Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council

Consolidated Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027



Volume 1
Written Statement

This consolidated version includes amendments associated with Variation No. 1

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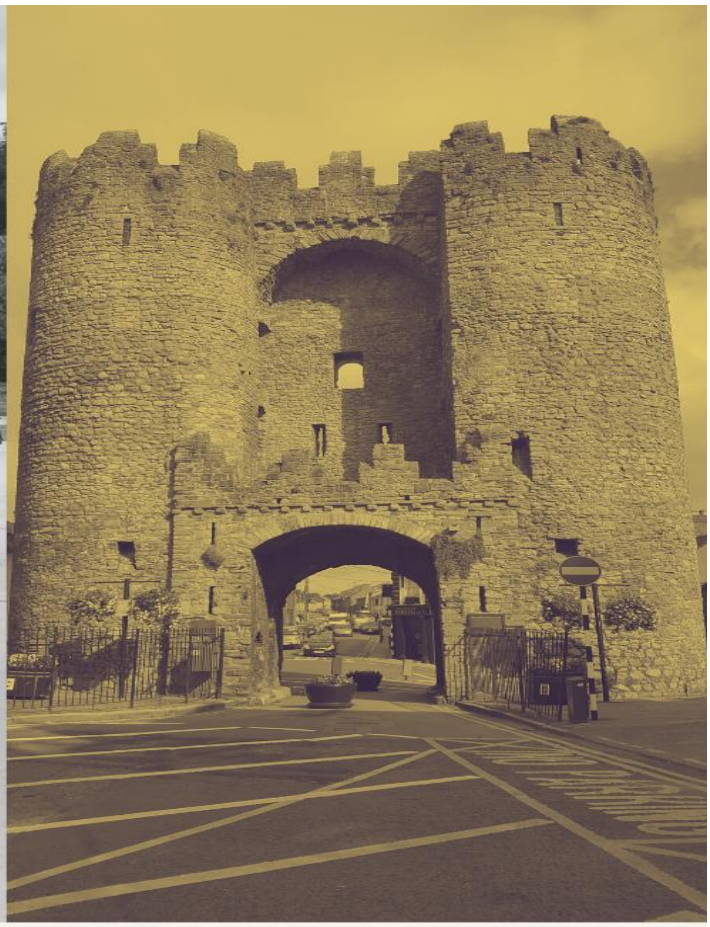
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Chapter 1

Introduction

'The Plan sits within a new hierarchy of national and regional plans which promote a departure from the 'business as usual' pattern of development.'

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN - A NEW APPROACH

The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the Council's overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Louth in accordance with the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*. It is a blueprint for development in County Louth and is the over-arching strategic framework for sustainable development in spatial, economic, social and environmental terms. It offers clear guidance on sustainable development policies and objectives over a range of issues including, but not limited to; settlement, sustainable communities, movement and transport, heritage and climate action.

This Plan represents a step change from the current *Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021*, for a number of reasons, which relate primarily to changes enacted at national and regional level and legislative amendments. The cumulative impact of the principle changes has a major impact on this Plan and none so profoundly as to the recognition afforded to the towns of Drogheda and Dundalk therein.

The implementation of the *Local Government Reform Act 2014* introduced legislative amendments, resulting in the abolition of Town and Borough Councils. Consequently, the County Development Plan incorporates the functional area of the entire County including the areas formerly within Drogheda Borough Council, Dundalk Town Council and Ardee Town Council.

When adopted, the County Development Plan will replace the Drogheda and Dundalk Development Plans, and Urban Area Plans/Local Area Plans will be prepared for these towns during the lifetime of this Plan, in addition to a Local Area Plan for both Ardee and Dunleer. The *Local Government Reform Act 2014* also established the Municipal District system of local administration and within County Louth there are three such districts: the Municipal District of Drogheda, the Municipal District of Dundalk and the Municipal District of Ardee.

The principle national and regional changes which impact the Plan are as presented below:

- The Plan sits within a new hierarchy of national and regional plans which promote a departure from the 'business as usual' pattern of development;
- County Louth has moved from the Border Region to the Eastern and Midland Region;
- The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) designation of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres in acknowledgement of their growth potential as drivers of regional development; and
- A National objective seeking to strengthen Ireland's overall urban structure with particular reference to Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry on the Dublin-Belfast Corridor.

The new hierarchy, wherein the Plan sits, promotes a new way forward for the pattern of development nationwide. While recognising the importance of Dublin City, the National Planning Framework (NPF) promotes a shift in population and employment growth to Irelands other cities and regions, including the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk in addition to other towns, villages and rural areas.

Future population growth targeted by the NPF for Drogheda and Dundalk does not seek to cap but rather build on their potential to develop as cities of scale and drivers of national and regional economic growth, investment and prosperity. Located on key strategic and public transport routes, their future growth will promote self-sustaining economic and employment based development opportunities. This will be complemented by a focused approach on compact, sequential and sustainable development to ensure the creation of attractive, liveable urban places for communities to enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.

The significance of Drogheda and Dundalk in the context of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor as an important cross border network and key driver for regional development, economic growth and competitiveness is also recognised in the NPF.

Prior to 2015, Louth was part of the Border Region but with the establishment of the three new regional assemblies, the County was incorporated into the Eastern and Midland Region. This represents a shift from viewing Louth in the context of a border County to one more aligned and affiliated with Dublin and the Eastern and Midland Region; the region with the largest population and highest concentration of employment and associated employment opportunities in the country.

The County nonetheless retains links with the border area and counties including Cavan and Monaghan and will continue to support investment and improvement in connectivity and economic investment that will facilitate local and regional development in the border area.

The designation of Drogheda and Dundalk as two of the three Regional Growth Centres in the Region is testament to their role as designated centres of growth, to further support and manage the growth of Dublin and critical to the implementation of effective regional development as set out in the NPF.

Growing Drogheda and Dundalk to cities of scale, where the majority of population growth is to be accommodated, supports the objective of the NPF to strengthen Ireland's overall urban structure.

1.2 REGIONAL GROWTH CENTRES

The RSES Settlement Hierarchy identifies Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres (RGCs), being towns with high level self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers, while playing a significant role for a wide catchment area. It supports significant population and economic growth in these centres, which is critical to the implementation of effective regional development.

Recognition of the importance of Drogheda and Dundalk within the Plan cannot therefore be understated.

The RSES sets out a strategic development framework for the future growth of Drogheda and Dundalk to allow them reach sufficient scale, to be drivers of regional growth, and in recognition of their critical role in successful regional development.

1.2.1 DROGHEDA







With regard to the RSES, a key priority of the Plan is to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of the town as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031. This will be supported by objectives to regenerate the town centre, promote compact growth in the town's hinterlands and enhance the role of Drogheda as a self-sustaining strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. The development of a joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) / Local Area Plan (LAP) between Louth County Council and Meath County Council will provide a co-ordinated planning framework to deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas.

The preparation of the Joint Local Area Plan for Drogheda will commence within 6 months of the adoption of the County Development Plan.

Regeneration: Revitalising and redeveloping the town centre will be a priority. This includes the regeneration of opportunity sites. Integrated physical, economic and social regeneration will be promoted to capitalise on existing infrastructure.

Areas identified include the Heritage Quarter and the Westgate Area, which received funding under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF). Other opportunity sites include the Docklands. This approach is supported by the RSES over and above the development of greenfield sites.

Residential Development: The success of Drogheda as a self-sustaining Regional Growth Centre (RGC) will be dependent on the delivery of a minimum 30% compact growth, through regeneration and redevelopment of vacant, infill and/or brownfield sites in the town centre, which will contribute to place-making.

Recent rapid residential development needs to be balanced with employment growth to reverse commuting patterns.
The sustainable development of lands in the northern and southern environs of the town will be supported.
Tourism: Drogheda is recognised as the gateway to the Boyne Valley Region and has significant tourism potential both within and beyond the town. The importance of the River Boyne is acknowledged as being central to any future strategy for the town and its regeneration. In conjunction with the adjoining parks and open spaces it provides a link to the Brú na Bóinne and beyond, as a recreational use.



Economic Development: Development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor with improved accessibility for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and indigenous business will enhance Drogheda's role as a key regional economic driver.

Cross-border collaboration is necessary for economic growth and to realise the potential of the Economic Corridor. The town has a broad employment base but there is a need to further grow this base and provide additional employment opportunities. The importance of start-up companies is recognised, as well as the strengthening of educational offerings from Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE).



Retaining indigenous talent is recognised, as is the importance of the Lourdes Hospital as a significant employer in the area.
Enabling Infrastructure: The goal of achieving compact growth will require improved accessibility, sustainable mobility and the requisite infrastructure to enable Drogheda to grow as a Regional Growth Centre (RGC). The town will benefit from the extension of the DART service and improvements will be required to McBride station relating to accessibility. The importance of protecting the national rail and road infrastructure in supporting economic growth and competitiveness is acknowledged, as is the need for improvements to greenways, walking and cycling routes. The RSES supports the Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme, Drogheda Port and the proposed Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR).

Urban Area Plan (UAP) / Local Area Plan (LAP):

A statutory joint UAP/LAP will be prepared for Drogheda between Louth County Council and Meath County Council during the lifetime of this Plan which will facilitate its future development as a Regional Growth Centre and economic driver in the Region. Other Regional Objectives seek to:

- Support the Drogheda Docklands and Drogheda Port including the relocation of the port and Port Access Northern Cross Route provision;
- Promote cross border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as a cross border network for regional development;
- Promote self-sustaining economic and employment based development opportunities to reverse commuting patterns;
- Promote Drogheda as an urban tourism destination capitalising on its role as gateway to the Boyne Valley, Brú na Bóinne, Boyne River and Irelands Ancient East designation;
- Support varied social inclusion measures;
- Support the Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme;
- Enhance its role as a strategic employment centre on Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

1.2.2 DUNDALK







In accordance with the RSES, a key priority of the Plan is to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of Dundalk as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031. This will be supported by objectives to regenerate the town centre, promote compact growth in the town's hinterlands, and enhance the role of Dundalk as an employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. Capitalising on its proximity to Newry and strengthening cross border synergy in functions and services will also be promoted. The RSES identified a strategic development framework to help Dundalk reach sufficient scale to be a driver of economic growth under topics identified hereunder:

Regeneration: Revitalising Dundalk's town centre will be prioritised through regeneration of opportunity sites and underutilised areas. Integrated physical, economic and social regeneration will capitalise on existing infrastructure, help combat social exclusion and improve permeability.

Specific sites benefitting from regeneration will be identified throughout the town centre, building on the success of already completed regeneration schemes.

Residential Development: The success of Dundalk as a self-sustaining Regional Growth Centre will be dependent on the delivery of a minimum 30% compact growth, through regeneration and redevelopment of vacant, infill/brownfield sites in the town centre, other character areas and in Mount Avenue. Development of these lands will therefore be a central tenet of the Urban Area Plan (UAP) / Local Area Plan (LAP).

Economic Development: Development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor with improved accessibility for FDI and indigenous business will enhance Dundalk's role as a key regional economic driver, with a strong, modern economic and employment base located in high quality business parks, and supported by the Dundalk Institute of Technology serving as a driver for enterprise development in the Region.

Continued cross border collaboration is necessary for economic growth and to realise the potential of the Economic Corridor. Indigenous employment opportunities will retain talent in the locality.

Support for the expansion and development of the economic, employment and educational base will be provided for in the UAP / LAP.

Enabling Infrastructure: Compact growth will require improved accessibility, sustainable mobility and the requisite infrastructure to enable Dundalk grow as a Regional Growth Centre, all of which will be supported by the UAP/LAP. The importance of protecting the national rail and road infrastructure in supporting economic growth and competitiveness is acknowledged.

Urban Area Plan (UAP) / Local Area Plan (LAP): A statutory UAP/LAP will be prepared for Dundalk during the lifetime of this Plan and facilitate its future development as a RGC and economic driver in the Region. The preparation of the Local Area Plan for Dundalk will commence within 6 months of the adoption of the County Development Plan. Other Regional Objectives seek to:

- Promote cross border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as a cross border network for regional development;
- Enhance its role as a strategic employment centre on Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor;
- Support the role of DKIT;
- Enhance potential for regeneration /redevelopment of the Port Harbour;
- Support varied social inclusion measures;
- Support the Dundalk Flood Relief Scheme.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF COUNTY LOUTH

Geographically, County Louth is located on the eastern seaboard midway between Ireland's two largest cities of Dublin and Belfast and strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.



It shares land borders with Counties Meath and Monaghan to the west and Counties Down and Armagh in Northern Ireland.

The County has a population of 128,884 (Census 2016). This represents a 4.9% increase on the previous 2011 Census and notably higher than the national average growth rate of 3.8%.

Albeit the smallest County in the State with an area of 827 km^2 (Census 2016), it is the most densely populated County in Ireland, outside of Dublin, with a population density of 156 persons per km^2, compared to the national average of 70 persons per km^2. It is also home to two of the three largest towns in the country, namely, Drogheda and Dundalk.

The presence of two such substantial towns within a single County, both of which are primary centres of employment and targeted to grow to city scale, is very unique in the country.

The scale of these towns combined with a number of additional substantial towns and villages dispersed throughout the County, results in the majority of the population living in urban areas - circa 66.1% (85,224).

As a result of its location, combined with high quality road and rail infrastructure, accessibility to ports and airports both north and south of the border, high speed broadband and a skilled and educated workforce, County Louth is well placed to continue to grow and prosper in terms of population and economic terms, into the future.

County Louth possesses a network of attractive and inviting towns and villages, interspersed with a diverse range of landscapes and natural environment, home to its rich and varied natural and built heritage, which collectively contribute substantially to the County's character, identity and sense of place. These valuable resources must be carefully managed to develop our society, economy and people in a sustainable manner.

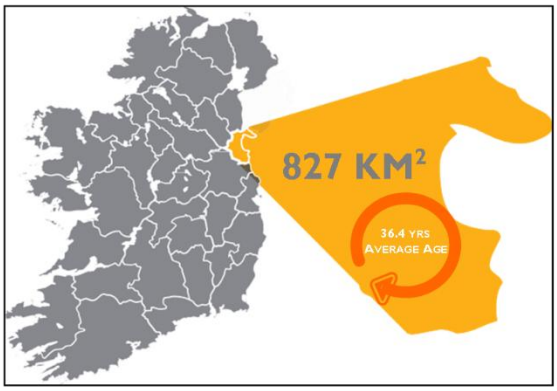


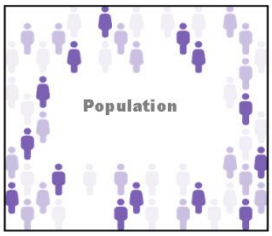






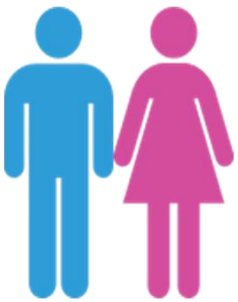
Key Facts and Figures





Population increase of 4.9% since 2011 => above National Average of 3.8%

Population by Town	
Town	Population
Drogheda	40,965
Dundalk	39,004
Ardee	4,928
Dunleer	1,822





45,448 Private Households





86% of population recorded as having good/very good health



Average disposable income €18,359

Just over 1 Hour from Belfast Airports



45 minutes from Dublin Airport

Population by Geographical Area

66.1% living in town (85,224)





33.9% living in the rural area (43,660)





27.7 mins Avg. travel time



Walked 10%



Travel By Car / 1.5%



Cycled 1.5%



Public Transport 16.5%



8,012	5,840	5,226	4,564	50,317
Wholesale & Retail	Health & Social Work	Manufacturing	Education	
15.9%	11.6%	10.4%	9.1%	Total number of residents in the county who are working

1.4 CHALLENGING/CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

When preparation of the Plan commenced in 2019, it was during a period of economic and social optimism. The economic downturn of 2008 and the resultant collapse of the economy for a period extending beyond 6 years had major implications for the country. The construction industry, which had been experiencing unprecedented growth, suddenly experienced a dramatic contraction, a consequence of which was a collapse in the property market, evidenced in the almost complete stagnation in housing construction.

From approximately 2014 the Irish economy was beginning to experience a form of economic recovery, albeit at a much reduced rate to previously. The gradual but continued economic growth was evidenced by reduced unemployment rates, increased wages and improved consumer confidence. This growth was particularly evident in the construction sector which tends to serve as a barometer of economic activity.

In June 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union. This is commonly referred to as Brexit. The future partnership between the UK and the EU following the UK departure is uncertain at this time. It will undoubtedly impact not just nationally but also on those counties, including Louth, located along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland which are particularly exposed to these uncertainties.

Notwithstanding this period of flux and uncertainty, in 2018 the Government published the National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP), as a disruptive shift from the planning status quo. Together they constitute Project Ireland 2040 the purpose of which is to guide development and investment in the country through a shared set of national objectives and principles. The alignment of strategic planning documents with the capital investment plan is regarded as a radical break with the past. The NDP sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the implementation of the NPF through a total investment of approximately €116 billion. This level of capital spending will facilitate ongoing employment retention and creation with appropriate regional development while allowing the construction industry to provide the capacity and capability required to deliver the Government's long term investment plans.

Refining these two documents into more detailed plans is the responsibility of the three Regional Assemblies through the publication of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for each Region.

The first quarter of 2020 witnessed a global economic shock as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to manage this virus, countries throughout the world have responded in a manner which has had major implications from both an economic and social perspective. At this stage, it is impossible to fully estimate or measure the implications or their timeframe.

