



Chapter 4 – Social & Community

“Provide and facilitate the development of healthy, sustainable, inclusive communities integrated with the timely delivery of a wide range of community, social, educational, recreational and cultural facilities where accessibility and social inclusion is provided for all, ensuring County Louth develops as a location with an enhanced quality of life for its citizens and visitors alike”.

4 Community Facilities

4.1 Introduction

Building healthy, strong and socially inclusive communities is a key element in achieving sustainable communities and is a cross cutting theme of the Draft Plan. *The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*, requires that development plans include objectives for the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population.

The Regional Strategic Economic Strategy (RSES) highlights the importance of the physical and social environment and place in which we live or work, and its impact on the physical and mental health and well-being of people. It sets out that the focus on compact growth and increased densities in urban areas will require a greater alignment between the development of communities and the provision and planning of open spaces, to provide for the recreational and amenity needs of communities. The guiding 'Quality of Life' principles set out in the RSES have informed the policy objectives in this chapter.

In this regard the Council will facilitate the delivery of sustainable community, social and cultural infrastructure which will contribute to the quality of life, promote County Louth as a place to live and work and meet the needs of the existing and future populations of the County. Community infrastructure delivery is central to building healthy and sustainable communities and delivering successful places.

Access to education, health and community support services, amenities, recreation, leisure facilities and an attractive, good quality built environment is a prerequisite for the creation of healthy sustainable communities.

The identification and provision of community facilities on an on-going basis, ensuring appropriate facilities are provided where necessary, requires a collaborative approach by all stakeholders namely, state, local authority, community groups and the private sector. The Council plays an integral role in facilitating and supporting these identified needs.

4.2 Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion is a key objective at National, Regional and Local level. It refers to the way in which everyone in a community is integrated in an equal manner by reducing barriers to participation. It affects the wellbeing of individuals, families, social groups and communities. Creating a more socially inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is a major challenge, but is essential to ensure that those at risk have the opportunities and resources to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life, enjoying a standard of living and wellbeing considered normal in today's society. Steps towards achieving a more socially inclusive society include the provision of good quality affordable housing, community infrastructure and improving access to information and resources.

It is therefore important that our living, working and leisure environments are designed and maintained in a manner accessible to all.

The Draft Plan policy objectives, which advocate and promote the development of sustainable communities with good quality public realm, access to housing, education, community facilities, social infrastructure and public transport are central to the promotion of social inclusion in the County. The Council is fully committed to developing a more socially inclusive society and promoting participation and access for all.

4.3 Community Participation

The community and voluntary sector of County Louth has played an important role in promoting community development and increasing service provision in the County. The value of this sector cannot be underestimated in terms of its resources and service provision and resultant overall benefits to the county. Indeed the successful implementation of the Council's social, community, recreational and cultural policies benefits from a collaborative approach between the Council, other statutory bodies, private developers and the community and voluntary sector.



Louth Public Participation Network (PPN) is a means whereby communities can connect to and engage with the Council, through the environmental, social inclusion, community and voluntary organisations. It aims to ensure communities in Louth have a say in local democracy. The PPN ensures access to information on funding, training events,

networking, information gathering on decisions of Council and input to policy.

