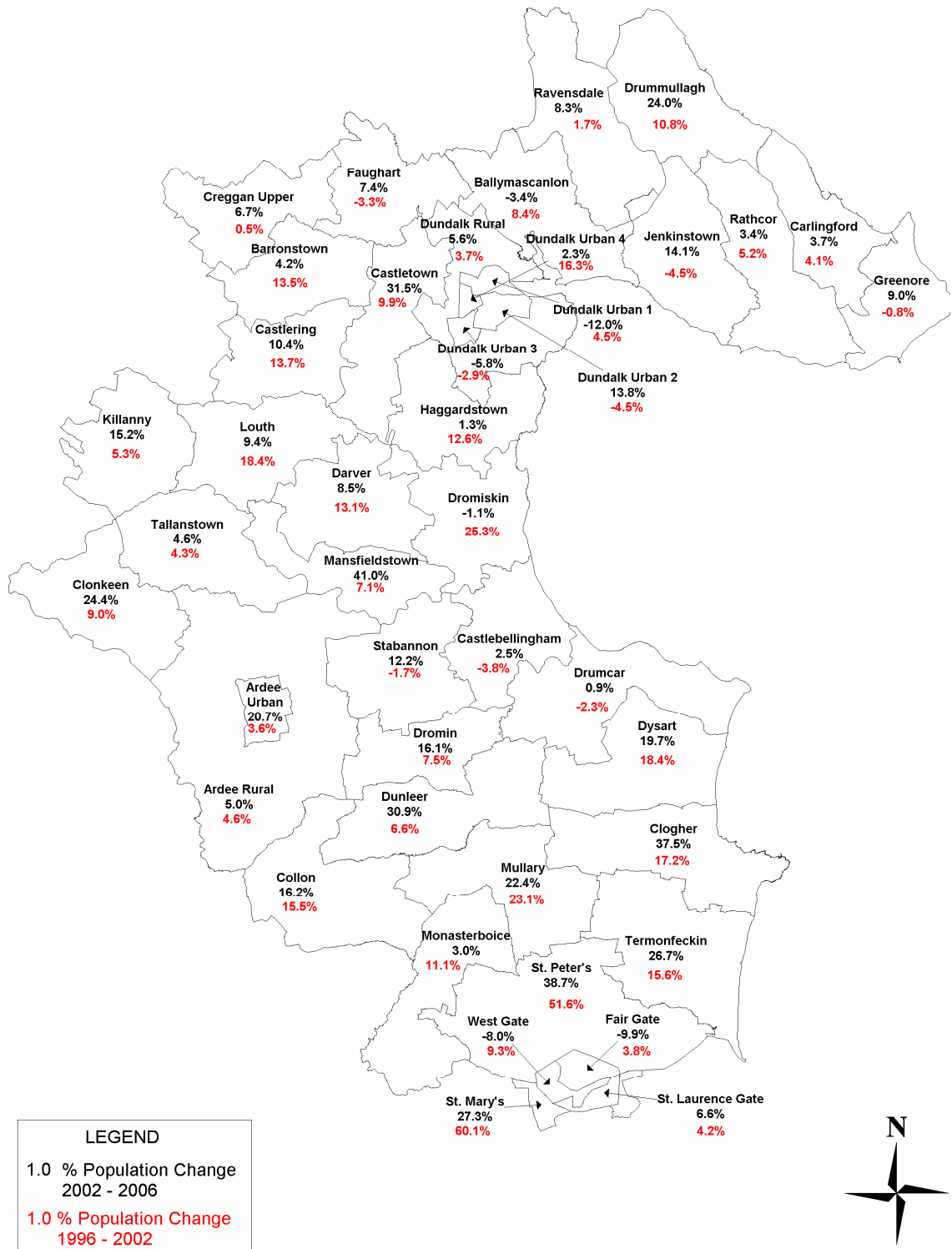
	2002	2006	% Change
Louth (County Area)		53,257	+9.3
Ardee Rural Area	16,055	17,976	+12.0
Ardee Rural	2,500	2,626	+5.0
Ardee Urban	3,564	4,301	+20.7
Castlebellingham	1,338	1,371	+2.5
Clonkeen	438	545	+24.4