However, the pandemic is undoubtedly the greatest threat to the Irish economy since the global financial crisis. Recovery is anticipated to be slow and opportunities for economic growth and investment will be limited.

1.5 A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

As a result of this extended period of flux with economic highs and lows and subsequent volatilities, Louth, like the rest of the country has had to adapt and adjust to the changes experienced and future proof for those changes yet to materialise. But Louth is a resilient County, and whilst there will be challenges to be faced, there will conversely be opportunities available from which the County can benefit and grow.

Louth is located along the border with excellent connectivity to Dublin and Belfast via the M1 Motorway, which forms part of the EU TEN-T Core Network and the inter-city rail link. It is an attractive location for UK business that requires access to the EU market and simultaneously Irish, European and International business requiring access to the UK market.

The designation of the two Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk in the County demonstrates their important roles and status within the region, to better manage the growth of Dublin and as two towns targeted to be regional economic drivers of city scale.

This Plan is acutely aware of the importance of Louth within the Eastern and Midland Region, the designated Regional Growth Centres and their role in driving regional development in accordance with national and regional strategies.

The Plan is an opportunity to shape the future growth of Louth while planning for and supporting its sustainable long term development. In an ever evolving economic and social environment this Plan will provide a positive vision for Louth. It will strive to create a prosperous and thriving County, where growth is prioritised in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk, supported by the sustainable development of smaller towns and villages while meeting the needs of the entire County.

1.6 STRATEGIC VISION

The Strategic Vision for County Louth enshrined in the Plan seeks to deliver a prosperous and thriving County, and in particular, the RGCs of Drogheda and Dundalk where no individual or social group is excluded, which enshrines the three principles of environmental, social and economic sustainability including protection of the County's resources, heritage and the natural and built environment while transitioning to a low carbon society.

Strategic Vision

"Promote County Louth, in particular the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk, as uniquely attractive places in which to live, work, visit and do business and where the quality of employment and educational opportunities, natural and built environment, cultural experiences and provision of inclusive communities are all to the highest standards, while transitioning to a low carbon and climate resilient society."

1.6.1 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The vision for County Louth will be achieved through the realisation of the following Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objective	
SO 1	Realise the potential and promote the development and growth of County Louth through harnessing the economic and employment potential of the competitive advantages of the County. This includes its strategic location, connectivity and accessibility to external markets and having regard in particular to the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres located on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

Strategic Objective	
SO 2	Support and promote the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as key designated Regional Growth Centres with high levels of self-sustaining employment and services, to act as regional economic drivers, playing a significant role for a wide catchment area and to help achieve a more coordinated and sustainable settlement and travel pattern across the region.

Strategic Objective	
SO 3	Direct new development in accordance with the Core and Settlement Strategies, which will provide for the sustainable development of the County for the period 2021-2027 and beyond and in accordance with the principles of compact growth, consolidation and regeneration.

Strategic Objective	
SO 4	Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County supporting energy efficiency and reducing energy demand, through a combination of mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change. This includes for increased usage of renewable energy through developing indigenous energy resources, supporting the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050, and ensuring flood risk management. The Council will work with other bodies and organisations as appropriate, to identify and help protect critical infrastructure.

Strategic Objective	
SO 5	Ensure a more sustainable and integrated concept of development with regard to land use, transportation, water services, energy supply and waste management over the lifetime of the Plan.

Strategic Objective	
SO 6	Conserve and enhance the County's Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services supporting the sustainable management of natural assets and the biodiversity of the County's protected habitats and species to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.

Strategic Objective	
SO 7	Protect and enhance the built, cultural and natural heritage assets of Louth, the intrinsic value of which helps to define the character of both urban and rural areas, contributes to the attractiveness, vibrancy and sense of place for residents, tourists and visitors, including improved access to the countryside through the development of greenways, walking trails and blueways in support of and advancing sustainable communities.

Strategic Objective	
SO 8	Develop and support vibrant, inclusive, sustainable and healthy communities in Louth where people can live, work, invest and visit, enjoying access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities and amenities, suitable for all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy.

Strategic Objective	
SO 9	Protect and enhance the unique character and identity of Louth's towns and villages and improve quality of life and well-being through the application of Healthy Placemaking, underpinned by good urban design with the creation of attractive public spaces that are age friendly vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate positive social interaction.

Strategic Objective	
SO 10	Support implementation of the objectives and actions for strengthening economic and community development in the County in accordance with the Louth Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

Strategic Objective	
SO 11	Support the further development of a resilient economic base in Louth and promote both enterprise and entrepreneurship, underpinned by innovation and talent resulting in the delivery of sustainable jobs and economic growth.

Strategic Objective	
SO 12	Support improvements in and access to education and training as central to skills, knowledge, innovation and quality job creation which will underpin future prosperity for all and aid in achieving a more sustainable, balanced and inclusive society.

Strategic Objective	
SO 13	Support the sustainable development of rural areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.

Strategic Objective	
SO 14	Reverse rural decline in small towns and villages through sustainable, targeted measures addressing vacancy and delivering sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.

Strategic Objective	
SO 15	Ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning through the increased use of sustainable transport modes and the minimisation of travel demand to achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with excellent connectivity both within and beyond the County.

Strategic Objective	
SO 16	Ensure the efficient and sustainable use and development of water and waste water service infrastructure throughout the County in a manner that supports a healthy society, economic development and a cleaner environment.

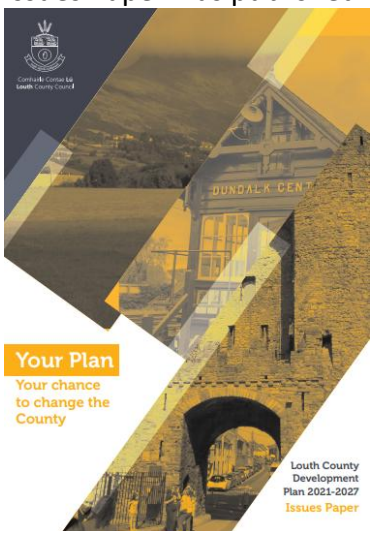
Strategic Objective	
SO 17	Facilitate the development of infrastructural projects, which will underpin sustainable development throughout the County during the period of the Plan.

Strategic Objective	
SO 18	Afford suitable protection to the environment and natural resources of the County and ensure the fulfilment of environmental responsibilities.

Strategic Objective	
SO 19	Provide a framework for the management and regulation of development and use of land that will guide day to day planning decisions, thus ensuring a more sustainable and integrated concept of development with regard to all forms of land use.

1.7 THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

The formal review process of the *Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021* commenced on 27th September 2019 with a pre-draft consultation phase. In accordance with best practice, a Strategic Issues Paper was published.



The purpose of this was to encourage dialogue on the key topics important to the County and to promote and support the involvement of the public at the early stages in the preparation of the Plan. The function of this stage was to determine the objectives and policies to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Development Plan area.

The pre-draft consultation process was undertaken from Friday 27th September 2019 to Tuesday 26th November 2019, wherein a total of 244 submissions were received. In addition to consultations with stakeholders and the use of social media etc., the Council engaged in five public consultation events throughout the County.

A Chief Executives Report was prepared in accordance with Section 11(4) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* and presented to the Elected Members for their consideration.

On the 23rd March 2020, direction was given by the Elected Members to proceed with the preparation of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. However, shortly thereafter, the statutory timeframe for drafting the Development Plan as specified in the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* was interrupted by Covid-19.

An Order under Section 251A of the Act resulted in an extension to the statutory timelines within which the Plan was to be prepared.

It is important to note that the opinions, views and ideas set out in the written submissions and of those expressed and recorded at the public consultation events, were considered during the drafting of this Plan.

The draft Plan was placed on public display from Wednesday 14th October, 2020 to Wednesday 23rd December, 2020 and a total of 833 submissions were received. The Elected Members, having considered the draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Chief Executive's Report on submissions/ observations received, resolved, following a series of Special Council meetings, to amend the draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The proposed Material Alterations to the draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 and accompanying Environmental Reports were placed on public display from Tuesday 29th June, 2021 to Wednesday 28th July 2021. A total of 67 no. submissions were received during this public consultation period.

A Chief Executive's report on submissions/observations received in relation to the proposed Material Alterations to the draft Development Plan was prepared and submitted to the Elected Members for their consideration. The Elected Members having considered the CE report resolved to adopt the Plan on the 30th September 2021. The Plan comes into effect on the 11th November 2021.

1.7.1 Legislative Background

This Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* which requires that a Development Plan set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in addition to the inclusion of mandatory objectives. These consist of *inter alia*, objectives for the zoning of land, the provision of infrastructure, the conservation and protection of the environment, and the integration of the planning and sustainable development with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population.

It also includes the requirement to prepare a 'Core Strategy' for the County, which must be consistent, as far as practicable, with the National and Regional development objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. A full list of mandatory objectives required for inclusion in a Development Plan as specified in the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* is detailed in Appendix 1, Volume 3.

In addition to compliance with the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*, the Louth County Development Plan is informed by other legislation, in particular the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

1.7.2 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, was carried out as part of the preparation of this Plan. SEA is the process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes and in this case the preparation of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. Article 1 of the EU Directive 2001/42/EC states, "*The objective of the SEA process is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of specified plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment*". The results of the SEA process were fully considered and integrated into the preparation and making of this Plan. The resulting Environmental Report has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this Plan and is included in Volume 5.

1.7.3 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The *EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC* on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora, otherwise known as The Habitats Directive, in combination with the *Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC)*, otherwise known as the Birds Directive, provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance, through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as the Natura 2000 Network of European Sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects likely to affect European Sites.

Appropriate Assessment is an evaluation of the potential impacts of a plan on the conservation objectives of a European site, and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects. An Appropriate Assessment was conducted as part of the preparation of this Plan.

A Natura Impact Report (NIR) has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this Plan and is included in Volume 5.

1.7.4 STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT (SFRA)

In meeting the requirements of both the Strategic Environmental Assessment process and *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2009), the Council has conducted a County wide Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Plan area. This provides a broad assessment of flood risk within the County and will inform strategic land-use planning decisions in this and other plans.

b) Taking into account the services that ecosystems provide - including those that underpin social and economic

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been published as a separate document in conjunction with this Plan and is available in Volume 5.

1.7.5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

The development objectives in the Plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment.

The accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes have informed the preparation of the Plan (Volume 5 of the Plan provides associated documents detailing the findings). All recommendations made by these processes have been integrated into this Plan and this will contribute towards environmental conservation and protection within the County and beyond.

1.7.5.1 Ecosystems Services Approach and Natural Capital

In preparing the Plan and developing policy objectives, the Council have followed these Ecosystem Services [i] Approach principles:

a) Consideration of natural systems - by using knowledge of interactions in nature and how ecosystems function (including in Plan Chapters 8 and 11);

[i] Ecosystems are multifunctional communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. Ecosystems provide a series of services for human well-being (ecosystem services) either directly or indirectly contributing towards human wellbeing.

b) Wellbeing, such as flood and climate regulation (including in Plan Chapters 8, 10 and 12), resources for food, fibre or fuel (including at Chapters 5 and 11), or for recreation, culture and quality of life (including at Chapters 4, 6, 9 and 11);
c) Involving people - those who benefit from the ecosystem services and those managing them need to be involved in decisions that affect them. Public consultation has informed the preparation of the Plan which was further refined before adoption, taking into account submissions and observations made on the Plan during public display.

The Council shall promote an Ecosystem Services Approach, following the above principles, in its decision-making processes, including those relating to the preparation of statutory land use plans.

In recognition of the need to manage natural capital[ii], provisions have been integrated into the Plan that will contribute towards management of air quality, noise pollution, light pollution, water quality and integrated catchment management.

1.7.6 POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* requires that a Development Plan shall, so far as is practicable, be consistent with National and Regional Plans, Policies and Strategies relating to proper planning and sustainable development, have regard to Ministerial Guidelines (DHPLG), the Development Plans of adjoining authorities and the requirements of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*.

This Plan is therefore required to comply with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly).

In preparing the Plan, regard has been had to International, National, Regional and Local policy documents.

These have been instrumental in formulating the Plan's overall aims and strategic direction, including but not limited to integrating transportation and land use, a settlement strategy centred upon consolidated and compact development, maximising efficient use of land, and protecting both the natural and built environment etc.

1.8 NATIONAL POLICY

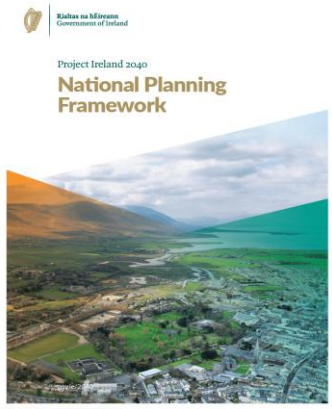
Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for its entire people. It is predicated on the proper alignment of investment priorities and capital expenditure with a carefully considered and defined strategy.

Alongside the development of physical infrastructure, Project Ireland 2040 supports business and communities across all of Ireland in realising their potential. The two documents constituting Project Ireland 2040 are detailed below.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country for the next 20 years. The ambition of the NPF is to establish a single vision for all communities throughout the country in accordance with shared goals identified as National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) and of which there are 10 identified.

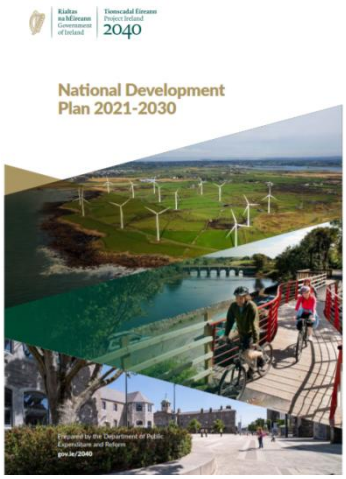
[ii] Renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals)

From a planning perspective, Ireland is divided into three regions and of these, County Louth sits in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) area.
In accordance with its vision of regional parity, and to address the disproportionate growth in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area to date, the NPF targets a level of growth in the country's Southern and Northern and Western Regions combined, to at least match that projected in the Eastern and Midland Region. The population target for the Eastern and Midland Region is for an additional 490,000-540,000 people to be living in the region by 2040.



In addition to targeting the existing five cities in the country for 50% of Ireland's growth the NPF, in recognition of the role of cross-border networks and the need to strengthen Irelands urban structure, identifies Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry on the Dublin-Belfast corridor as playing an important lead role in future growth and development with Drogheda and Dundalk identified as Regional Growth Centres.
The NPF promotes regional concentration toward cities and larger urban areas, with a focus on compact urban growth in existing built up areas and provision of enabling infrastructure to promote investment.

In accordance with the NPF, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly prepared its Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy in 2019.
Local Authorities were then tasked with preparing city and/or County Development Plans to correspond with the respective regional strategy to ensure that a shared vision is applied locally and to ensure alignment at national, regional and local level.
The National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027 is intended to act as the investment plan, which will underpin and ensure the success of the National Planning Framework (NPF) wherein planning objectives are supported by investment priorities. This represents a very substantial commitment of resources through a total investment of approximately €116bn. Its stated aim is to act as a driver for *"Ireland's long-term economic, environmental and social progress across all parts of the country over the next decade."*
This, in essence, will facilitate proactive rather than the heretofore, reactive intervention, in an attempt "*to rebalance national planning and counter the gravitational pull of regions of socio-economic advantage*." - (Eolas magazine - online March 2018).



1.9 Regional Policy

1.9.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 - 2031

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), comprising of nine counties and 12 local authorities is divided into three sub-regions or Strategic Planning Areas (SPA's) namely; the Dublin SPA, the Eastern SPA and the Western SPA.

Louth sits in the Eastern SPA alongside Meath, Kildare and Wicklow. EMRA published its first Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy in 2019, the primary objective of which is to support implementation of Project Ireland 2040 alongside the economic and climate policies of the Government, by providing a long term strategic planning and economic framework. It identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides corresponding policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs). The Strategic Vision of the RSES is:

> *"To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and well-being of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all."*

The growth strategy for the region seeks to align population, economic growth and services, making the best use of infrastructure, including public transport to reduce emissions and to strengthen the region's strategic connectivity as part of an integrated land use and transportation strategy.

1.10 National And Regional Alignment

The RSES is underpinned by key cross-cutting principles reflecting the three pillars of sustainability; Social, Environmental and Economic. Reflecting the challenges and opportunities of the region these are expressed in the RSES as the following Three Key Principles:

- Healthy Placemaking;
- Climate Action and;
- Economic Opportunity.

Falling out of these three key principles are 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), which align with the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) of the NPF and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 in its policy objectives has sought co-ordination with and guidance from the aforementioned 'Three Key Principles' and associated 'RSOs', in order to create a coherent policy alignment and hierarchy between national, regional and local level.