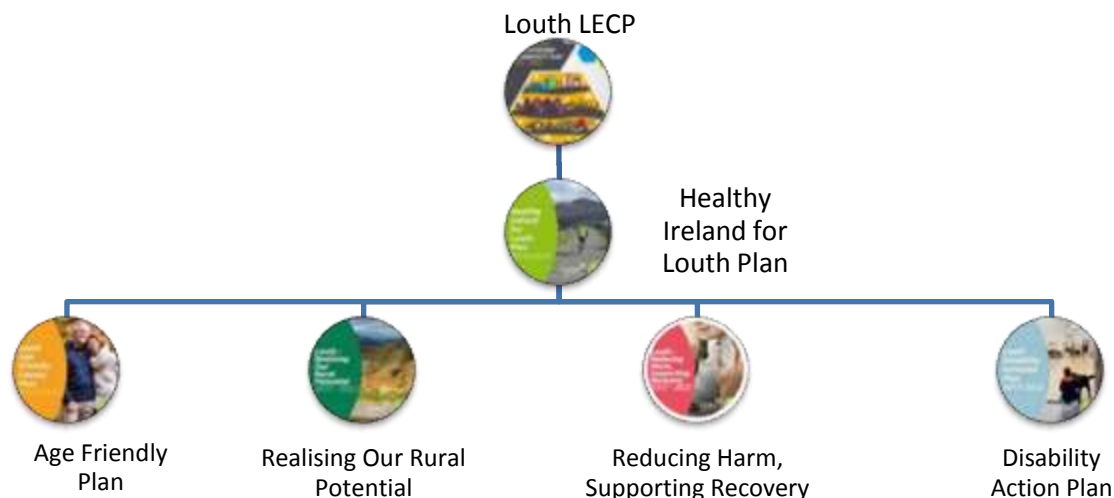
The Council will continue to support and facilitate community and voluntary organisations across the County. It is important that our living, working and leisure environments are designed and maintained in a manner that is accessible for all. The Draft Plan policy objectives, which advocate the development of sustainable communities in conjunction with good quality public realm, access to housing, community facilities, education, employment and public transport. are central to the promotion of social inclusion in the County. The Council is fully committed to developing a more socially inclusive society and promoting participation and access for all.

4.4 Louth Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

The Local Government Act 2014 required all local authorities to prepare an integrated LECP, which identifies objectives and actions for strengthening economic and community development in the County.

Louth County Council adopted the *Louth Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 - 2022*, in March 2016. It is a central component of the local authority's role in developing the economic and local community dimensions of the Council over the 6 year period.

Importantly, the LECP is informed by and contributes to the wider suite of National, Regional and Local strategies and plans and to which its high level goals and objectives must be consistent, including with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and the County Plan. It is the County Development Plan, which provides the spatial strategy for the realisation of the objectives and actions of the LECP, in a sustainable and planned manner.



The high level goals of the LECP in relation to community are as follows:

Goal 1: Enable wellbeing and quality of life to support safe, resilient, independent and engaged communities;

Goal 2: Ensure that everyone can access and participate in education, skills development and lifelong learning;

Goal 3: Create equality of opportunity for those experiencing poverty, isolation and social exclusion;

Goal 4: Provide environments and conditions that support healthy, self-directed, fulfilled and purposeful lives;

Goal 5: Nurture and develop our children and young people from early childhood to young adulthood;

Goal 6: Embrace and foster the rich contribution our older people make to our communities;

Goal 7: Empower community innovation, entrepreneurship and enterprise to support urban and rural economic development; and

Goal 8: Value and sustain our built heritage and natural environment to enhance the lives of those who live, work and visit in the county.

Policy Objective

SC 1	To engage with the Local Community and Development Committee, development agencies, community groups and various stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Development Plan 2016-2021 and any subsequent plans.
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4.4.1 Healthy Ireland for Louth Plan

Healthy Ireland is a government-led initiative aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of everyone living in Ireland, with four high level goals and associated actions. These have been incorporated for delivery at local level into the Louth LECP. The Council has produced a *Healthy Ireland for Louth Plan 2018-2022* which fully integrates with the Louth LECP and supports the overall vision which is:

“Louth will be a prosperous, proud, safe and inclusive County where people want to live, work, visit and invest and where there is equal opportunity for all”.

A further series of associated Plans have been developed including *Louth - Disability Inclusion Plan 2017-2022*, *Louth - Age Friendly County Plan 2017-2022*, *Louth - Realising Our Rural Potential* and *Louth - Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery*.

Policy Objective

SC 2	To assist the implementation of the <i>Healthy Ireland for Louth Plan 2018-2022</i> and/or any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
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Policy Objective

SC 3	To support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the <i>National Physical Activity Plan</i> , through integrating such policies, where appropriate and of an applicable scale.
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4.4.2 People with Disabilities

The objective of the *National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022* is to provide a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities. With links to the LECP and the *Healthy Ireland for Louth Plan*, the *Louth Disability Inclusion Plan 2017-2022* was developed. Herein there are 10 goals, which include *inter alia* for: Safe and Accessible Space, Everyday Community Life and Activities, Independent Living and Accessible Transport.