Chapter 1 Introduction

Collon	1,188	1,380	+16.2
Dromin	461	535	+16.1
Dromiskin	1,956	1,935	-1.1
Drumcar	1,372	1,385	+0.9
Dunleer	1,787	2,340	+30.9
Stabannan	526	590	+12.2
Tallanstown	925	968	+4.6
Dundalk Rural Area	20,533	22,721	+10.7
Ballymascanlan	2,088	2,016	-3.4
Barronstown	621	647	+4.2
Carlingford	1,334	1,384	+3.7
Castlering	847	935	+10.4
Castletown (Part)	1,409	1,421	+0.9
Creggan Upper	641	684	+6.7
Darver	518	562	+8.5
Drummulagh	903	1,120	+24.0
Dundalk Rural (Part)	509	535	+5.1
Faughart	843	905	+7.4
Greenore	898	979	+9.0
Haggardstown (Part)	4,778	5,769	+20.7
Jeninstown	831	948	+14.1
Killanny	593	683	+15.2
Louth	1,196	1,308	+9.4
Mansfieldstown	454	640	+41.0
Rathcor	1,163	1,203	+3.4
Ravensdale	907	982	+8.3
Louth Rural Area	9,515	12,560	+32.0
Clogher	1,814	2,494	+37.5
Dysart	649	777	+19.7
Monasterboice	1,130	1,164	+3.0
Mullary	1,248	1,528	+22.4
St.Peter's (Part)	2,641	4,022	+52.3
Termonfeckin	2,033	2,575	+26.7

Source: CSO

Map 1.1: Percentage Population Change 2002 – 2006



Source: CSO

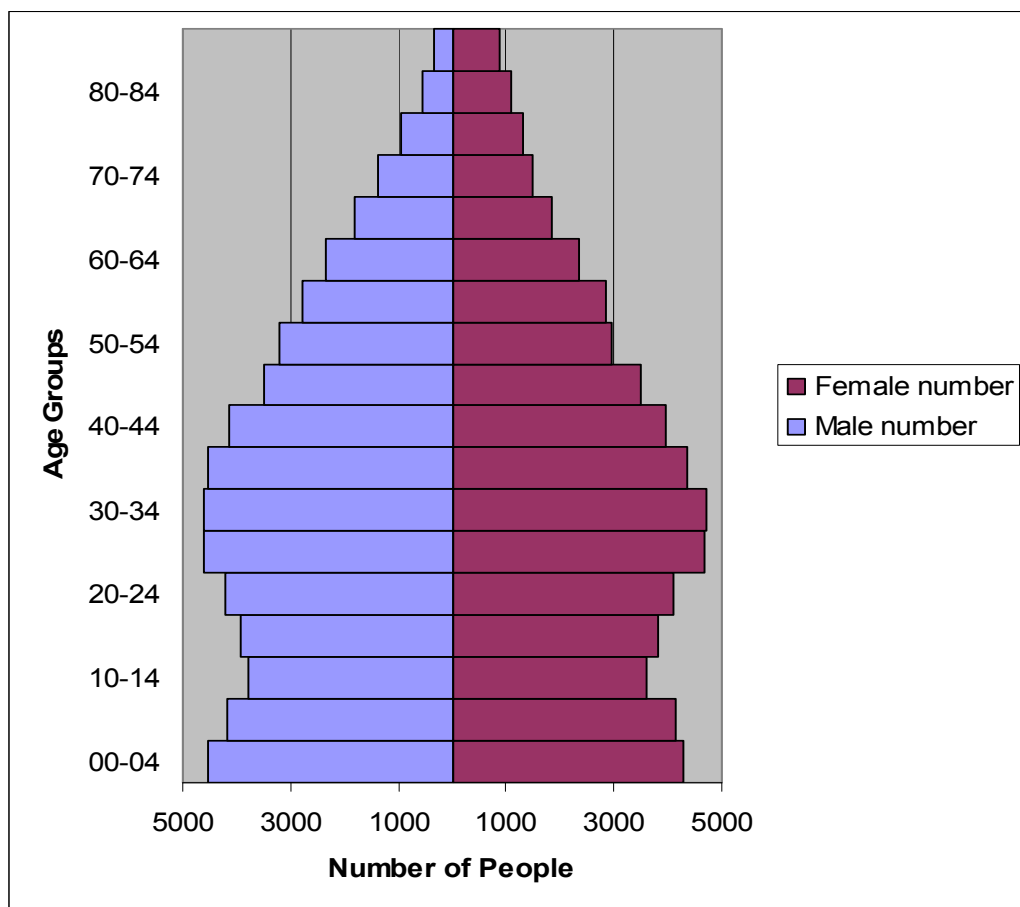
1.9.1 Age Profile

Figure 1 below illustrates graphically the age profile of the county. The proportion of dependants (0 -14 and 65 plus) within the population recorded for County Louth in the 2006 census was 32.4%, marginally above that of the State (31.3%) over the same

period. It is notable, that since the early 1990's the numbers in the lower cohort 0 to 14 years have been increasing. This will impact on the level of provision of childcare, education and other youth facilities needed.