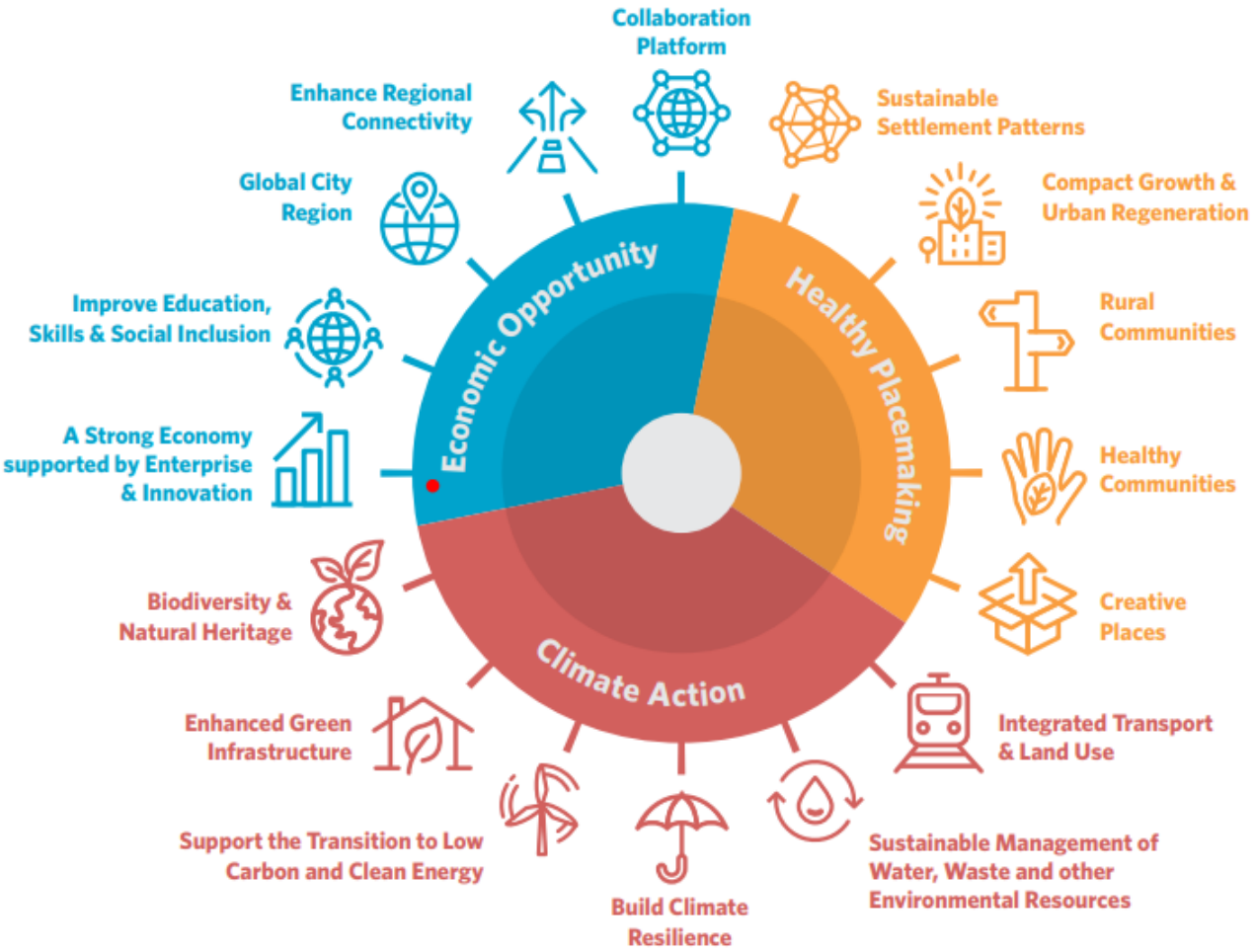
To illustrate the alignment of local and regional goals, each chapter of the Plan has in broad terms, been assigned to one of the three aforementioned key principles to which it is most closely aligned (there may be cross over with the two remaining key principles).

The subsequent alignment with RSOs detailed in Fig. 1.1 and Table 1.1 illustrates how the Plan is in accordance with the identified framework for preparing County Development Plans as referenced in the RSES.

Table 1.1: Alignment of LCDP with Three Key Principles and Regional Strategic Outcomes

Three Key Principles	Louth County Development Plan Chapters	Alignment with Regional Strategic Outcomes 1-16
Healthy Placemaking	Core Strategy & Settlement Strategy Housing Social & Community Heritage (Natural and Built)	1, 2, 3, 9 2, 3, 4, 6, 9 4, 5, 6, 9, 13 4, 5, 9, 10, 11
Climate Action	Movement Infrastructure & Public Utilities Environment, Natural Resources & the Coast Climate Action	4, 6, 9, 15, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14 3, 7, 8, 9, 1-16
Economic Opportunity	Introduction Economy & Employment Tourism	14 3, 12, 13, 15 3, 15

Figure 1.1 - Figure 2.4 of the RSES



1.11 LOCAL POLICY

1.11.1 Louth Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022

The Local Government Act 2014 required that all local authorities develop a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). The Louth LECP includes a series of high level goals, objectives and actions to promote and support the economic and community development of the County both by itself directly, and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The two required elements of a LECP are:

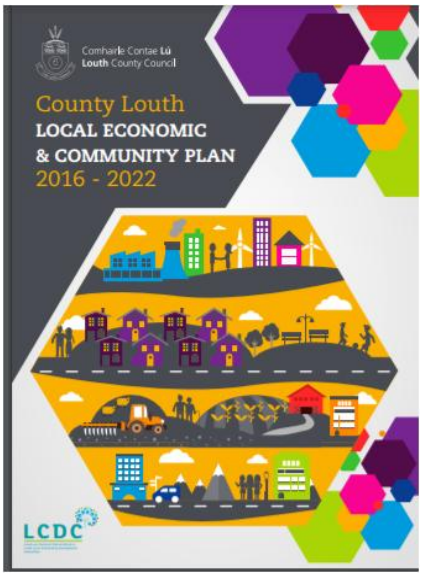
- A local economic element prepared and adopted by the Local Authority via the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC); and
- A community development element prepared and adopted by the Local Community Development Committee. (LCDC).

The Vision of the Louth LECP 2016-2022 is that "*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*".

To this end, the Louth LECP has identified eight economic and eight community goals to be achieved through a series of identified objectives and actions, which collectively will deliver and realise the stated vision. These are as indicated on Table 1.2.

The LECP is required to be consistent with the County Development Plan and the RSES, meaning it is closely aligned with planning policy at a local, regional and national level.

Both the Economic and Community high level goals and objectives identified in the LECP have been incorporated and intrinsically linked with the policy objectives of this Plan.



Whilst the linkage and compatability between the two documents is most obvious in Chapter 4 - 'Social and Community' and Chapter 5 - 'Economy and Employment', it is, in fact, peppered throughout and underlies the key principles and policy objectives of the entire Plan.

Table 1.2: Economic and Community Goals of the LECP

Economic Goals		Community Goals	
Foreign Direct Investment	Promote and develop Louth as a key investment location on the Eastern Economic Corridor	**Strong, Safe & Flourishing Communities**	Enable well being and quality of life to support safe, resilient, independent and engaged communities
Sustainable Development	Promote the growth of new and existing business in communities in Louth, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.	**Access to Education**	Ensure that everyone can access and participate in education, skills development and life long learning.
Education & Trainig	Advance economic and social development by providing a targeted continuum of lifelong learning and skillls development.	**Prosperous, Inclusive Communities & Places**	Create equality of opportunity for those experiencing poverty, isolation and social exclusion.
Future – Focused Innovation	Ensure that Louth will be a leader in business development, creating new models of flexible value and enterprise.	**Health & Wellbeing**	Provide environments and conditions that support healthy, self-directed, fulfilled and purposeful lives.
Business & Indigenous Industry	Deliver viable local economies underpinned by innovation and entrepreneurship	**Nurturing Children & Young People**	Nurture and develop our children and young people from early childhood to young adulthood.
Tourism & Heritage	Ensure that Louth's unique Tourism offering positions it as a market leader of national significance.	**An Age Friendly Society**	Embrace and foster the rich contribution older people make to our communities.
Agriculture, Food & Fisheries	Establish Louth as a premier producer in the Agri-Farming, Food and Fisheries sector.	**Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Enterprise**	Empower community innovation, entrepreneurship and enterprise to support urban and rural development.
Broadband Connectivity & Transport	Ensure availability of high speed broadband connectivity County-wide to develop and sustain business and connect our communities.	**A Valued Environment**	Value and sustain our built heritage and natural environment to enhance the lives of those who live, work and visit in our County.

1.11.2 Louth Corporate Plan 2019-2024

The Council's mission statement as outlined in the Louth County Council Corporate Development Plan 2019-2024 is to "*provide leadership and to deliver high-quality, citizen-focused, responsive and effective services*". The Council stands for democracy, integrity, openness and accountability, and input from the people who live, work and do business in Louth is important to ensure the development of a shared vision for the County.

The Plan highlights seven organisational strategic objectives, which guide and shape the direction of the functions of Louth County Council over the plans five year period, as follows:

- Housing;
- Drogheda and Dundalk - Regional Growth Centres;
- Climate Change;
- Key Infrastructure Projects;
- Economic Development and Job Creation;
- Key Plans and Strategies;
- Quality of Life.

These Corporate Plan objectives have contributed to the formulation of the vision and strategic objectives intrinsic to the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.

1.11.3 Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

In response to the impact of climate change both now and into the future on County Louth and its citizens, Louth County Council developed a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, which will allow the Council to plan for severe weather events (which are becoming more prevalent) and to make the organisation and its communities more sustainable and climate resilient.

It forms part of the National Adaptation Framework (NAF), which was published in response to the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. The Council is uniquely placed to effect real positive change with respect to the national transition objective to a low carbon and climate resilient future and the actions set out in the Climate Action Plan 2019.

The role of the Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy at local level is to:

- Ensure comprehension of risks and vulnerabilities of climate change;
- Advance the implementation of climate resilient actions in a planned and proactive manner; and
- Ensure climate adaptation considerations are main-streamed into all plans and policies and into all operations and functions of the local authority.

This Strategy is based around six thematic areas developed as High Level Goals which identify the desired outcomes anticipated through the effective implementation of the climate change adaptation strategy:

- **Theme 1:** Local Adaptation Governance and Business Operations;
- **Theme 2:** Infrastructure and Built Environment;
- **Theme 3:** Land Use and Development;
- **Theme 4:** Drainage and Flood Management;
- **Theme 5:** Natural Resources and Cultural Infrastructure;
- **Theme 6:** Community Health and Wellbeing.

The Plan will integrate these high level goals and outcomes as Development Plan objectives in order to deliver on the Government's objectives on climate action as set out in the *Climate Action Plan 2019*.

1.12 FORMAT OF THE PLAN

The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 comprises 5 inter-related volumes, which must be interpreted as a whole when reading the Plan. These are as follows:

Volume One:	The Written Statement which sets out the overall strategy alongside the policy objectives of the Plan to ensure the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.
Volume One -A:	Maps providing a graphic representation of the proposals of the Plan indicating land use and other objectives of the Council including for the County, the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk, and the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer.
Volume Two:	Settlement statements and maps providing a graphic representation of the proposals of the Plan indicating land use and other objectives of the Council for the Level 3 - Self-Sustaining Towns and Level 4 - Small Towns and Villages. Maps are also provided for each of the Level 5 - Rural Nodes.
Volume Three:	The Appendices which include the Housing and Retail Strategies, Green Infrastructure Strategy, Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's), Zones of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) etc.
Volume Four:	The Record of Protected Structures.
Volume Five:	The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report, the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Natura Impact Report and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Report.

The Written Statement of Volume One is comprised of 14 Chapters the contents of which are presented in summary below:

Chapter Summary

Chapter Heading	Chapter Summary
Introduction	This provides an introduction to the Louth County Development Plan setting out changes that have occurred and impacted the County since the last Development Plan with particular reference to Drogheda and Dundalk. It details the legislative background and requirements in addition to the steps taken in the preparation of the Plan. It provides a vision for the County, which is supported by a set of strategic objectives.
Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy	This establishes a quantitatively based strategy for the spatial development of the County consistent with the NPF and RSES objectives and includes a settlement hierarchy, gives effect to the hierarchy by setting population projections and housing allocation for residential land and provides an evidence based rationale for lands to be zoned. Details of the settlement structure in the County and the range of services available within each category of settlement are provided in this chapter. It also sets out how the policy framework established in the Core Strategy will be implemented in the towns and villages in the County.
Housing	The Housing chapter sets out the strategy for the provision of housing in the urban and rural parts of the County. It supports the creation of sustainable communities and quality, adaptable housing that is resilient to the potential impacts of climate change and will meet the changing needs of residents.
Social and Community	The Social and Community chapter provides a strategy to ensure the development of sustainable, inclusive communities through policy objectives to ensure the provision of community, social, recreational, educational and cultural facilities accessible to and meeting the needs of all individuals and community groups.
Economy and Employment	The strategy for economic development in the County is set out in this chapter. An overview of the economic profile of the County is provided with opportunities as to how the County can strengthen its employment base identified. The importance of the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk fulfilling their potential and developing into centres of scale in the economic development of the County is emphasised.

Chapter Heading	Chapter Summary
Tourism	The overall strategy for Tourism within the County is detailed in this chapter. The principle tourism initiatives, strategies and locations are identified and supporting policy is set out for each. The chapter emphasises the importance of the County's natural environment, rich and varied heritage and numerous cultural attractions as key drivers for the sector.
Movement	The strategy for the provision of transport infrastructure and investment is set out in the Movement chapter. The links between land use and transport planning are identified with the importance of an efficient and functional transport system in providing connectivity and supporting economic investment acknowledged. The strategy supports a shift towards more sustainable modes of travel including walking, cycling, and public transport.
Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure	A contextual overview and strategic context in relation to the natural heritage and green infrastructure of the County is provided in this chapter. Policy objectives for the protection, conservation and management of the natural environment are provided and include for sites designated at EU and national level, protected species and habitats outside of designated sites, green infrastructure, landscapes, scenic routes, views and prospects etc.
Built Heritage and Culture	A contextual overview and strategic context in relation to the built heritage and culture of the County, which seeks to ensure its protection and enhancement for future generations is provided in this chapter. Policy objectives for the protection, conservation and management of the built heritage and cultural aspects are provided and include archaeology, architecture and vernacular heritage, battlefield sites, historic gardens and designed landscapes.
Infrastructure and Public Utilities	The sustainable growth of County Louth is dependent on the provision of adequate water and waste water services and infrastructure. This chapter acknowledges the working relationship between Louth County Council (LCC) and Irish Water (IW) in ensuring adequate capacity to support future development and progressing and implementing IW projects throughout the County, which includes for water conservation. The importance of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Flood Risk Management is acknowledged through inclusion of appropriate policy objectives and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). High quality, appropriately located, ICT infrastructure is recognised as critical infrastructure to achieve balanced social and economic development. The chapter also supports the development of renewable energy sources in the interest of delivering on identified targets and on the National Climate Change Strategy and in providing security of energy supply throughout the County. The policy objectives contained herein support this approach.

Chapter Heading	Chapter Summary
Environment, Natural Resources and the Coast	This chapter sets out the strategy with regards to the Environment, Natural Resources and the Coast and details policy objectives relating to the conservation and enhancement of the County's environment. A balanced approach is promoted with appropriate policies for the growth and development of the County's natural resources while ensuring that adverse environmental impacts are minimised. The chapter also addresses the changing coast and coastal protection in the context of a changing marine planning process.
Climate Action	This chapter outlines the approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation, as required by the Planning and Development Act 2000, (as amended). The chapter examines how mitigation and adaptation strategies have been integrated throughout the County Development Plan. The chapter identifies policies, which contribute towards achieving the targets set down in the Climate Action Plan 2019.
Development Management Guidelines	This chapter provides guidance on a range of different development types for prospective applicants having regard to the national planning and local policies provisions within each of the chapters of the Plan. Reference and links are provided to relevant national policy documents and prospective applicants are encouraged to engage in pre-planning discussions.
Implementation and Monitoring	This chapter recognises that the policies and objectives of the Plan cover the broad range of functions of the Council and that the full realisation of these will be dependent on many factors including funding. It details that a 2 year review of the Plan will be completed in accordance with the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).*

Note: *Should any conflict arise between the written statement and accompanying maps, the written statement shall take precedence*.



Chapter 2

Core and Settlement Strategy

"The Core Strategy facilitates and promotes a more consolidated compact urban form and ensures that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development, delivering a high quality living and working environment meeting the needs of all residents."

2 CORE STRATEGY AND SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

2.1 STATUTORY CONTEXT

The *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* requires an evidence based Core Strategy be included in all development plans. Its primary purpose is to ensure local authorities identify and reserve an appropriate amount of land in the right locations to meet projected population and housing targets. This is achieved through the expression of a medium to long term quantitative strategy for the spatial development of the area of the planning authority, which is consistent with the national and regional objectives as outlined in the *National Planning Framework (NPF)* and in the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES*) for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The Core Strategy includes a Settlement Hierarchy for the County transposing prescribed regional population targets set at County level to settlements and rural areas identified within the Settlement Hierarchy.

On foot of projected population allocation it identifies the housing demand and land requirement for residential and mixed use development having regard to the capacity of existing zoned land and the phasing of development, taking account of services and emerging transport and mobility trends.

While not expressly required by the Act, the Core Strategy should undertake an appropriate level of analysis of other land uses such as employment uses, to ensure sufficient lands are zoned at suitable locations, taking account of higher level planning policies and the required physical and green infrastructure.

A Core Strategy Map is a specified requirement as per the Act, depicting how the Planning Authority anticipates its area will develop over the plan period in line with the availability of infrastructure, services and amenities.