Policy Objective

SC 4	To assist the implementation of the <i>Disability Inclusion Plan 2017-2022</i> and/or any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
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4.4.3 Age Friendly

Louth County Council has pioneered the Age Friendly County Programme informing both National strategies and plans. The National Positive Ageing Strategy seeks to ensure that Ireland will be a society for all ages, which celebrates and prepares properly for individual and population ageing, enabling all to enjoy physical and mental health, and wellbeing.



Louth Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) decided to embed the Age Friendly County Programme as a priority into the LECP. From this, developed the *Louth Age Friendly County Plan 2017-2022* wherein there are 5 goals focusing on a Connected Sustainable Environment, Health & Well-Being, Inclusive Communities, Innovation and Enterprise and Support.

Policy Objective

SC 5	To assist the implementation of the <i>Louth Age Friendly County Plan 2017-2022</i> and/or any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
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Policy Objective

SC 6	To ensure the integration of age friendly and family friendly strategies in all new neighbourhoods including the provision for flexible housing typologies, buildings and open spaces that are designed so that everyone, including older people, people with disabilities, and people with younger children can move about with ease, avoiding separation or segregation.
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4.5 Community Facilities and Social Infrastructure

The provision of community and social infrastructure of a high standard, in appropriate locations, and in tandem with housing and other development is important for all ages and abilities and is an essential component of building sustainable, properly planned, healthy communities.



Facilities including community centres, sports centres, libraries, childcare facilities and playgrounds can serve as a focal point for the communities they serve and provide venues for local sporting, cultural, community, education and social events. Louth is well serviced by a wide range of community and social infrastructure.

However, with the increased population projections for the County as identified in the Settlement Hierarchy, and with the primary focus of this growth directed to the two Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk, there will be a need to accommodate and provide for, in a timely manner, additional community facilities and social infrastructure. The RSES sets out an asset-based approach to the strategic location of new residential development. This Draft Plan seeks to target significant growth to the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and consequently recognises, that the provision of good quality community facilities in existing and developing areas, is a key element in developing sustainable communities and fostering social inclusion and positive health outcomes

The *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* highlight the need to phase development in line with the availability of essential social and community infrastructure such as schools, amenities and other facilities and locate the facilities so as to maximise their efficiency. This includes promoting accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling, facilitating ease of access for users of all ages and abilities and capacity for adaptation.

Many community groups share facilities which can cater for a diverse range of activities. The Council will encourage the provision of multi-functional facilities that can be shared by community groups as will the clustering of facilities at appropriate locations, which will improve their viability and accessibility.

This Draft Plan seeks to ensure that an appropriate range of community facilities is provided in all communities, taking account of growth targets and population profiles identified in the Core Strategy.

4.6 Social Infrastructure Assessment

Planning applications on zoned lands for residential development on sites of 1 ha or greater, or for 100 residential units or more, shall be accompanied by a Social Infrastructure Assessment, to determine if facilities in the area are sufficient to provide for the needs of all future residents.

Where deficiencies are identified, the assessment should demonstrate how these will be addressed, either through direct provision on site, or such other means and in a manner, which is deemed acceptable to the Council.

Policy Objective

SC 7	To reserve lands for social and community facilities and encourage the provision of facilities suitable for intergenerational activities accessible to all members of the community in appropriate locations.
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Policy Objective

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

SC 9	To support the sharing and clustering of social and community facilities at appropriate locations to improve viability of and accessibility to these facilities.
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Policy Objective

SC 10	To resist the loss of existing social and community facilities, or any sports facilities including playing fields unless satisfactory alternatives in suitable locations are available.
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Policy Objective

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

SC 12	To consider the cultural diversity and ethnic minorities in planning for the needs of communities and ensure community facilities and social services provided are accessible for all individuals, communities and sectors of society.
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4.7 Outdoor Recreation



Outdoor recreational spaces and facilities are essential for the health and wellbeing of people living in County Louth. The provision of facilities that cater for the demands of an increasing population and which are accessible to all sectors and age groups, are a key component in the creation of successful sustainable communities.