The working age group is defined as those persons recorded within the 15-64 age cohorts. The table below illustrates the large numbers of the population within the working age cohorts. For Louth County this was recorded at 67% for 2006 while the figure for the state was significantly lower at 58.7%. The proportion of the population within the working age cohorts suggests that there is a large available labour force within the county. This also has implications for the provision of housing, services, community facilities and employment provision.

Figure 1.1: Distribution of Population, by Age and Sex in Co. Louth, 2006



Source: CSO

1.9.2 Population Growth

In February 2007, the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government (DoEHLG) revised the National Spatial Strategy population target figures. The revised figures contained within the circular "*National and Regional Population Projections 2006 – 2020*" indicated that population growth was well ahead of that projected during the preparation of both the *National Spatial Strategy* and thereafter, the *Regional Planning Guidelines* in 2004.

The Border Regional Authority revised its population projections accordingly in 2007, having regard to the revised DoEHLG figures and estimated that the population of the Border Region will be approximately 590,359 by the year 2020.

The Authority then adjusted the figures on a county by county basis and the relevant figures for County Louth are set out in table 1.4 and 1.5 below. These revised figures reflect the growth potential within the county both with and without the application of the NSS target figures.

Table 1.4: County and Settlement Growth Projections Applying Regional Growth Figures and excluding NSS Population Targets

Year	2006	2011	2016	2020
County Louth	111,267	122,293	133,092	140,531
Drogheda Primary Development Centre and Environs (Louth only)	30,303	33,306	36,246	38,272

Source: CSO Census 2006, Volume 1

Table 1.5: Projected Growth Figures for Dundalk and Drogheda applying Regional Growth Figures and including NSS Settlement Targets

Year	2006	2011	2016	2020
Dundalk Gateway and Environs	35,085	52,035	57,759	63,354
Drogheda Primary Development Centre and Environs (Louth only)	30,303	52,053	57,759	60,000

Source: Border Regional Authority 2007

Whereas the figures outlined in table 1.4 above, would seem to be reasonable and reflect current trends, it is considered that the adjusted figures in respect of the NSS targets contained in table 1.5, are significantly overstated and unlikely to be achieved.

In December 2008, the Central Statistic Office issued revised regional population projection for the period 2011 to 2026. These revised figures suggest that the population of the region will be as set out in table 1.6 below:

Table 1.6: Projected Population for the Border Region 2011 to 2026

2011	2016	2021	2026
515,000	550,000	576,000	592,000

Source: CSO December 2008

The above figures are not broken down on a county basis. This is will be done in the review of the *Regional Planning Guidelines* which is currently under way. However for the purposes of the Plan, it is necessary to estimate what proportion of the population growth projected for the region will occur in County Louth.

The population of the Border Region and County Louth in 2006 was 468,475 and 111,267 respectively. The percentage of the total population within the six border counties that resided in county Louth in 2006 was 23.8%. By applying the same percentage to the CSO projections, the population of Louth would be as set out in table 1.7.

Table 1.7: Projected Population for County Louth 2011 to 2026

2011	2016	2021	2026
122,570	130,900	137,088	140,896

Source: CSO December 2008

Whilst the above projections are considered realistic, it is accepted that the changed economic circumstances could have a negative impact resulting in an actual population less than that projected. On the other hand, the continued implementation of the National Spatial Strategy and the potential for continued significant growth in both Dundalk and Drogheda could have a positive impact that would result in the above projections being exceeded particularly if the *Regional Planning Guidelines* projection of 60,000 for Dundalk and Drogheda were to be achieved. Whilst it remains the policy of the council to support the growth of Dundalk and Drogheda in accordance with NSS and RPGs targets, it is accepted that the 60,000 figure is unlikely to be reached by the year 2020.