2.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

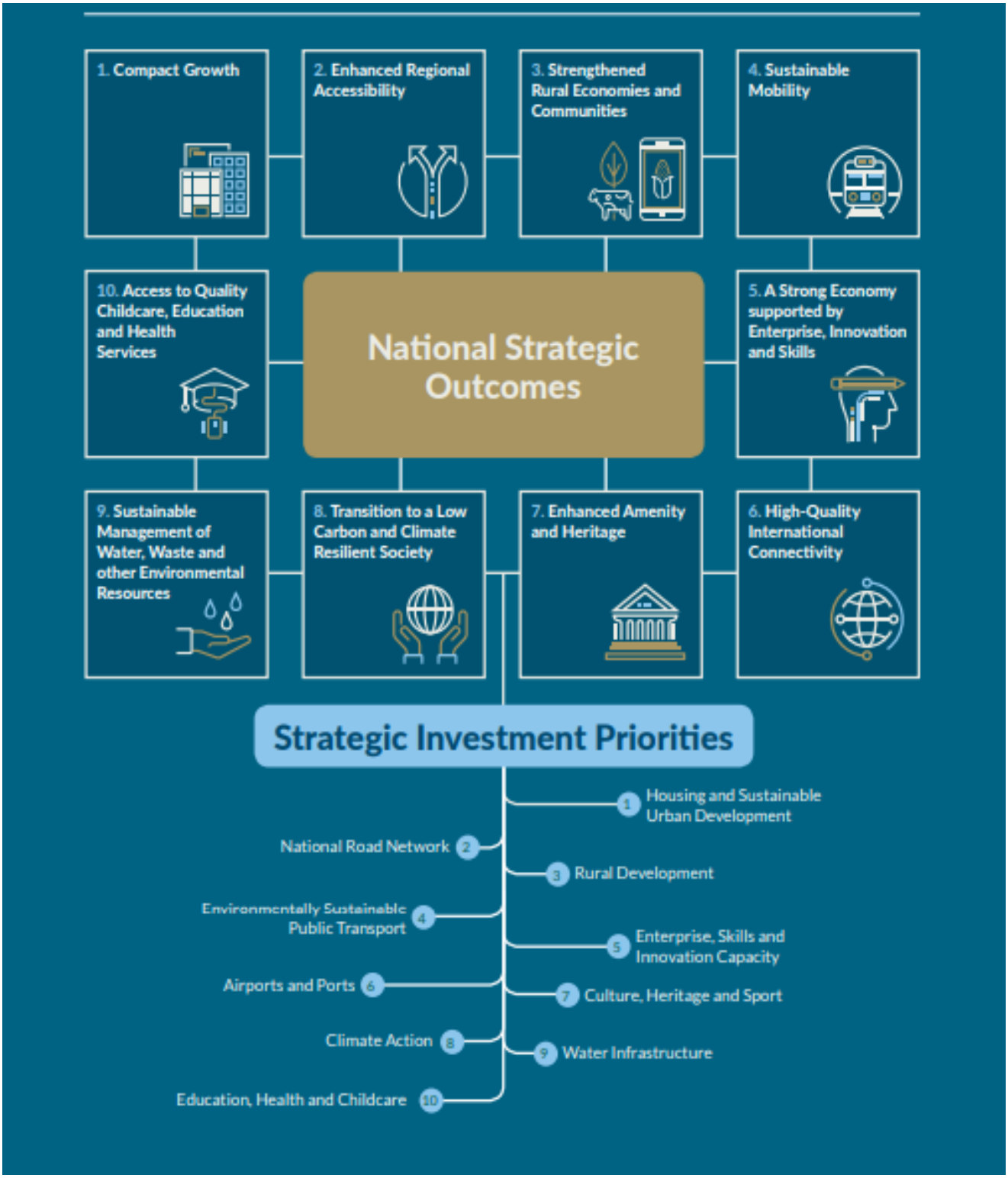
2.2.1 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)

Development Plans sit within a hierarchy of National and Regional spatial plans at the top of which sits the NPF. This replaces the former *National Spatial Strategy (NSS)* and is a high level, 20 year strategic plan for future growth and development of the country to 2040, the objectives of which are outlined hereunder:

- Establish a broad National plan in relation to the strategic planning and sustainable development of urban and rural areas;
- Secure balanced Regional development by maximising the potential of the regions; and
- Secure the co-ordination of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and City and County development plans.

The NPF identifies a set of goals expressed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's), which underpin the overarching vision for the country (see Figure 2.1). These NSO's are significantly aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals outlined in Chapter 12 (Figure 12.1) in areas such as climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities and innovation and infrastructure, as well as education and health.

Figure 2.1 – National Strategic Outcomes



Source: National Planning Framework

One of the underlying principles of the NPF Strategy is to rebalance growth in the country, which historically has disproportionately taken place in the Eastern and Midland Region. It enables all parts of the country whether urban or rural, to successfully accommodate growth and change whilst simultaneously recognising Dublin's ongoing key role as the principal economic driver of the country. It promotes 'Regional parity' rather than the 'business as usual' approach, seeking a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland Region with that of the Southern and Northern and Western Regions combined.

Of the national projected population growth, 25% is planned for Dublin, 25% for the four cities of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford and the remaining 50% growth for the key regional centres, towns, villages and rural areas as identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

The targeted population growth for the Eastern and Midland Region is for an additional 490,000-540,000 people living in the Region.

The Strategy focuses on building 'centres of scale' and addressing peripherality, wherein Dublin will continue to develop as an international city of scale.

In building 'centres of scale' outside Dublin, the four cities of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford have ambitious growth targets and, below these cities, the regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands, Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border networks are also identified. The NPF acknowledges significant cross-border interactions focused on key settlement networks, specifically Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry in the context of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor, recognising the growth potential of the network as important for regional development and in strengthening Ireland's overall urban structure.

An important element of the growth strategy, intrinsic to the NPF, is securing compact and sustainable growth as it offers the best prospects for unlocking Regional potential. The preferred approach for compact development is one which focuses on reusing previously developed 'brownfield' lands and development of infill sites and buildings. To this end the NPF requires at least 30% delivery of all new homes in settlements (outside of the 5 cities) to be within the existing built up footprint (NPO 3(c)). The targeted pattern of growth in the Eastern and Midlands Region up to 2040 is detailed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Targeted Pattern of Growth in the Eastern and Midland Region 2040

Eastern and Midland Region		
Growing Our Region	Building Stronger Regions: Accessible Centres of Scale	Compact, Smart, Sustainable Growth
+490,000 - 540,000 people	Dublin City & Suburbs: +235,000 - 290,000 people	30% of all new housing within existing urban footprints
+320,000 in employment	RSES sets a strategic development framework for the Region leading with the key role of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border network.	

Source: National Planning Framework

In relation to place making one of the primary challenges faced by the Eastern and Midland Region is the delivery of future development that both enhances and reinforces the urban and rural structure, with a move to self-sustaining activity and remote working rather than commuter driven activity. This allows the Region's various city, town, village and rural components to play to their strengths, while moving away from a sprawl-led development model, where rapid growth was driven by housing, rather than employment.

The NPF recognises that the Dublin-Belfast cross-border network is the key driver in the North-East regional area. To achieve leveraged employment and sustainable population growth, development must be supported by enhanced connectivity, quality of life and a focused approach to the compact, sequential and sustainable development of the larger urban areas such as Drogheda and Dundalk.

2.2.2 Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework

The *Implementation Roadmap* highlights the Government's focus on achieving alignment between National, Regional and Local planning policy and practice. However, translating long-term national projections and targets to the local plan making level requires a step change in both the short to medium transitional term and long term context.

Aligning Plans at all levels in conjunction with a shift to compact growth requires a period of transition, whereby both existing planning permissions and zoned lands must be considered.

The Roadmap provides for the operation of a 'transition period' until 2026. Herein, it provides a transitional set of population projections to inform Regional and Local plans to 2026 and 2031. The transitional population projections for Louth are listed in Table 2.2.

For those Counties where population growth is projected to be at or above the national average baseline, which includes County Louth, the Roadmap provides scope for headroom, not exceeding 25% up to 2026. This additional headroom is only applicable in the 2026 projection and not beyond to 2031. The population projections with the additional 25% headroom are illustrated in Table 2.3.

Having regard to the designation of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres and regional drivers, supported by the Self Sustaining Growth Centres of Ardee and Dunleer and the remaining strong urban settlement structure which typifies County Louth, it is appropriate that the additional 25% headroom available to the County is utilised in order to allow flexibility in approach and to help realise the objectives of the NPF and RSES. The years 2026/2027 will see the first full assessment of Development Plans prepared in accordance with the NPF and the RSES and establish the success in implementation of both the National and Regional policy objectives.

Table 2.2: Transitional Population Projections for Louth

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly			
Region and Counties	2016	2026	2031
Mid-East			

Louth	129,000	139,000-144,500	144,000-151,500

Source: Appendix 2 of the Implementation Roadmap

Table 2.3: Transitional Population Projections for Louth with additional 25% Headroom

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly				
Region and Counties	2016	2026	2026 (incl.25% Headroom)[1]	2031
Mid-East				
Louth	129,000	139,000-144,500	141,500-148,375	144,000-151,500

[1] This Plan runs until 2027, which is factored into the population figures later in this Chapter

2.3 REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

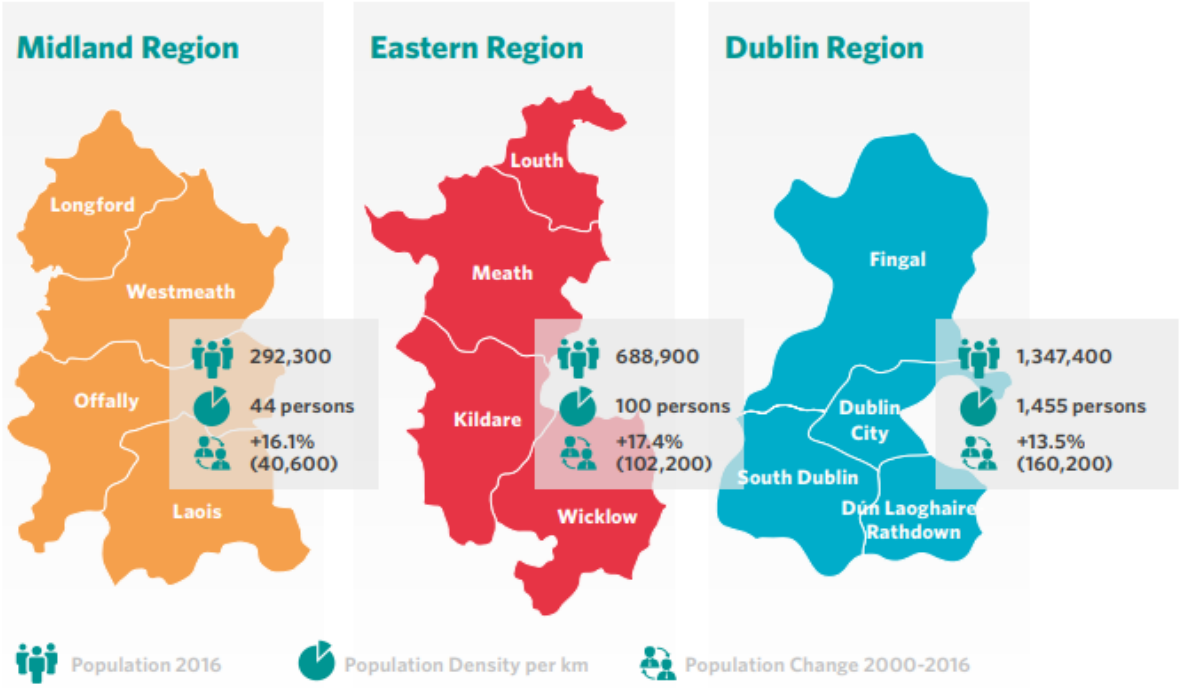
2.3.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

Following on from the enactment of the *Local Government Reform Act 2014,* three new Regional Assemblies came into effect in January 2015, replacing the eight previous Regional Authorities. Louth is now part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) which adopted its first Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) in June 2019.

The objective of the RSES is to support implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – which links planning and investment through the NPF and the ten year National Development Plan (NDP) and the economic and climate policies of the government, by providing a long term strategic planning and economic framework for the Region. Reflecting the NPF, the RSES emphasises sustainable development patterns and seeks to focus growth in regional growth centres such as Drogheda and Dundalk and within the footprint of existing urban areas. At a Regional level, the RSES seeks to determine how best to achieve the goals of the NPF as identified in the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).

To this end, the Strategy identifies 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) which are aligned with national policy and which set a framework for delivery of county development plans. Chapter One identifies how this Plan closely aligns with the identified 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes and subsequently with both national and regional policy. Of the three Regions, the Eastern and Midland Region has the largest population, which was in excess of 2.3 million people in 2016. It is a young and diverse growing region where Dublin, its main settlement, is supported by a network of Regional and County towns and an extensive rural hinterland. It is the primary economic engine of the state, being home to the capital city, almost half of the country's population and in excess of one million jobs. It is comprised of three Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) which provide for a sub-regional planning remit, namely; the Dublin Region, the Eastern Region (which Louth is part of) and the Midland Region (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Strategic Planning Areas (SPA) Eastern and Midland Region



In addition to the spatial development of the Region, the RSES seeks to plan for its economic development, with opportunities for enterprise development based on local strengths, assets and resources, all underpinned by the quality of living offering. Its natural, cultural and green infrastructure assets support the tourism and leisure industry and are essential to creating places that are attractive in which to live, work, visit and invest. The spatial and economic framework set out in the RSES underpins the strategic policy objectives set out in this Plan.

A key priority for the Region is to address long distance commuting and subsequent poor quality of life issues. The RSES utilised 'Functional Urban Areas' (FUAs) which consider where people live and work to better plan for the future provision and improved alignment of transport, housing and infrastructure in the Region.

The FUAs augment the Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) by recognising spatial, social and economic similarities and differences within each SPA. The three identified FUAs are:

- Dublin City & Metropolitan Area:
  - Dublin city and suburbs and the metropolitan area which includes major settlements with strong connections to the city (Louth not included).
- Core Region:
  - Peri-urban 'hinterlands' within the commuter catchment around Dublin, including south Louth and the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda.
- Gateway Region:
  - Remaining area beyond the Metropolitan and Core Areas and includes North Louth and the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk. The three FUAs are identified in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Map of the Settlement Hierarchy in the Eastern and Midland Region



Source: RSES

2.3.2 RSES and Louth's Settlement Hierarchy

Consistency and alignment between National, Regional and Local plans is a requirement of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).* Louth's framework for growth is therefore guided and directed by both the NPF and the RSES.

The NPF and RSES set policy parameters for the Region, to manage the growth of Dublin as a city of international scale, supported by the growth of the designated Regional Growth Centres and further supported by the development and regeneration of selected Key Towns.

The RSES growth strategy employs a robust evidence based approach, to derive a settlement hierarchy which identifies locations for population and employment growth with matched infrastructure and service investment, to satisfy and accommodate future growth needs. This influences the future growth of Louth in the following manner:

Regional Growth Centres (RGC's) support the direction of significant population and economic growth to ensure these centres reach sufficient scale, to serve as economic drivers for the Region and implement effective regional development. Drogheda and Dundalk are designated as Regional Growth Centres.

Key Towns Louth has no key towns. The remaining settlement typologies identified in the RSES are defined by the development plan using an evidence based approach.

Self-Sustaining Growth Towns are regionally important local drivers serving their resident population and surrounding catchments and with a reasonable level of jobs and services. Ardee and Dunleer are designated as such.

Self-Sustaining Towns require investment in services, employment and infrastructure whilst balancing housing delivery. These include; Carlingford, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Clogherhead, Termonfeckin and Tullyallen.

Small Towns and Villages support local growth across the County and range in size and function. Future growth will focus on localised sustainable growth meeting the needs of the local population.

Rural Nodes and the Wider Rural Area These are characterised by residential development with limited services and facilities with an emphasis on strengthening their fabric and creating sustainable rural communities, suitable to meet rural generated housing needs.

The Settlement Hierarchy in this Plan has been updated to reflect the terminology and settlement categories set out in the RSES. The Settlement Hierarchy for Louth is as outlined in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Settlement Hierarchy for County Louth

Settlement Level	Settlement Category	Description	Settlement
1	**Regional Growth Centres**	Regional Growth Centres are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.	Drogheda Dundalk
2	**Self-Sustaining Growth Towns**	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.	Ardee Dunleer
3	**Self-Sustaining Towns**	Self-sustaining towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.	Carlingford, Clogherhead, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Termonfeckin, Tullyallen
4	**Small Towns and Villages**	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions.	Annagassan, Baltray, Collon, Dromiskin, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Omeath, Tallanstown,
5	**Rural Nodes**	Rural Nodes.	Ballagan, Ballapousta, Bellurgan, Darver, Dromin, Faughart, Glenmore, Grange, Grangebellew, Greenore, Gyles Quay, Kilcurry, Kilkerley, Lordship, Mountbagnal, Muchgrange, Philipstown (Collon), Ravensdale, Reaghstown, Sandpit, Sheelagh, Stabannon, Tinure, Willville

2.4 CORE STRATEGY APPROACH

This Plan sets out an evidence based Core Strategy for the future development of County Louth, having regard to the NPF population projections, the settlement hierarchy of the RSES and consideration for the phasing of development lands to ensure Towns grow at a sustainable and appropriate level to their position in the hierarchy. The Core Strategy shall also be developed having regard to the infill/brownfield targets provided for in the NPF.