The natural environment and recreational spaces and amenities available in Louth such as beaches, rivers, mountains, forests and trails make an ideal location for outdoor sport and recreation, both active and passive. These natural amenities need to be augmented by parks, playing fields, playgrounds and green networks for walking and cycling which should be easily accessible to all the County's communities, both rural and urban.

The provision of accessible open space is an integral part of the provision of high quality green infrastructure for communities and forms an important element in the Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County.

Open spaces, both public and private fulfill a range of functions in addition to recreation, such as protecting habitats and biodiversity, drainage management and providing visual amenity.

Playing fields and other open spaces are an important resource for sport, making a significant contribution to both active and passive recreation. In order to cater for an increasing population and meeting the needs of existing and future populations, the Council will resist the loss of existing playing pitches, fields and other recreational open spaces.

The Council will ensure adequate lands are zoned for the development of outdoor recreational and sporting facilities, which should be equally accessible to all individuals including people with disabilities, people with special needs, the elderly, youth, marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

4.7.1 Open Space and Parks

The provision of public open spaces for people of all ages and levels of fitness is vital in creating successful and healthy sustainable communities. Open spaces also play a key role in enhancing the distinctiveness of a neighbourhood and in contributing to the quality of life of both residents and visitors alike. The provision of open spaces and associated recreational facilities will be required as part of the design of new development.

The Council will also adopt a more proactive hierarchical approach to achieve a balanced provision of parks and open spaces of differing sizes and functions distributed throughout the County, which will benefit all communities.

Policy Objective

SC 13 To ensure that sufficient land is identified for the provision of a variety of public open spaces on a hierarchical basis throughout the County in order to achieve a choice of active and passive open space, recreational and amenity areas to suit all individuals

Policy Objective

SC 14 To resist the loss of existing public open space, unless satisfactory alternatives in suitable locations are available.

Policy Objective

SC 15 To facilitate and encourage open space areas and greenway corridors to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating measures to promote and protect ecosystems, climate change measures and to incorporate key landscape features including archaeological considerations into their design.

4.7.2 Play Facilities for Children

The Council recognises the need to maximize opportunities for play facilities for children. *'Ready, Steady, Play! A National Play Policy'* seeks to raise awareness of the importance of play and contribute to the expansion of play facilities. This National Play Policy is about creating better play opportunities for children.

The Council will support the provision of playgrounds in a variety of land use zoning categories where appropriate.



Policy Objective

SC 16 To support the provision of playgrounds in a variety of land use zoning categories where appropriate.

Policy Objective

SC 17 To require the provision of play features that can be used for recreational purposes in all new housing developments exceeding 100 residential units or more.

Policy Objective

SC 18 To maximize the range of public play opportunities available to all children.

4.7.3 Sports Facilities

Louth boasts a wide and diverse range of natural recreational spaces, sporting infrastructure and physical activity opportunities, at the disposal of potential participants across all sections of society.



The Louth Local Sports Partnership (LLSP) aims to be at the forefront of the promotion and development of these activities, supporting sustainable participation for everyone, at a level of their choosing and from every age and from all social backgrounds.

Working with others, it identifies the sports participation needs of the County and seeks to realise programmes, which meet these needs, primarily targeting the development of recreational or participatory sport in the county.

The LLSP has produced the '*Louth Local Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2018-2022*', which emphasises the need for collaboration coupled with the importance of networking and sharing of facilities.



The strategic role of the LLSP is to assist others, such as clubs, communities, the commercial sports sector and individuals, to operate in line with governance standards and respond to local sports needs and sport development opportunities.

Policy Objective

SC 19	To support the objectives of <i>Louth Local Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2018-2022</i> and/or any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
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Policy Objective

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

Louth has a rich and varied cultural heritage and it is important for the identity of the County that this is protected and promoted. The provision and enhancement of arts and cultural infrastructure is crucial for continued socio-economic development and fundamental to the health, well-being and prosperity of the County.