2.4.1 Strategic Objectives of the Core Strategy

The Strategic Objectives of the Louth Core Strategy are to:

- Ensure development and growth in Louth occurs in line with both National and Regional objectives as provided for in the NPF and the RSES and other national guidelines and policies;
- Provide a framework to enable the delivery of the vision and objectives of the Plan;
- Support the population growth of County Louth in accordance with the population projections as specified in the NPF Implementation Roadmap of 148,375 (increased to 149,966 to reflect the life of the Plan) and in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy and Core Strategy Tables;
- Ensure alignment of infrastructural investment with those settlements identified for growth in the Settlement Hierarchy to ensure capacity of services is matched by demand for services and delivered in a timely, cost effective and sustainable manner;
- Ensure the growth of towns is at a sustainable and appropriate level, with a rationale for lands zoned for residential, employment and mixed use development; and
- Provide clarity for developers and others investing in the County.

2.4.2 Content of the Core Strategy

The Core Strategy delivers the following:

- Settlement hierarchy/Population and household distribution;
- Population targets; and
- Future Household targets and land zoning requirements.

2.4.3 Guiding Principles for Core Strategy

The RSES recognises that a disconnect may exist between the quantum of land zoned in current plans and the National and Regional development parameters set out in the NPF. The options available to address issues of surplus residential lands are:

- Prioritisation measures that provide for the sequential release of lands which may be suitable for housing delivery but not likely to be forthcoming during the period of the Plan; and
- De-zoning land.

Where there are sites with long term development potential not being brought forward for development, the RSES acknowledges that local authorities should consider other suitable, alternative sites capable of being delivered in the short term. With regard to any surplus of residential lands, the prioritisation of lands will be considered. This may include the phasing of lands and/or the introduction of a strategic reserve, or the de-zoning of land.

Any lands placed in a strategic reserve will not be available for development during the lifetime of the Plan. This will be dependent on the settlement category in which the lands are located and other localised factors including but not limited to; recent patterns of development, extant permissions and infrastructure constraints.

2.4.4 Louth's Growth Strategy

Louth's growth strategy has been informed by the principle elements of the RSES growth strategy in conjunction with the environmental sensitivities of the County. It is based on strengthening its strong urban settlements, whilst simultaneously protecting and supporting rural areas, which provide valuable natural resources, biodiversity, environmental quality and landscape features. It will seek to respond to the needs of the entire County.

Population and economic growth will be focused primarily in the RGCs of Drogheda and Dundalk with recognition of the potential for the smaller towns and villages to develop at a sustainable rate.

The focus of the growth strategy for County Louth is as outlined hereunder:

- Prioritise targeted population and economic growth to the designated RGCs of Drogheda and Dundalk. Promote their continued sustainable and compact growth as regional drivers to city scale, with a target population of 50,000 by 2031 supported by improvements to sustainable transport links and the requisite infrastructure to enable the towns grow to their full potential by becoming more attractive to live and invest in;
- Capitalise on the strategic location of both Drogheda and Dundalk along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, to drive linkages and synergies between the north and south of Ireland;
- Contribution of urban regeneration lands and development of infill sites to the revitalisation of settlements and sustainable compact urban growth (in Louth a minimum 30% of new homes to be in the built up footprint of the urban area) facilitated by investment in services, transport, infrastructure etc.;
- Support the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer, which are regionally important local drivers providing a moderate level of jobs and services for the resident population and surrounding catchments. Growth will be balanced and at sustainable levels including brownfield and infill development with a focus on the commensurate delivery of employment and services and improving the quality of life for all in these towns;
- Support Self Sustaining Towns requiring contained growth, focusing on investment in services, employment and infrastructure whilst balancing housing delivery;
- Having regard to the viability and vibrancy of small towns and villages, promotion of regeneration and support for local employment whilst offering a viable alternative to single housing in the open countryside;

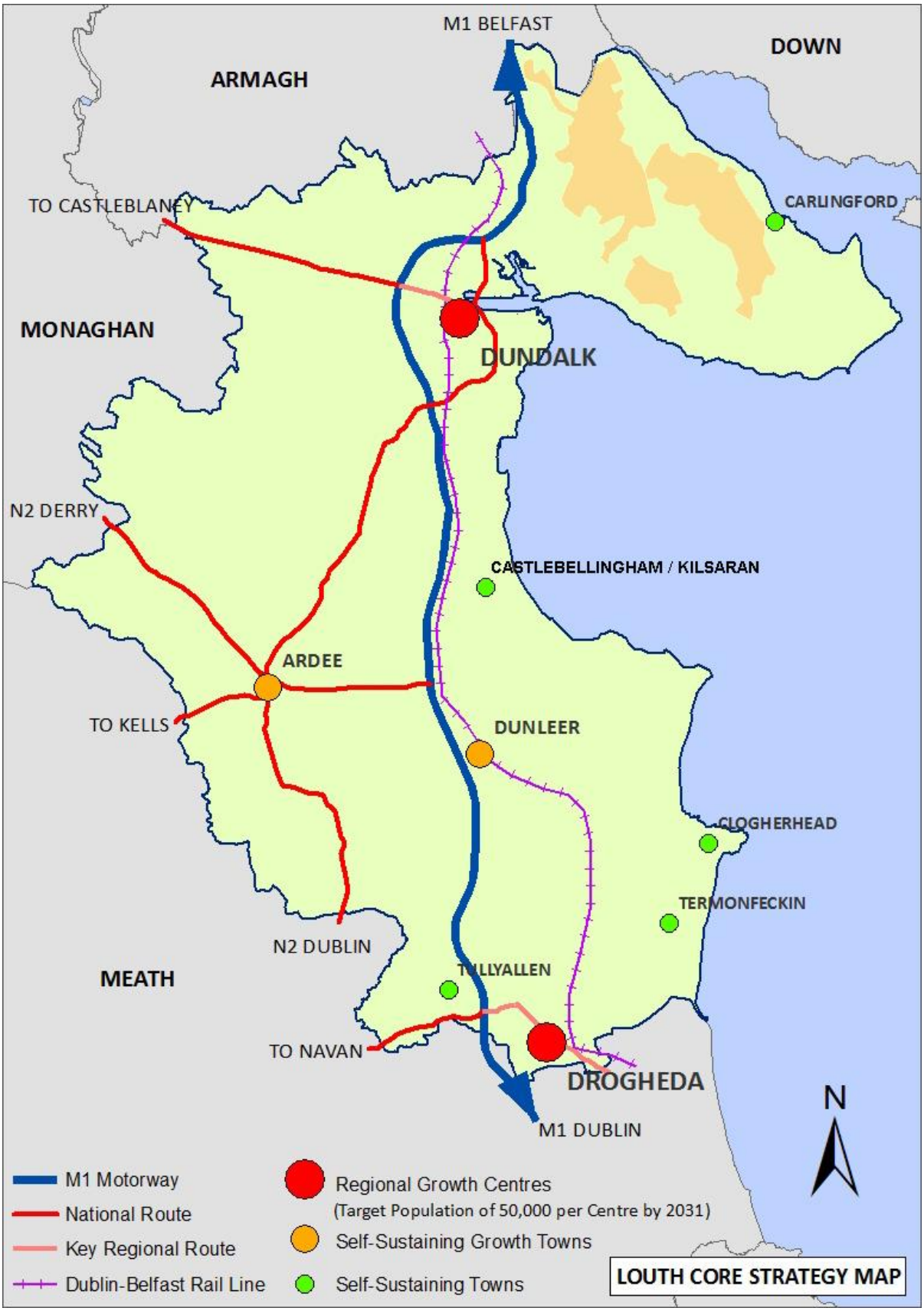
and

- Management of urban generated growth in Rural Areas under urban influence, by ensuring single houses in the open countryside is based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area in addition to compliance with statutory guidelines, plans and having regard to ensuring the viability of the aforementioned small towns and villages. The Settlement Strategy for future growth in the County is further detailed in Section 2.12 of this Chapter.

2.4.5 Core Strategy Map

The Core Strategy Map (Map 2.1) is a diagrammatic representation of the spatial planning strategy for County Louth.

Map 2.1 – Core Strategy Map



2.5 POPULATION TRENDS

Census 2016 recorded a population of 4,761,865 in Ireland, representing an increase of 3.8% on Census 2011. Urban settlements in the country, of which there are 200, accounted for 63% of the population. Outside of the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Galway and Limerick, 29% of Ireland's population lives in towns and villages of at least 1,500 or more people.

Louth's population in 2016 was 128,884 which was an increase on the 2011 census, albeit, at a slower rate from the levels experienced in previous inter-censal periods. This reduced rate of increase can be attributed to the recession, in the period 2008-2014, which impacted on population trends and the movement of people, with changing migration patterns experienced. This included for high levels of emigration and a decrease in inward migration at a national, regional and county level, which ultimately resulted in a decrease in the rate of population growth.

With this in mind, a 10 year outlook on the level of growth in the County between 2006-2016 provides a more balanced overview of population growth which occurred prior to and during the recession.

During this period the average population increase per annum was 1,762 persons. Table 2.5 provides an overview of population growth in the County between 2002-2016 and indicates the different rates of population growth experienced during this period.

As the economy began to recover from 2014 and employment opportunities in the country improved, migration patterns began to change. 2016 was the first year since 2009 where there was a return to net inward migration at a national level.

This trend continued in 2018 and 2019 where there was a net inward migration of 34,000 and 33,700[2] respectively which increased the rate of population growth at national level.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown, which occurred in spring 2020, has curtailed the movement of people throughout the world. It is anticipated that will impact on population growth and migration patterns in the immediate term with the medium-long term impacts unclear at the time of writing.

2.5.1 Population Distribution

The population of the County is distributed across a network of urban and rural settlements and the open countryside. The population concentration in Drogheda and Dundalk in combination with its small landmass makes Louth the County with the highest percentage of an urban population outside of Dublin, with 66.1% of the population living in urban areas in 2016. Table 2.6 sets out the County population distribution based on the definition of aggregate urban and rural areas by the CSO.

[2] CSO Population and Migration Estimates August 2019

Table 2.5: Population Growth in Louth 2002-2016

Year	Population	Population increase	Inter-censal period	% increase in the inter-censal period	Average annual increase
2002	101,281	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006	111,267	9,986	2002-2006	9.9%	2,497
2011	122,897	11,630	2006-2011	10.5%	2,326
2016	128,884	5,987	2011-2016	4.9%	1,197
2006-2016	N/A	17,617	2006-2016	15.8%	1,762

Table 2.6: Population Distribution by Settlement Category CSO 2016, County Louth

CSO Categorisation	Settlement Category	Settlement	% of total population	Overall County %
Aggregate 'Town' Areas	Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda and Dundalk	56.7%	**66.1%**
	Self-Sustaining Growth Town	Ardee and Dunleer	5.3%	
	Self-Sustaining Town	Clogherhead, Termonfeckin, Tullyallen	4.1%	
Aggregate 'Rural' Areas	Self-Sustaining Town	Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Carlingford	2%	**33.9%**
	Small Town	Annagassan, Baltray, Collon, Dromiskin, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Omeath, Tallanstown	3.9%	
	Villages and Open Countryside	See Table 2.4 for the list of Villages in the County	28%	

2.5.2 Location of Population Growth

Between 2011-2016, the population of Louth increased by 5,987 persons with the highest recorded population increase of 46.6% (2,792) occurring in the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk.

In contrast the population of Ardee and Dunleer, now identified as Self Sustaining Growth Settlements, was almost stagnant, with a combined population increase of just 37 people (0.6%).

The level of growth in the Self Sustaining Towns and Small Towns was also significantly higher than the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer, with a combined population increase of 1,363 persons, equating to 22.8% of total population increase.

Furthermore, the villages and open countryside experienced high levels of growth, with 30% of total population growth in the County taking place in these locations.

Consequently, almost 53% of population growth in the County took place in lower tier settlements, indicating the pressure for development within these areas.

Figure 2.4 illustrates the distribution of population growth by settlement category in the County between 2011 and 2016. Settlements that experienced a population increase of 100 persons or more between 2011-2016 are detailed in Table 2.7.

This highlights the fact that growth is occurring in the higher tier and lower tier settlements. In percentage terms relative to the size of the settlements, the Self Sustaining Towns such as Carlingford, Tullyallen, Clogherhead, and Termonfeckin, are experiencing the highest levels of growth.

Fig. 2.4: Distribution of Population Increase in the County 2011-2016

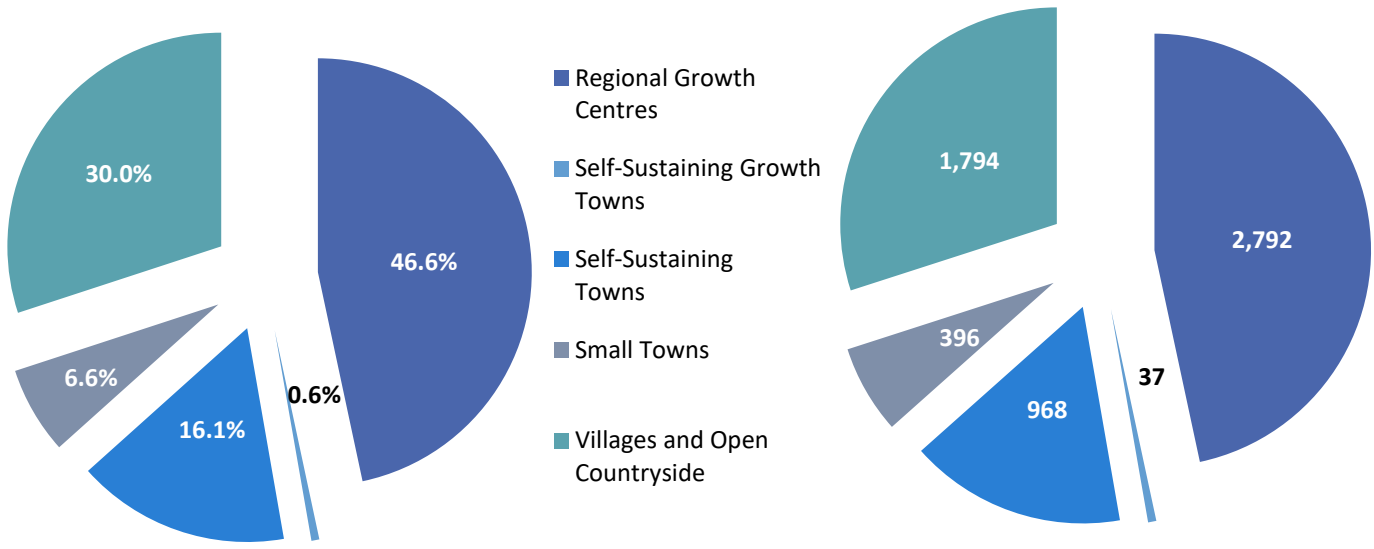


Table 2.7: Settlements with a Population Increase of 100+ persons 2011-2016

Settlement	Population 2011	Population 2016	Actual change	% change
Drogheda	32,595	34,199[3]	1,604	4.9%
Dundalk	37,816	39,004	1,188	3.1%
Carlingford	1,045	1,445	400	38.3%
Omeath	503	603	100	19.9%
Tullyallen	1,358	1,547	189	13.9%
Termonfeckin	1,443	1,579	136	9.4%
Clogherhead	1,993	2,145	152	7.6%

[3] This figure is for Drogheda in County Louth only (excludes South Drogheda in County Meath). The population for the entire settlement of Drogheda in 2016 was 40,956 persons (Census 2016).

2.5.3 NPF Population Projections

The NPF's Implementation Roadmap provides that Louth's projected population, in conjunction with the permitted 25% headroom, will be in the range of 141,500-148,404 persons by 2026. Using the higher projected growth rate and factoring into the equation that this Plan runs from 2021 to 2027, the population projection for the County in 2027 is 149,966 persons, representing an increase in population of 21,082 on the 2016 Census figure (see Table 2.8). An annualised average of the projected population increase during the period 2016-2026 was used to calculate the projected population increase between 2026-2027. This figure of 1,562 persons was added on to the 2026 projection of 148,404 to give a projected population of 149,966 in 2027. These figures are set out in greater detail in Table 2.9.

Justification for adopting the higher projected growth rate for the County in conjunction with the additional 25% headroom is considered measured and appropriate. Table 2.10 illustrates how the projected annual average population increase for 2016-2027 only marginally exceeds the recorded annual average population increase experienced during the 2006-2016 period.

This increased growth is considered reasonable given there are two Regional Growth Centres in the County. It will allow the strategically located settlements of Drogheda and Dundalk to continue to grow into centres of scale and create a critical mass of population that will enable them to fulfil their function as regional drivers of economic and population growth with a targeted population of 50,000 by 2031.

Table 2.8: Population Projections for Louth 2016-2027

Population 2016	*NPF Projected Population 2026*	*25% Headroom 2026 Projected Population Increase*	*Projected Population 2026 including 25% Headroom*	*Projected Annual Average Population Increase 2016 - 2026 excluding 25% Headroom*	*Projected Population 2027*
128,884	139,000 – 144,500	2,529 – 3,904	141,529 – 148,404	1,562	149,966

Table 2.9: NPF Projected Population Growth, 2027, County Louth

County	**2016**	**2026**	**2026 incl. 25% Headroom**	**Projected to 2027**	**Population Increase 2016-2027**	**2031**
Louth	129,000	139,000 - 144,500	141,500 - 148,404	149,966	21,082	144,000 - 151,500

Table 2.10: Existing and Projected Growth 2006-2027, County Louth

County	**Population Increase 2006 -2016**	**Average Annual Increase 2006 -2016**	**Projected Population Increase 2016 -2027**	**Projected Annual Average Population Increase 2016 -2027**
Louth	17,617	1,762	21,082	1,916

2.5.4 Population Distribution

The bulk of the projected population and household growth in County Louth is directed to the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk (69%) in accordance with the principle objectives of the NPF, RSES and as provided for in the Settlement Hierarchy. It is consistent with reaching a population of 50,000 in each of the towns by 2031 as set out in the RSES and supports consolidated development in these large centres to facilitate economic growth and broaden the employment base.

The Self Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer are important local drivers, and with continued commensurate growth, will become more self-sustaining into the future.

Strengthening the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as RGCs and the Self Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer is critical to address the more recent pattern of development evident during the 2011-2016 inter-censal period where the majority of the combined population growth occurred in the lower tier towns, villages and open countryside (Figure 2.4). Such a pattern of growth is counter-productive to the stated objectives of the NPF and the RSES and to the development of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres, militating against the two towns reaching their full potential as cities of scale and economic drivers in the Region.

With 69.1% of the projected population targeted to Drogheda and Dundalk and 12.3% to Ardee and Dunleer, the residual 18.6% of the projected population will be allocated to the remaining settlements including Self Sustaining Towns, Towns and Villages and the Rural Area.

In accordance with the NPF and the RSES, future growth will be directed to settlements with capacity and potential for sustainable development. With the need for greater co-ordination between land use zoning and infrastructure provision, the NPF has adopted a 'Tiered Approach to Zoning' identifying lands available for development and those dependent on the provision of additional services and infrastructure (See Volume 3, Appendix 2).

Its success will be dependent on close collaboration between the local authority and other agencies including inter alia; Irish Water, TII, and the NTA.

Louth's projected population growth and percentage growth by Settlement Category is provided for in Table 2.11. Herein, the favoured population growth of the two Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk is highlighted.

Table 2.11: Population Projections & Distribution by Settlement Category, County Louth

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H	Column I
Settlement Category	Settlement	Census Population 2016	Projected Population 2027	Projected increase in Population	Population Increase 2002-2016	Annual Average Population increase p/a 2002-2016	Projected average Population increase per annum 2016-2027	Projected % of Total Growth Rate 2021-2027
County	Louth	128,884	149,966	21,082	27,063	1,933	1,916	100%
Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda	34,199	41,113	6,914	5,866	419	629	32.8%
	Dundalk	39,004	46,664	7,660	6,499	464	696	36.3%
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Ardee	4,928	6,583	1,655	980	70	150	7.9%
	Dunleer	1,822	2,757	935	808	58	85	4.4%
Self-Sustaining Towns	Carlingford	1,445	1,645	200	841	60	18	0.9%
	C'bellingham /Kilsaran	1,126	1,236	110	405	29	10	0.5%
	Clogherhead	2,145	2,445	300	1,239	89	27	1.4%
	Termonfeckin	1,579	1,829	250	1,076	77	23	1.2%
	Tullyallen	1,547	1,767	220	930	66	20	1.1%
Small Towns	Level 4 Settlements	5,103	5,888	785	1,886	135	71	3.7%
Villages	Level 5 Settlements	35,986	38,039	300	6,533	467	186	9.7%
Rural Area	Rural Area			1,753				

2.6 HOUSING

2.6.1 Introduction

The economic collapse of 2008 caused a countrywide decimation of the property market evidenced in the almost complete stagnation of the previous unprecedented growth experienced in house construction. In Louth, during this period, the demand for residential development abruptly ceased with a resultant dramatic reduction in housing stock delivery, in contrast to previous years as illustrated in Table 2.12.

Since approximately 2014, with the beginnings of an economic recovery, house building slowly began to increase in the County but at a much reduced rate of growth. This has subsequently placed pressure on the existing housing stock and it is anticipated this will increase as economic conditions improve.

In response to this nationwide phenomenon, the Government has introduced a range of initiatives, which are outlined below:

- **Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness**: Herein, a commitment was made to increase housing supply to 25,000 units per annum by 2020.
- **Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF)**: In 2017, the Government committed €200 million funding to provide critical infrastructure to facilitate the speedy delivery of housing in key development sites experiencing a high demand for housing.
- **National Development Plan (NDP)**: Committed capital investment of €4.2billion to the delivery of 40,000 new social housing units.
- **Rent Pressure Zones (RPZ)**: Where Rent Pressure Zones are identified annual rent increases are limited to 4%. All of County Louth with the exception of Clogher electoral area has been identified as a Rent Pressure Zone.
- **Land Development Agency**: With an initial capital budget of €1.25 billion, the Agency has an objective to deliver 150,000 homes over a 20 year period. Of this, it is a requirement that 40% must be social/affordable with 10% to be social and 30% to be affordable.
- **Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF)**: This ten year fund with a budget of €2 billion supports compact sustainable development through regeneration of Ireland's towns and cities in line with the objectives of Project Ireland 2040.

2.6.2 Recent Residential Construction

A continuation of the economic recovery and improved consumer confidence is evident in the increase in housing construction in the County. The CSO Report 'New Dwelling Completions' 2011-2020 illustrates a steady, continual increase in residential construction in the County since 2014 (Figure 2.5). This increased activity is set to continue having regard to the level of pre-planning enquiries, permitted SHDs, active construction sites and extant permissions in the County.

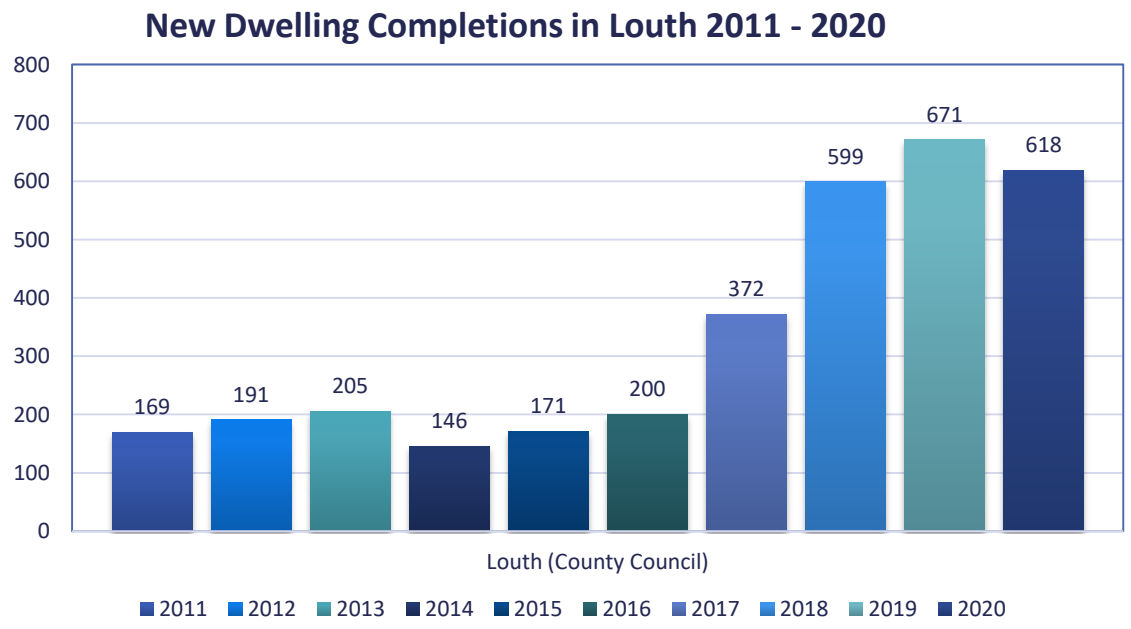
Table 2.12: Housing Stock and Vacancy Rate, County Louth 1991-2016

Housing Stock and Vacancy Rate – County Louth						
Census Year	1991	1996	2002	2006	2011	2016
Total Housing Stock Numbers	28,391	34,635	37,441	45,488	51,186	51,399
Vacant (numbers)	1,983	2,249	3,053	6,107	6,232	4,713[4]
Vacancy Rate (%)	7%	6.5%	8.2%	13.4%	12.2%	9.2%
% Increase year on Year		21.99%	8.10%	21.49%	12.53%	0.42%

Source: CSO

[4] This includes 761 vacant holiday homes

Fig. 2.5 – New Dwelling Completions in Louth



2.6.3 Projecting Housing Demand to 2027

In December 2020 the Department (DHLGH) published Section 28 Guidelines to assist Local Authorities in projecting housing demand as part of the preparation of a Development Plan.

These Guidelines 'Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning' include a projected housing demand for each Local Authority between 2017-2031.

This projection is derived from research carried out by the ESRI[1], which involved a range of variables being inputted into an econometric and demographic projection model.

As part of the ESRI research four development scenarios were considered as follows:

- **Baseline** – projecting a 'business as usual' scenario which is based on current trends and medium-term projections for the Irish economy;
- **NPF 50:50 City** – consistent with the NPF strategy;
- **High Migration** – incorporating assumptions around high international migration flows into Ireland based on higher economic growth than the baseline;
- **Low Migration** – incorporating assumptions around lower international migration flows into Ireland based on lower economic growth than the baseline.

Under each of these scenarios, housing demand levels for each year from 2017-2031 was provided and are available for use by planning authorities in the preparation of a Housing Strategy/Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA). The Guidelines recommend that the NPF 50:50 City Scenario is followed in order to plan for the provision of housing that will meet the projected demand in accordance with the NPF Strategy.

Table 2.13 below provides details of the housing demand in Louth up to the end of 2027 based on the ESRI NPF demand scenario.

The projected housing demand during the plan period (Q3 2021-Q3 2027) is 6,691 residential units.

When accounting for the completion of 167 units in the County in Q4 of 2021 as detailed in the CSO Housing Completions data the demand for the remainder of the plan period i.e. Q12022-Q32027 is 6,524 units. [2]

[1] ESRI Research Series No.111 'Regional Demographics and Structural Housing Demand at a County Level, December 2020

[2] The County Development Plan came into effect on the 11th November 2021. When preparing Variation 1 of the CDP consideration was given to the number of household completions in Louth in Q4 of 2021, which was 167 units. This figure was subtracted from 6,691 to give a housing target of 6,524 units for the remainder of the plan period i.e. Q12022-Q32027.

This projection is considered to be consistent with national and regional policy and has taken into account the projected population increase in the County between 2016-2027, which is based on the high growth scenario in the NPF Implementation Roadmap, inclusive of the 25% headroom, in addition to the designation of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres in the NPF and RSES, which acknowledges the potential of these settlements to act as a counter balance to Dublin and become drivers of regional growth and development along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

The distribution of the housing allocation is aligned with the population projection for each settlement and has also taken account of the position of the settlement in the settlement hierarchy for the County.

Full details are set out in the Core Strategy Table (Table 2.15).

Table 2.13: Housing Demand in Louth 2017 - Q3 2027

	Louth	Total Households	Number of Relevant Years	Annual Average Households
A	ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2017 to end Q3 2027	9,214	10.75	857
B	Actual new housing supply 2017 to end Q3 2021	2,756	4.75	580
C	Homeless households (latest data), and unmet demand as at most recent Census	233	-	-
D	**Plan Housing Demand** = Total (A-B+C), (Projected ESRI NPF demand - new completions) = Unmet demand	**6,691**[2]	**6**	**1,115**

2.6.4 Compact Growth

An overriding objective of both the NPF and the RSES is the need to achieve ambitious targets for compact growth in urban areas. Louth is required to deliver at least 30% of all new homes within existing built up footprints (NPO 3c). Achieving this target can be realised through urban regeneration and infill/brownfield site development, which will contribute to sequential, sustainable and compact growth, revitalisation of existing settlements of all scales and transition to a low carbon, climate resilient society.

In satisfying this target for compact growth, an analysis of appropriate brownfield and infill sites with potential capacity to deliver new homes was completed for Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Dunleer and the remaining Level 3 settlements.

This compact growth will be delivered in central locations of these settlements and along key transport corridors on lands zoned for town centre, residential, or mixed uses. Details of the potential capacity of infill and brownfield lands are set out in Table 2.17. Included within the figures of infill and brownfield development are the potential residential capacity of lands zoned for town centre and mixed use development. These are set out in Table 2.14.

Table 2.14: Potential Residential Capacity of Lands Zoned for Town Centre and Mixed Use Development in the Higher Tier Settlements

Settlement Category	Settlement	Potential number of units that can be delivered on lands zoned for Town Centre and Mixed Use development
Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda	500
	Dundalk	570
Self-Sustaining Growth Town	Ardee	30
	Dunleer	40

Table 2.15: Core Strategy Table

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H	Column I	Column J
Settlement Category	**Settlement**	**Population 2016**	**Projected Population Increase to 2027**	**Projected Population 2027**	**Housing Allocation 2021-2027**	**Lands with potential to deliver Infill or Brownfield Development (ha)**	**Potential units to be delivered on Infill/ Brownfield Lands**	**Total Lands Zoned New Residential Phase 1 (ha)**	**Total lands zoned New Residential (Phase 1 and Phase 2) (ha)**
County	Louth	128,884	21,082	149,966	6,524	110.4	4,302	506.1	597.1
Regional Growth Centre	Drogheda	34,199	6,914	41,113	2,447	34.8	1,725	270	270
	Dundalk	39,004	7,660	46,664	2,447	30	1,743	150.3	225.7
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Ardee	4,928	1,655	6,583	440	8.5	298	35.9	51.5
	Dunleer	1,822	935	2,757	146	3.1	109	8.4	8.4
Self-Sustaining Towns	Carlingford	1,445	200	1,645	50	2.6	31	2.0	2.0
	Castlebellingham / Kilsaran	1,126	110	1,236	65	1.1	27	10.9	10.9
	Clogherhead	2,145	300	2,445	75	1.6	39	3.2	3.2
	Termonfeckin	1,579	250	1,829	70	3.4	40	4.5	4.5
	Tullyallen	1,547	220	1,767	65	1.2	29	0	0
Small Towns & Villages	Level 4 Settlements	5,103	785	5,888	230	24.1	260	20.8	20.8
Rural Nodes	Level 5 Settlements	35,986	300	38,039	489	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rural Area	Rural Area		1,753						

2.7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Louth is unrivalled in terms of its strategic and central location on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, wherein are located the two RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk, both of which are underpinned by strong transport infrastructure connecting the two main cities of scale on the Island. In line with the growth and settlement strategies, the Plan seeks to ensure that there is a convergence of where people live and work, improve the job ratio, reduce commuting patterns thereby improving the quality of life for people and promoting a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.

In accordance with the principles of the NPF and the RSES, and in recognition of the critical importance of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, this Plan promotes economic growth in those locations identified in the RSES capable of accommodating significant economic growth, primarily the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk. RGC's will serve as focal points to gain critical mass and deliver positive impacts to the surrounding area whilst enhancing overall Regional and National growth. A coordinated approach to infrastructure investment for the sustainable development and growth of the urban settlements and interconnections will be necessary to build greater levels of critical mass and facilitate the effective movement of people and goods.

The Joint LAP to be prepared for Drogheda with Meath County Council and the LAP to be prepared for Dundalk will provide greater detail on the policy framework for these settlements that will assist in co-ordinating infrastructure investment.

Whilst the majority of economic growth will be directed to Drogheda and Dundalk, there is recognition that economic opportunities exist elsewhere in the County particularly in the Self Sustaining Growth Towns of Ardee and Dunleer but also in some of the smaller settlements dispersed throughout the County.

2.8 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

The Council aims to ensure that all retail development permitted within the County is in accordance with the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012 (DECLG),* the *Retail Design Manual – A Good Practice Guide, 2012 (DECLG)* and the *Louth Retail Strategy*, which has been prepared as part of this Plan. The Retail Strategy sets out the indicative potential for additional convenience, comparison and bulky household goods floorspace in Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee. The potential floorspace capacity for these settlements has been informed by the settlement and retail hierarchy and projected population growth. Full details of the Retail Strategy are available in Appendix 4, Volume 3.

2.9 CLIMATE ACTION

Louth County Council prepared a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy as part of the requirements of the National Adaptation Framework (NAF), which was published in response to the provisions of the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.* The role of this strategy is to ensure an understanding of the risks of climate change, advance planned climate resilient actions and ensure climate adaptation considerations inform all Plan policies.

The *National Climate Action Plan 2019* is designed to enable Ireland to meet its EU climate change commitments through carbon proofing government policies and establishing carbon budgets.

It provides 183 individual policy actions over 12 sectors to tackle climate change along with timelines for delivery to reduce carbon emissions by 30% between 2021 and 2030 and towards achieving zero emissions by 2050.

This key document also places Ireland at the forefront of international efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 13 – the need to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Several key measures identified in the National Climate Action Plan have already been delivered including the signing up of all 31 Local Authorities in Ireland to the *Climate Action Charter*. The *Climate Action Charter* for Louth was signed in 2019.

The Charter acknowledges that climate change is happening and that actions must be taken to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate.

Climate action is intrinsic in all of the chapters of this Plan and is specifically addressed in Chapter 12.

2.10 Core Strategy and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

The Plan is informed and guided by robust policies and objectives in relation to Flood Risk Management, designed to ensure that future development, in areas at risk of flooding shall conform to *'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (2009).