Louth County Council supports and promotes opportunities for everyone to participate in the cultural life of the County by facilitating the provision of well-managed, sustainable arts and cultural infrastructure, suitable for all ages and by adopting a positive approach to the development of cultural facilities. In recognition of the value of culture, the Council has prepared a *Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022* to strengthen the cultural and creative life of its citizens for the period

The existing arts and cultural infrastructure in Louth includes a wide range of theatres, museums, music venues, performance, arts and exhibition spaces, galleries and workshops. The Council supports the continued development of Arts at a local level and actively seeks promotion of opportunities for all who live, work and visit the County, to engage in the Arts as creators, participants and spectators.

The Arts Service of Louth County Council in collaboration with its strategic partners, works towards a society, which values the arts and recognises their positive contribution to individuals and communities. By supporting those who create art, the quality of life and the richness of cultures in Louth will be enhanced.

Louth County Council is committed to developing arts services which strengthen, and give voice to the stories and experiences of every corner of Louth.

The Arts Service works across five main areas:

- Developmental and Community Arts, Programming;
- Funding and Partnership;
- Planning;
- Information; and
- Advice.

The Arts Service alongside the *Creative Ireland Programme (2018 – 2022)*, supports creativity at community level, through initiating projects where art is made outside formal venues, such as arts in education projects and residencies. In terms of financially supporting artists and communities, the Arts Office provides an annual range of tailored funding opportunities including the Grants under the Arts Act, Drama League of Ireland Award, School Musical Instrument Bursary and the Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary.

The Arts Service supports artists, arts initiatives and the arts infrastructure in County Louth, working towards a situation where access to and participation in the Arts is a real and valuable choice for all citizens in the County.

4.8.1 Public Art

Public Art can assist in developing a sense of place and provides an identity and character to a community that is distinctive. The Council will continue to identify and implement new 'Per Cent for Art Schemes' attaching to publicly funded capital, infrastructural and building development, as appropriate.



The Council should be consulted on opportunities for permanent art to reflect the area's heritage and to enhance focal points within towns, villages and developments.

Policy Objective

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

SC 22	To continue to enhance the public domain by encouraging the provision of public art across all art forms and throughout the County, supported by the Percent for Art Scheme.
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4.9 Louth Library Service

Louth Library Service plays an important role in addressing a variety of needs by offering a diverse range of services to all ages, free of charge, particularly in the area of lifelong learning, literacy, culture and wellbeing, and in connecting and empowering communities.



Louth Library Service operates through a network of five libraries: Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee, Dunleer and Carlingford, along with a reference, genealogical and local history service, a mobile library service and schools service.

The development and publication of *Louth Library Service's Development Plan 2020-2025* will outline the developmental trajectory of the library service and strengthen the service offering and its attractiveness to new members. In tandem, Louth Library Service will further strengthen and embed the strategic objectives set out in 'Our Public Libraries 2022', including the roll out of digital learning spaces and delivering a multi-functional library service using the latest technology, such as virtual reality, accessible to all.

Policy Objective

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

SC 24	To deliver a library facility in the Cooley Area.
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4.10 Education

Education is a critical driver of economic success and social progress. The provision of quality education and training is central to skills, knowledge and innovation based economy that will underpin future prosperity.

Improved access to education and training opportunities also plays a significant role in helping to achieve the objectives of a more sustainable, balanced and inclusive society.

There are 71 primary schools and 20 post primary schools in County Louth. Third level education is represented by the Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) and the Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE), both of which play a very important role in the County.



The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services. Louth County Council will continue to work closely with the Department of Education and Skills under the 2012 nationally agreed Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the proactive identification and acquisition of school sites and in support of the Department's schools building programme, into the future.



The *Provision of Schools and the Planning System*, a Code of Practice for Planning Authorities, published jointly by the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, sets out the best practice approach to facilitate the timely and cost effective roll out of school facilities.

The planning process can address future requirements for educational facilities through the reservation of specific lands for such uses or through permitted uses within other zoning categories, thereby ensuring flexibility to accommodate future needs. School provision should be an integral part of the evolution of compact sustainable urban developments, where the opportunities to walk or cycle to school are maximised.