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been prepared as part of this Plan and is available in Volume 5. Its baseline data has been derived from the Office of Public Works (OPW) catchment and *Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM)* data, the *Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Management (PFRAM)* data and the *Areas of Further Assessment (AFAs).*

2.11 Core Strategy and SEA/AA

The Core Strategy has been prepared in tandem with a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment and has had regard to both assessments with any changes/recommendations incorporated into the strategy.

2.11.1 Overarching Strategic Policy Objectives for the County

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

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

Policy Objective	
CS 3	To support and manage the self-sufficient sustainable development of all settlements in a planned manner, with population growth occurring in tandem with the provision of economic, physical and social infrastructure.

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

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

Policy Objective	
CS 6	To support the implementation of the EU Green Deal, National Climate Action Plan 2019, Programme for Government 2020, Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and the Climate Action Charter through the Plan and to consider, if appropriate, a variation of the development plan to ensure the consistency with the approach to climate action recommended in any revised Development Plan Guidelines as adopted.

Policy Objective	
CS 7	To ensure a plan-led and evidence based approach is taken to the preparation of the Local Area Plans for Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee and Dunleer whereby the respective Plans are informed by the Local Transport Plans (for Drogheda and Dundalk), the Infrastructure Assessment and Land Use Evaluation for the respective settlement, and any other relevant information available from statutory bodies, government agencies, or infrastructure providers.

Policy Objective	
CS 8	In order to ensure consistency with the Core Strategy housing allocation as set out in the County Development Plan, as part of the preparation of the Joint Local Area Plan for Drogheda a review of lands zoned A2 New Residential in the Northern Environs area will be carried out and a phasing strategy will be set out. This will take account of the designation of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre in national and regional policy, the housing allocation for Drogheda in the Core Strategy, the availability of transport infrastructure and water services, and ensuring the Northern Environs retains its potential to function as a counter balance to the Southern Environs of the town.

Policy Objective	
CS 9	To review the Infrastructure Assessment and Land Use Evaluation for Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee, and Dunleer as part of the preparation of the Local Area Plans for these settlements and to ensure that any land use zoning is aligned to infrastructure availability.

In line with the population and economic strategy of this Plan of targeting population and economic growth to key urban centres, in particular the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk, the Core Strategy policy objectives are set out in accordance with the core and settlement hierarchy as follows:

2.11.2 Regional Growth Centres

Policy Objective	
CS 10	Direct and consolidate the majority of the County's future population growth into the strong and dynamic Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk in line with the objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and in accordance with the Core and Settlement Strategies of the Development Plan.

Policy Objective	
CS 11	Support the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk as regional economic drivers targeted to grow to city scale with a population of 50,000 by 2031 and capitalise on their strategic location on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

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

Policy Objective	
CS 13	To prioritise the preparation of a Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP/LAP) for Drogheda in partnership with Meath County Council, which will incorporate the existing local area plan areas affecting the wider town environs into one overall planning framework for the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda. The preparation of the UAP/LAP will be informed by a local transport plan, in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.11 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Policy Objective	
CS 14	To prioritise the preparation of an Urban Area Plan (UAP/LAP) for Dundalk, which will incorporate the existing local area plan and framework plan areas affecting the wider town environs into one overall planning framework for the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk. The preparation of the UAP/LAP will be informed by a local transport plan, in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.19 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

2.11.3 Self-Sustaining Growth Towns

Policy Objective	
CS 15	To prepare a new Local Area Plan for Ardee in line with the Core Strategy and in recognition of Ardee's role as a regionally important local driver and Self Sustaining Growth Town in the Settlement Strategy.

Policy Objective	
CS 16	To prepare a new Local Area Plan for Dunleer in line with the Core Strategy and in recognition of Dunleer's role as a regionally important local driver and Self Sustaining Growth Town in the Settlement Strategy.

Policy Objective	
CS 17	To ensure proportionate, contained and compact growth within the Self Sustaining Towns identified in the Settlement Hierarchy, with focused investment in green industry, services, infrastructure and employment whilst balancing housing delivery.

2.11.4 Small Towns and Villages

Policy Objective	
CS 18	To ensure localised sustainable growth within the small towns and villages identified in the Settlement Strategy, is proportionate to the size of the settlement, prioritised on infill/brownfield sites and that economic related development is supported.

Policy Objective	
CS 19	To strengthen and rejuvenate the fabric of rural villages and create sustainable rural communities to meet rural generated housing needs and alleviate the need for one off rural housing in the open countryside.

Policy Objective	
CS 20	To direct rural generated housing demand to rural villages and rural nodes in the first instance and ensure that one off housing in the open countryside is only permitted where there is demonstrable compliance with the criteria for rural housing as provided for in the Development Plan.

Policy Objective	
CS 21	To facilitate rural generated housing demand in identified Rural Nodes commensurate with the prevailing scale, pattern of development and services available.

Policy Objective	
CS 22	To promote, support and facilitate the re-use of under-utilised or vacant lands, or lands identified for regeneration, through a co-ordinated approach to active land management between the Council and stakeholders.

2.12 Settlement Hierarchy and Growth Strategy

The Settlement Hierarchy of this Plan has been developed to take account of the function and role of each of the identified settlements in accordance and close alignment with the identified settlement hierarchy in the RSES. It has been informed by a range of factors including population, employment base, facilities and service provision, recent growth levels and capacity to accommodate future growth. The Louth Settlement Hierarchy is set out in Table 2.4.

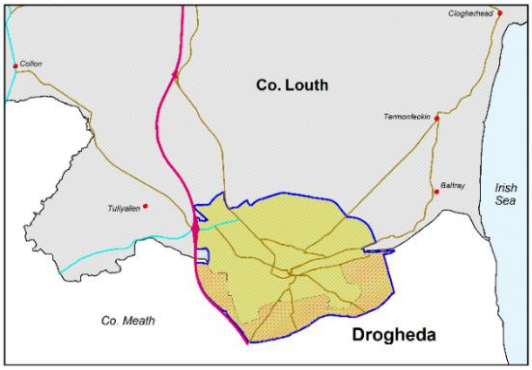
In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, growth will be prioritised in the RGC's of Drogheda and Dundalk, close to employment, services, and local amenities. The potential for smaller towns and villages to develop at a sustainable rate is also recognised.

2.12.1 Regional Growth Centres: Drogheda and Dundalk

This Section will provide an overview of the growth strategy for Drogheda and Dundalk during the lifetime of this Plan. Land use zoning maps have been prepared for these settlements and can be viewed in Volume 1A of this Plan.

2.13 Drogheda

With a total population of almost 41,000, Drogheda was the largest town in Ireland in 2016.



Supporting this population, is a wide range of services and amenities including an extensive convenience and comparison retail portfolio in town centre and edge of centre locations, a regional hospital at Our Lady of Lourdes, primary and secondary schools, an adult education facility, community centres, play parks, and open spaces, as well as a range of local and international businesses, production, and manufacturing facilities located in the business and enterprise parks in the town. Drogheda is located within the administrative areas of Louth and Meath County Council.

The town centre and urban core is located in Louth with the southern fringes extending into Meath. In 2016 approximately 84% of the population (34,199 people) lived within the administrative area of Louth.

2.13.1 Joint Urban Area Plan

In order for Drogheda to fulfil its economic potential it is acknowledged that a coordinated approach needs to be taken with regard to the future growth strategy and infrastructure investment. The Council therefore welcomes the requirement in the RSES to prepare a Joint Urban Area Plan for Drogheda between Louth and Meath County Councils.

The UAP/LAP will be informed by the strategic objectives set out in this Plan and will provide for specific objectives and key actions to unlock the full potential of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre.

2.13.2 Growth Strategy

The growth strategy for Drogheda will focus on building on the competitive advantage of the town and in particular its location along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and accessibility to Dublin Airport and City Centre.

It will support significant population and economic growth that will ensure the town continues to function as a regional driver for economic growth and to strengthen the economic base of the town.

The trajectory of population growth is based on the population increasing to 50,000 in 2031 as set out in the RSES.

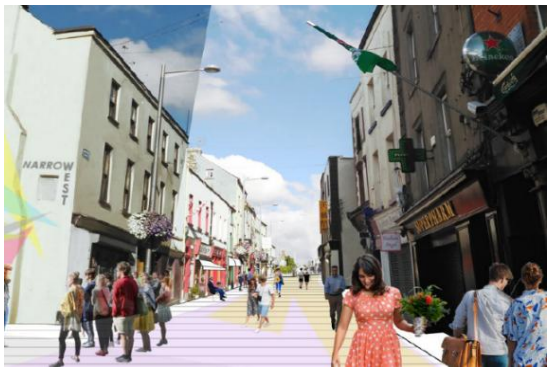
There will be a significant focus on promoting the regeneration of the town centre through the identification of specific areas and land for regeneration uses and the progression of regeneration projects such as the Westgate Vision.

The development of the employment and residential lands in the Northern Environs and the delivery of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) are also a fundamental element of the immediate and long-term growth strategy for the town. The delivery of the PANCR is critical to the removal of port related traffic from the town centre and the facilitation of the regeneration of town centre lands.

2.13.3 Regeneration Areas

There is significant potential for the town to deliver compact growth, with a number of vacant and under-utilised buildings and land situated within its core. This includes the Westgate area, where a development strategy, the 'Westgate Vision' has been published, and funding to commence its implementation provided through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

The Westgate area has the capacity to accommodate commercial, office, and residential uses in a part of the town that has experienced high levels of vacancy and dereliction.



The Docklands area of the town is another location with regeneration potential. This includes lands on the North and South Inner Quays. *The Docklands Area Plan 2007*, provides a framework for the redevelopment of this part of the town. This includes for the creation of a new urban quarter on both sides of the River Boyne. Port activities have ceased on the South Inner Quays with docking still taking place on the North Inner Quays.

In the immediate term the South Inner Quays have therefore more potential for redevelopment however with proposals to consolidate Drogheda Port at the deep water facility at Tom Roe's Point the North Inner Quays may also become available in the future. The regeneration of the Docklands area would act as a stimulus for further redevelopment in the town centre and support the creation of an attractive, compact, and vibrant living space in the centre of the town.

Table 2.16: Overview of Key Statistics for Drogheda

DROGHEDA	
Population 2016	34,199
Projected Population 2027	41,113
Projected population increase	6,914
Housing Stock	13,741
Projected Housing Stock increase 2021-2027	2,447
Residents Workers 2016	16,108
Total Jobs 2016	12,361
Job: Workforce Ratio 2016[5]	0.76
Resident workforce working in Dublin City and suburbs 2016	2,662 (16.5%)

[5] The Total Jobs, Resident Workers, and Job:Workforce ratio for Drogheda includes the Southern Environs of the town which is in the administrative area of Meath. In 2016 the population of Drogheda within the administrative area of Louth was 34,199. There were 12,408 resident workers in the Louth area of the town and 11,145 jobs resulting in a Job:Workforce ratio of 0.90.

2.13.4 Buildings of Increased Height

As part of the compact growth strategy the Local Authority will actively promote and support proposals to develop buildings of increased height on suitably located and configured lands.

These lands will normally be centrally located, in proximity to public transport or in strategic locations in the town where such buildings could function as a landmark or focal point for development.

A more detailed analysis of the preferred location for taller buildings will be carried out as part of the Joint UAP/LAP for Drogheda. In the interim the development of taller buildings, which are supported by appropriate design briefs and which are consistent with the provisions of the Specific Planning Policy Requirements set out in the *Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2018,* will be considered.



2.13.5 Urban Design Framework Plan for the Heritage Quarter

In 2013 an *Urban Design Framework Plan for The Heritage Quarter,* was published with the vision of building on the unique qualities of the Heritage Quarter of the town and its medieval walls and make it a focal point for cultural and business activities in the town.

One of the main challenges facing the area is addressing the high levels of vacancy.

The Framework Plan provides a strategy that aims to enhance and protect the qualities of the Heritage Quarter and guiding and enabling development in a changed and managed way.

This Plan will continue to support the principles and implementation of this Urban Design Framework Plan.

2.13.6 Northern Environs of Drogheda

In addition to the regeneration of the town centre area there is an extensive land bank of employment, residential, and community zoned lands in the Northern Environs of the Town. This land bank will form part of the UAP/LAP and will ensure the town has the capacity to deliver the population and economic growth envisaged in the NPF and RSES and will act as a counter balance to the level of growth that has taken place in the Southern Environs of the town. The Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) is a critical piece of infrastructure in the Northern Environs that will ensure the comprehensive and cohesive development of this area while also facilitating the regeneration of key sites within the town centre.

It is important that the build out of these lands is coordinated so that the necessary social, community, and recreational infrastructure is provided in tandem with residential development.

In this regard there will be a requirement for a phased approach to be taken to the development of the Northern Environs. This shall be informed by the phasing arrangements set out in the 2006 Masterplan (which can be viewed by clicking on this link) or any subsequent Masterplan prepared for the area. In addition an emphasis shall also be placed on consolidation between areas developed or under construction and the existing built up area of Drogheda rather than a continuation of a dispersed pattern of development in the Northern Environs area.

Whilst it is acknowledged there is an extensive quantum of lands in the Northern Environs zoned for residential use these lands are a fundamental part of the long term growth strategy of the town that will be developed over a number of development plans.

The development of these lands is closely linked to the provision of roads, new streetscapes, pedestrian and cycle networks and water services infrastructure which will allow the Council to manage the phased release of the lands.

2.13.7 Economy and Employment

There are a range of local and international businesses located in the business and enterprise parks in the town. This Plan will continue to support the provision of a wide range of employment uses in Drogheda to assist in improving employment opportunities in the town and to reduce commuting for work elsewhere.

The Council will continue to work closely with businesses and stakeholders including the Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland in promoting and attracting further economic investment and employment generating development to the town.

Further details on the economic profile and retail opportunity sites for Drogheda are set out in Chapter 5 'Economy and Employment'.

2.13.8 Movement

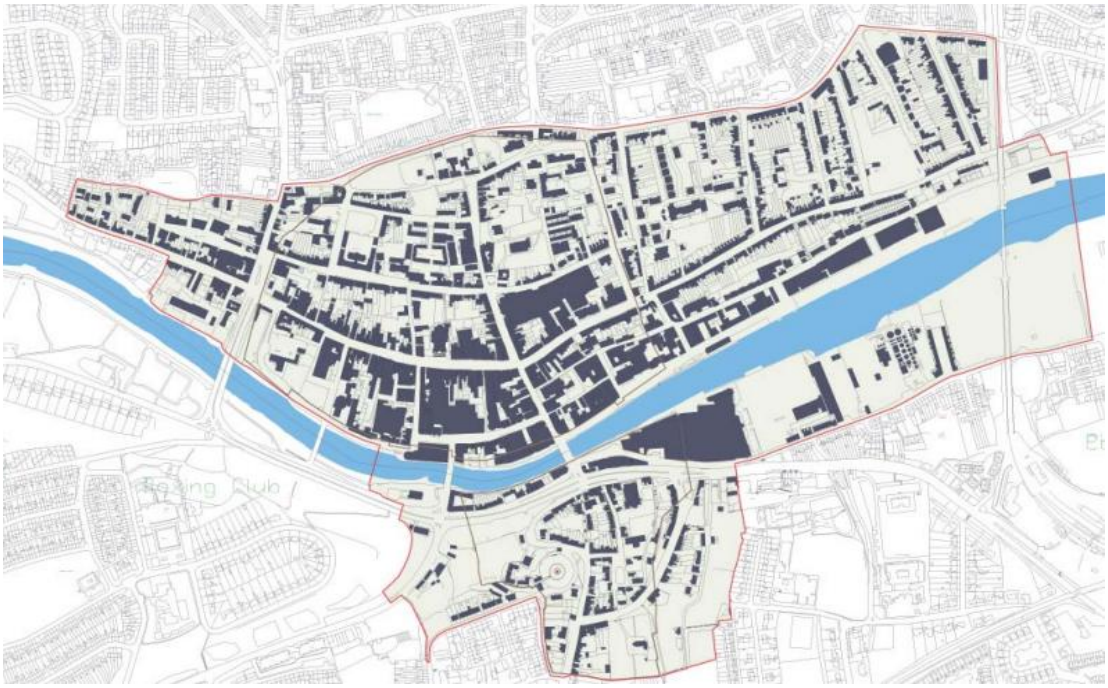
The PANCR is a critical piece of enabling infrastructure for Drogheda that would provide a direct link from the Motorway to the Port. This enabling infrastructural project is important to both the Local and Regional economy as it would improve connectivity between Drogheda Port and the wider Region whilst also removing port related traffic from the town centre, providing opportunities for investment in the public realm that would give greater priority to more sustainable modes of transport in the town centre area.

The importance of the project is recognised in Regional Policy Objective 4.12 of the RSES, which supports the delivery of the road.

The DART Expansion Programme proposes to expand DART Services on the northern line to Drogheda. This is an important growth enabler for Drogheda as it would improve the connectivity to Dublin due to the increased frequency of services, making the town more accessible and attractive for economic investment and employment generating development.

The regeneration of McBride Rail Station and the integration of bus and rail services in the Town through the creation of an Integrated Public Transport Hub would significantly improve public transport provision and accessibility in the town, making public transport a viable alternative to the private car.