This Draft Plan makes provision for educational facilities through the identification and reservation of potential school sites. Consideration needs to be given to the co-location of childcare provision and the potential use of school facilities by the wider community, outside of school hours, and during school holidays. Future school provision within new growth areas, particularly the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk, should be planned and implemented in tandem with residential development.

The Council supports the concept of multi-campus educational arrangements, which can lead to more sustainable provision of schools through reductions in the land-take required for such developments.

Policy Objective

SC 25	To ensure that adequate lands are zoned and reserved to cater for the establishment, improvement and expansion of all educational facilities in the County.
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Policy Objective

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

SC 27	To promote and facilitate multi-campus educational facilities.
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Policy Objective

SC 28	To reduce the need to travel by car to schools. Applications for extension to an existing school or a new educational facility must be accompanied by a sustainable travel plan. The plan should indicate how students will access the school and provide for measures and facilities that promote sustainable modes of travel.
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Policy Objective

SC 29	To promote and support schemes that facilitate shared use of school facilities, particularly at planning stage, such as sports halls, all weather pitches etc. for community use outside of school hours and support the co-location of pre and after school facilities on new primary school developments.
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Policy Objective

SC 30	To ensure appropriate infrastructure is provided concurrent with the development of an educational facility, including technology, footpaths, pedestrian crossings, cycle lanes and parking facilities, with accessibility for all.
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4.10.1 Third Level Education and Further Education

Education is a key driver of economic success and social progress in modern society. Third level education and training is central to the high skills, knowledge and innovation-based economy that will underpin ongoing and future prosperity.



The Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) provides a valuable third level educational facility for Dundalk and the wider north-east region, extending north of the border. Coinciding with the expansion of its third level courses, services and Research and Development has been its spatial expansion onto adjoining lands.

The Council supports the further expansion and development of DKIT and on its elevation to technological university.

The Drogheda Institute of Further Education is the largest provider of Further Education courses in the Northeast, offering a valuable tertiary educational facility for Drogheda and the wider hinterland, with courses spanning a wide variety of disciplines.

Since opening, the college has experienced continued and sustained growth, which is reflected in the student numbers and in the courses and facilities offered. The Council will continue to support the further expansion of the Institute.



Policy Objective

SC 31	To support the expansion and development of Dundalk Institute of Technology as a centre of excellence and its elevation to technical university status.
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Policy Objective

SC 32	To support the expansion and development of Drogheda Institute of Further Education.
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4.11 Childcare Facilities

The provision of childcare facilities is acknowledged as a vital component of social infrastructure, fundamental to national economic and social wellbeing as it facilitates participation in the workforce, education and social networks. The Council supports the sustainable development of good quality and accessible childcare facilities in the County.

The *Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG 2001)* advocates a pro-active role by planning authorities, in the promotion of increased childcare provision, whilst simultaneously protecting residential amenities.

It is recommended that a 20 unit crèche or childcare facility should be provided for every 75 houses within new residential developments. Having regard to the guidelines, the Council will take account of existing childcare provision when considering the delivery of new facilities as

part of residential development in order to avoid over provision.

In these instances and with the agreement of the Council, developers will be required to provide in lieu, other community benefits by way of direct provision or financial contribution.

The Council is committed to working with Louth County Childcare Committee (LCCC) in developing optimum facilities at appropriate locations throughout the County. In accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy and sustainable development, crèche or childcare facilities will be directed to settlements as identified in the Settlement Hierarchy. The Council will encourage the co-location of childcare facilities with schools so as to reduce travel patterns in the County.

Childcare facilities are taken to encompass full day care, sessional facilities and after school services.

Policy Objective

SC 33	To support and facilitate the sustainable provision of childcare facilities in appropriate and suitable locations and seek their provision concurrent with new residential development, all having regard to the <i>Guidelines on Childcare Facilities (2001)</i> and <i>Childcare Regulations (2006)</i> and in consultation with the Louth County Childcare Committee. Such facilities will be directed to settlements identified in the Settlement Hierarchy.
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Policy Objective

SC 34	To seek the provision of additional community benefits by way of direct provision or financial contribution in lieu of the provision of childcare facilities where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that there are sufficient childcare spaces available in the locality.
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Policy Objective

SC 35	To permit childcare facilities of appropriate size and scale in settlements, in proximity to existing community and/or educational facilities and in existing residential areas provided they do not have a significant negative impact on the character or amenities of an area, particularly with regard to traffic generation, car parking and noise disturbance.
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Policy Objective

SC 36

The Council will encourage the co-location of childcare facilities with schools in the interest of sustainable development

4.12 Healthcare Facilities

Healthcare and medical facilities are provided by a range of public, private and voluntary agencies. The HSE is the primary body responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services to the people of Louth, while also providing a vital role in promoting health and wellbeing.

The Council has an important role in supporting suitable healthcare provision, by ensuring that sufficient lands are reserved in the Draft Plan to accommodate the provision of adequate healthcare facilities for the County's population.

Louth is home to two hospitals serving its residents and those from surrounding counties, namely Louth County Hospital in Dundalk and Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda.



The Council will seek to support the co-existence of healthcare facilities with community support services, on suitably zoned lands, in accessible locations, convenient to pedestrian access and public transport. Suitable lands for the provision of healthcare facilities will include town and village centres and/or lands proximate to new and existing residential areas, which will allow communities access to multi-disciplinary health care, in easily accessible locations throughout the County.

The primary role of the Council in healthcare provision is to ensure there are adequate lands available in development plans and local area plans to provide for new facilities and the expansion or adaptation of existing facilities. These facilities should reflect the County's Settlement Hierarchy with regard to scale and location.

The Council considers that healthcare facilities should be provided in the Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements within the County.

Policy Objective

SC 37

To co-operate with the HSE and other statutory and voluntary agencies and the private sector in the provision of appropriate health care facilities to all sections of the community, subject to proper planning considerations and the principles of sustainable development.

Policy Objective

SC 38

To support the provision of healthcare facilities on suitable lands within the existing Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements and on sites convenient to pedestrian and public transport.

Policy Objective

SC 39

To encourage where feasible, the integration of healthcare facilities with new and existing community facilities.

4.12.1 Residential Care, Retirement and Nursing Homes

With increased life expectancy and an ageing population there is increasing demand for the provision of residential care, retirement and nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation within the County.

Residential Care Home: The term 'residential care home' refers to a number of different types of property in which accommodation is provided for people in need of care for various reasons.

The occupants, usually in single rooms, have access to on site care services. Care can be provided on a 24 hour basis or partial care depending on the person's needs.

Retirement Home: A 'retirement home' is a multi-residence housing facility intended for older persons. The usual pattern is that each person or couple in the home has an apartment style room or suite of rooms. Additional facilities are provided within the building. Often this includes facilities for meals, gathering, recreation, and some form of health or hospice care.

Nursing Home: A 'nursing home' is a facility for the care (usually long-term) of patients who are not sick enough to need hospital care but are not able to remain at home. Today, nursing homes have a more active role in health care, helping patients prepare to live at home or with a family member when possible. They help conserve expensive hospital facilities for the acutely ill and improve the prospects of the chronically disabled. A retirement home differs from a nursing home primarily in the level of medical care given.

Retirement Village : A 'retirement village' is a complex containing separate and independent homes for residents, that are intended to be predominantly or exclusively occupied by retired persons, who have entered into village contracts with the operator of the complex.

The presumption for such retirement villages is that they be located within an urban setting so that services and facilities are accessible.

Sheltered Accommodation: Sheltered accommodation are housing schemes with on-site communal facilities for assisted independent living.

Sheltered housing schemes usually have an on-site warden and include care supports such as the provision of meals and health care assistance. Communal on site facilities can include recreation areas, alarm systems and a laundry.

The Council considers the provision of such services should be accommodated in the Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements where:

- Public utilities (water and wastewater) are available;
- Public transport accessibility is available;
- Opportunities for social inclusion and integration of the community exist;
- Connectivity is promoted through high speed broadband to support telecare and telemedicine and
- Combination of trips by visitors.

In general, there is a presumption against the provision of these facilities in the open countryside for reasons relating to unsustainability, poor accessibility, social exclusion and visual intrusion.

The Council recognises that instances may arise where buildings are vacant and no longer used for their original purpose. In such cases, and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development, consideration may be given to the conversion and re-use of these existing buildings.

Policy Objective

SC 40	To require that Residential Care, Retirement and Nursing Homes, Retirement Villages and Sheltered Accommodation be located in Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements for reasons of sustainability, accessibility, social inclusion and proximity to services. In exceptional circumstances and where considered suitable, the re-use and conversion of existing buildings shall be considered.
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4.13 Emergency Services

Louth County Council provides a fire and rescue service and fire prevention and building control service in Louth, in compliance with statutory requirements. The Fire Service also runs a regional training centre in Dundalk.

Louth County Council has made arrangements, in co-operation with other emergency response agencies, (Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána) to effectively respond to major emergencies and severe weather events.



The Council has developed a *Major Emergency Plan* and *Severe Weather Plan* and has kept these plans updated. These Plans have been tested by means of regular inter-agency exercises.

Policy Objective

SC 41	To provide an efficient and effective fire and rescue service and prevention service in Louth and to ensure an effective response to major emergencies and severe weather events.
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4.14 Community Funding

The Louth Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) has oversight of all community funding in County Louth, in line with the strategic vision of both the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) and the Draft Plan and in coordination with other local authority grants, to ensure a fair and equitable delivery across the whole of the county.

The most significant funds are: LEADER, Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Healthy Ireland Fund, and Community Enhancement Programme. These funds complement and supplement other funds such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, CLÁR, Outdoor Recreation Scheme and in some cases the Rural Regeneration Scheme.

The Council encourages and supports community funded projects proposed at various locations throughout the County. It will facilitate where appropriate, with others including the LCDC through the various funding programmes both locally and nationally, in carrying out projects, which will improve the stock of recreation facilities throughout the County, depending on the availability of funding.

Policy Objective

SC 42	To deliver national funding programmes in conjunction with the strategic vision of both the Draft Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan, while supporting and co-operating where appropriate, with development agencies, community groups and organisations in carrying out projects, funded nationally and locally, designed to improve the stock of amenity and recreational facilities and services in the County.
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4.15 Places of Worship

The Council recognises the importance of places of worship and multi-faith centres in meeting the religious needs of the County's population.



Having regard to the noise and traffic impacts associated with such uses, the Council will seek that these are suitably located where they do not adversely impact on existing amenities.

Policy Objective

SC 43	To support the development of places of worship/places of assembly and multi-faith facilities at appropriate locations such as town or village centres or other suitable locations in close proximity to residential communities where they do not adversely impact on existing amenities.
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4.16 Burial Grounds

The Council is responsible for ensuring that there are adequate burial facilities, including the acquisition of lands for such facilities where necessary. Cemeteries and crematoria can also be provided by the private sector. Burial grounds may need to be extended during the period of the Plan to address capacity issues as they arise. The burial needs of multi-faith and non-religious communities may also need to be taken into account with regard to such facilities.

Policy Objective

SC 44	To support the development of new or extended burial grounds and crematoria at suitable locations in the County, subject to appropriate safeguards with regard to environmental, noise and traffic impacts, and residential amenities.
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Policy Objective

SC 45	To protect and maintain historic graveyards within the County.
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4.17 Community Allotments

Under the *Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)*, an allotment means an area of land comprising not more than 1,000 square metres, let, or available for letting to, and cultivation by, one or more than one person who is a member of the local community and lives adjacent or near to the allotment, for the purpose of the production of vegetables or fruit mainly for consumption by the person or a member of his or her family.

Louth County Council recognises that the public's interest in growing fruit and vegetables locally has increased significantly in recent years. This has been due to a number of reasons including economic circumstances, health benefits, along with concerns regarding sustainability and the embodied energy involved in the global production and transportation of food.

The Planning Authority will therefore facilitate the development of allotments at suitable locations throughout the County. Such locations should be consistent with the terms of the definition above and should be located within or close to existing settlements, where they will be more easily accessible to all sections of society.

Policy Objective

SC 46	To facilitate the development of allotments at suitable locations throughout the County. Any such facility should be located within or close to an existing settlement and should be easily accessible.
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