Figure 2.6: Extent of Heritage Area Identified in Framework Plan



2.13.9 Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Drogheda

Policy Objective	
SS 1	To support the role of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre and a driver of growth along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to facilitate the continued expansion and growth of the town based on the principles of balanced, sustainable development that enables the creation of employment, supports economic investment, and creates an attractive living and working environment.

Policy Objective	
SS 2	To continue to support and promote the economic role of Drogheda as a regional centre of employment along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to facilitate any infrastructural investment or employment generating sustainable development that will strengthen the role of the town and maintain its competitiveness.

Policy Objective	
SS 3	To support the preparation of a Joint Urban Area Plan for Drogheda in conjunction with Meath County Council in accordance with the requirements of Regional Policy Objective 4.11 in the RSES.

Policy Objective	
SS 4	To support high density sustainable development, particularly in centrally located areas and along public transport corridors and require a minimum density of 50 units/ha in these locations.

Policy Objective	
SS 5	To support increased building heights at appropriate locations in Drogheda, subject to the design and scale of any building making a positive contribution to its surrounding environment and streetscape.

Policy Objective	
SS 6	To support the sustainable development of the regeneration sites identified on the land use zoning map for appropriate uses compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood.

Policy Objective	
SS 7	To support the progression and implementation of any projects in Drogheda funded by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund including the Westgate Vision**.**

Policy Objective	
SS 8	To support the implementation of the Urban Design Framework Plan for the Heritage Quarter in Drogheda.

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

Policy Objective	
SS 10	To manage the growth of Drogheda in a manner that will achieve the creation of a compact settlement with attractive and inclusive sustainable neighbourhoods where there is a choice of affordable homes for all.

Policy Objective	
SS 11	To support the coordinated development of the Northern Environs of Drogheda with the provision and delivery of sustainable social and community facilities and infrastructure in tandem with residential development.

Policy Objective	
SS 12	To recognise the importance of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) as a critical piece of enabling infrastructure in the strategic growth of Drogheda and to seek to secure funding to progress the delivery of this project as a priority during the life of the Plan.

Policy Objective	
SS 13	To support investment in public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services in Drogheda including the progression of the DART Expansion Programme which includes the electrification of the rail line and the extension of DART services to Drogheda.

Policy Objective	
SS 14	To enhance the established role of Drogheda town centre and position it as a destination of choice for both visitors and residents alike with a special emphasis on the role played by the town walls.

Policy Objective	
SS 15	To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area.

Policy Objective	
SS 16	To promote and facilitate the sustainable development of key opportunity sites within the town centre.

Policy Objective	
SS 17	To work with the NTA, local landowners, and developers to implement an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Drogheda, recognising the highest priority to be given to cycling and walking over other modes of transport.

Policy Objective	
SS 18	To develop a network of green areas throughout the town including the delivery of a greenway along the north and southern banks of the River Boyne stretching from Townley Hall to Baltray and Oldbridge to Mornington in County Meath while maintaining the integrity of the Boyne Natura 2000 sites.

2.14 DUNDALK

Dundalk is the County town and administrative centre for Louth. It is a multi-modal settlement that benefits from its strategic location along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and excellent connectivity with Dublin and Belfast.

With over 14,000 jobs in the town, it is the primary employment centre in the County. A more detailed Urban Area Plan will be prepared for Dundalk during the life of this Plan.

2.14.1 Development Strategy

The development strategy for Dundalk will be based on the town reaching a population of 50,000 by 2031, as set out in the RSES.

It will seek to continue to broaden and strengthen the employment base of the town and facilitate population and economic growth that would allow the town to fulfil its function as a Regional Growth Centre. The creation of a vibrant town centre where people want to live and visit is also a priority.

2.14.2 Town Centre Area

The *Urban Design Framework Plan* published in 2008 will continue to provide the platform for future development for the town centre area.

This Framework Plan identified 7 character areas based on their historic, economic, or architectural form and included specific recommendations for each of the character areas. These recommendations provide a robust framework for the long-term future development of the town centre area. The Framework Plan can be viewed by clicking on this link.

Recent investments in the public realm around Clanbrassil Street and St. Nicholas' Quarter by the Council are an example of aspects of the Framework Plan that have been implemented.

These projects have created an attractive and vibrant space for businesses to operate and people to shop and socialise.

The Longwalk Quarter Project, which received funding through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and which will create a new living and working quarter in the town centre, is also being progressed. Continued support will be provided for this project and any public realm and regeneration projects that will revitalise the town centre area and support the implementation of the policy of compact growth.

Table 2.17: Overview of Key Statistics for Dundalk

DUNDALK	
Population	39,004
Projected population 2027	46,664
Projected population increase	7,660
Housing Stock	16,351
Projected Housing Stock increase 2021-2027	2,447
Residents Workers	14,178
Total Jobs	14,163
Job: Workforce Ratio	0.99
Resident workforce working in Dublin City and suburbs 2016	1,004 (7.1%)

2.14.3 Regeneration Areas

In order to promote regeneration in the town, specific areas and lands have been identified with a regeneration zoning. This zoning has been directed to specific locations in the town where it is considered a regeneration project or development would act as a stimulus for further redevelopment activities.

The sites/locations identified are:

- Carroll Village;
- Longwalk Shopping Centre;
- St. Nicholas Quarter; and
- Port/Harbour Area.

The former Carroll Village Shopping Centre includes the footprint of the existing building and a large surface car park. The site is strategically located on a corner site along The Long Walk and is suitable for a mixed use development including commercial, retail, and residential uses.

The existing Longwalk Shopping Centre is located immediately south of the former Carroll Village Shopping Centre. Whilst Tesco is the anchor tenant, the centre is experiencing high levels of vacancy with an occupancy rate of approximately 50%.

The former Toymaster building to the north-east of the centre is included in this regeneration area. The aim of this designation is to assist in stimulating the redevelopment of this centre where there is an opportunity for retail and an associated mix of uses.

St. Nicholas' Quarter is an area of the town that has experienced high levels of vacancy, ad-hoc development, and dereliction.

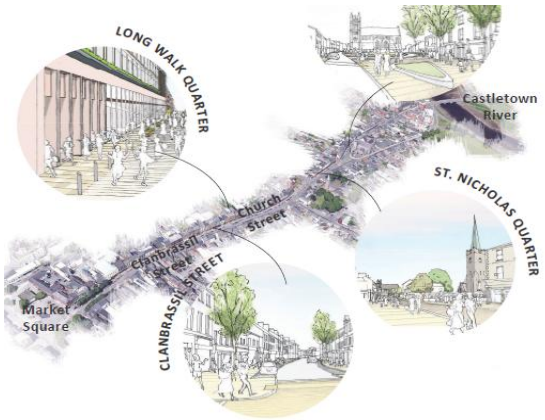
The area has the potential to create a rejuvenated urban quarter along Bridge Street, Northgate Street, and Linenhall Street with opportunities for backland and infill development.

The existing harbour area of the town is another area of Dundalk that is presently under-utilised. Whilst part of the lands are used for port related activities, there is a large area of land currently vacant (c.1.6 hectares). Taking account of the proximity of these lands to the town centre there is potential for these lands to be developed for a range of uses that would complement the town centre and revitalise this part of the town.

RPO 4.23 of the RSES supports the regeneration of the harbour/port area in the town and recognises its potential as a location for economic development.

The strategic location of the lands means the lands may be suitable to accommodate taller buildings that would maximise its riverside location and proximity to the town centre whilst also providing a landmark/gateway to the Port.

This Plan has also identified Retail Opportunity Sites, details of which can be found in the Retail Strategy in Volume 3, Appendix 4.



2.14.4 Buildings of Increased Height

As part of the compact growth strategy the Council will actively promote and support proposals to develop buildings of height on suitably located and configured lands. These lands will normally be centrally located, in proximity to public transport or in strategic locations in the town where such buildings could function as a landmark or focal point for development. A more detailed analysis of the preferred location for taller buildings will be carried out as part of the Urban Area Plan for Dundalk.

In the interim the development of taller buildings which are supported by appropriate design briefs and which are consistent with the provisions of the Specific Planning Policy Requirements set out in the *Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2018*, will be considered.

2.14.5 Residential Development

Residential development will focus on the delivery of high quality designed buildings and spaces that can meet the housing needs of all members of the community, regardless of age or ability, and provide connectivity and permeability between existing and future neighbourhood areas. In order to achieve compact growth higher density developments will be required, particularly on centrally located lands or lands well connected to the town centre.

Recent household construction has been concentrated primarily in the southern parts of the town in the Blackrock area and on the residential lands to the west of the R132. There is also development ongoing in the western and northern areas of the town.

With the quantum of residentially zoned lands available in excess of that required for the anticipated population growth during the life of this Plan, an analysis of the undeveloped residentially zoned lands was carried out.

Based on this analysis, which took account of the location of the land relative to the town centre, public transport, and local facilities, and the availability of services and infrastructure required to service the lands, the lands were prioritised and ranked accordingly.

Any excess lands have been placed in a strategic reserve and will not be available for development during the life of this Plan. One of the primary locations for residential growth during this Plan will be in the Mount Avenue area to the west of the town centre.

Whilst part of these lands will be released by the construction of the LIHAF funded Mount Avenue Link Road, there is c.38 hectares of land that are subject to a Masterplan with the capacity to deliver c.1,200 residential units in addition to a linear park and community facilities.

The town centre area will be the focus for infill and brownfield development with a number of significant development opportunities available.

In the southern area of the town development in the Blackrock area will be carefully managed with the focus on consolidation, the build out of extant permissions and developments currently under construction.

The Plan supports the delivery of affordable homes including a mix of house types and tenure suitable for all life stages.

2.14.6 Economy

Whilst the location of the town along the border makes Dundalk particularly susceptible to the uncertainties and potential economic instabilities surrounding the UK withdrawal from the EU, this Plan will continue to support and facilitate infrastructural investments and improvements to connectivity that will enable businesses and enterprises to respond to these challenges. It will also support the strengthening of cross-border links and the continued collaboration between government agencies and businesses on both sides of the border that will encourage and facilitate economic growth and enterprise development.

The continued expansion of the business and enterprise parks in the town will be supported with the Council continuing to work closely with businesses and stakeholders including the Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA in promoting and attracting further economic investment and employment generating development to the Town.

The existing land bank of undeveloped employment zoned lands is strategically located in various parts of the town and is suitable for a range of enterprise and employment uses.

DkIT is an important education facility in the town and north-east region that provides opportunities for education and skills development of the local labour force in addition to opportunities for collaboration between local businesses and industry.

The continued development of this partnership approach will be supported and facilitated in this Plan. The Plan also supports DkIT as a centre of excellence for education.

Further details on the economic and retail profile of Dundalk are set out in Chapter 5 'Economy and Employment'.

2.14.7 Movement

The Local Authority will work closely with the NTA to develop a travel plan for the town which focuses on the provision of an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Dundalk. Whilst sustainable modes of transport will be prioritised, if Dundalk is to increase its population at the rate anticipated in the RSES investment in roads infrastructure will be required to ensure the efficient movement of people and goods around the town.

Taking account of the quantum of lands zoned for residential use in the Mount Avenue area, the roads infrastructure will be required to be upgraded to facilitate additional traffic flows and movements.

There is a requirement for link roads connecting neighbourhoods and industrial/business areas to the main access roads in and out of the town. Further details on this project are set out in Chapter 7 'Movement'.

2.14.8 Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Dundalk

Policy Objective	
SS 19	To support the role of Dundalk as a Regional Growth Centre and a driver of growth along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and in the border area and to facilitate the continued expansion and growth of the town based on the principles of balanced, sustainable development that enables the creation of employment, supports economic investment, and creates an attractive living and working environment.

Policy Objective	
SS 20	To continue to support and promote the economic role of Dundalk as a regional centre of employment in the border area and to facilitate any infrastructural investment or employment generating development that will strengthen the role of the town and maintain its competitiveness.

Policy Objective	
SS 21	To support sustainable high density development, particularly in centrally located areas and along public transport corridors and require a minimum density of 50 units/ha in these locations.

Policy Objective	
SS 22	To support increased building heights at appropriate locations in Dundalk, subject to the design and scale of any building making a positive contribution to its surrounding environment and streetscape.

Policy Objective	
SS 23	To enhance the established role of Dundalk town centre and position it as a destination of choice for shopping with a special emphasis on revitalising and reducing vacancy in the retail core area.

Policy Objective	
SS 24	To promote and facilitate the development of key opportunity or regeneration sites within or proximate to the town centre.

Policy Objective	
SS 25	To manage the growth of Dundalk in a manner that will achieve the creation of a compact settlement with attractive and inclusive neighbourhoods where there is a choice of affordable homes for all.

Policy Objective	
SS 26	To support the implementation of the 2008 Urban Design Framework Plan for Dundalk.

Policy Objective	
SS 27	To support the progression and implementation of any projects in Dundalk funded by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund including the Longwalk Quarter Project.

Policy Objective	
SS 28	To support the sustainable development of the regeneration sites identified on the land use zoning map for appropriate uses compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood.

Policy Objective	
SS 29	To support the role of Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) as a centre for excellence for education and to facilitate any proposals that would strengthen the role and raise the profile of DkIT as a research and education facility.

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

Policy Objective	
SS 31	To work with the NTA, local landowners, and developers to implement an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Dundalk.

Policy Objective	
SS 32	To develop a network of green areas throughout the town, building on existing green infrastructure, and advancing the delivery of the Great Eastern Greenway along the coast incorporating the delivery of greenway and pedestrian infrastructure on both sides of the Castletown River, while maintaining the integrity of the Dundalk Bay Natura 2000 sites.

Policy Objective	
SS 33	To ensure the delivery of the Northern Environs Framework Plan recognising the need for an interchange on the Armagh Road to reduce non-local traffic entering Dundalk at the Lisdoo Junction and the corresponding contribution to Climate Action within same.

Policy Objective	
SS 34	To recognise the strategic piece of infrastructure that is the former Dundalk Landfill Site to be developed for playing pitches and for recreation purposes.

2.15 SELF-SUSTAINING GROWTH TOWNS

2.15.1 ARDEE

Ardee is an important local service centre in mid-Louth providing a range of services and employment to an extensive catchment that extends into parts of Meath and Monaghan. In 2016 there were over 1,700 jobs in the town.



The total jobs in the town, in combination with its high Job:Workforce ratio, which was 0.93 in 2016, is an indication of the strong employment base in the town. It also demonstrates the town is well balanced in its Population:Employment ratio.

Table 2.18: Overview of Key Statistics for Ardee

ARDEE	
Population	4,928
Projected population 2027	6,583
Projected population increase	1,655
Housing Stock	2,002
Projected Housing Stock increase 2021-2027	440
Residents Workers	1,819
Total Jobs	1,716
Job: Workforce Ratio	0.93

The connectivity and accessibility that the town provides due to its location along the national road network makes it an attractive location for growth and investment.

This connectivity includes access to the Dublin-Belfast Corridor via the M1, the north-west of the country via the N2, and access to local centres of employment in the Eastern and Midland Region via the N52.

The growth strategy for Ardee, during this Plan, will be to consolidate its designation as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' and continue to expand its employment base and facilitate sustainable residential growth that would meet the needs of a localised demand.



Any expansion of the town shall be complementary to the development of the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

There is an existing land bank of undeveloped lands zoned for residential and employment uses in Ardee which will meet the residential and employment/ economic needs of the town during this Plan period. A sequential approach to the development of residential lands will be encouraged, with priority given to lands in proximity to the town centre.

The development of these lands shall facilitate the creation of attractive, sustainable communities.

Any excess residential lands have been placed in a strategic reserve and shall not

be available for development until after the expiration of the Plan.

As part of the strategy of promoting town centre renewal this Plan will support and facilitate high quality development that results in the development of vacant or under-utilised lands which will improve the vibrancy of the town centre and create a more compact settlement.

Part of the regeneration strategy for the town is the redevelopment of Ardee Castle, which is located on the Main Street in the town. Funding was received to redevelop the Castle under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

This is an important tourism project for both the County and Ardee, as it has the potential to significantly increase visitor numbers to the area.

As part of the policy of improving connectivity at a National and Regional level there are proposals to upgrade the N2 and N52. These proposals will involve a by-pass of Ardee along both of these routes. When delivered these projects would transform Ardee town centre as it would remove through traffic from the urban core of the town and provide opportunities for investment in the public realm that would give greater priority to walking and cycling. These environmental improvements would make town centre living much more appealing.

A Land Use Zoning Map has been prepared for Ardee and can be viewed in Volume 1A of this Plan.

Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Ardee

Policy Objective	
SS 35	To support the role of Ardee as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town, which shall be complementary to the Regional Growth Centres, and to facilitate balanced population and economic growth that will meet the needs of the residents of Ardee and its hinterland.

Policy Objective	
SS 36	To continue to support the economic growth of Ardee by facilitating and supporting a range of employment generating uses in the town.

Policy Objective	
SS 37	To support the creation of a sustainable compact settlement in Ardee that provides opportunities for walking and cycling and to encourage a minimum density of 25 units/ha for new residential developments.

Policy Objective	
SS 38	To support the creation of sustainable attractive and inclusive communities where the residential needs of the entire population can be met.

Policy Objective	
SS 39	To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area of Ardee and to support and facilitate the re-use of existing buildings within the town centre or edge of centre.

Policy Objective	
SS 40	To support the progression and implementation of any projects in Ardee funded by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund including the Restoration of Ardee Castle and the Regeneration Plan for Ardee.

Policy Objective	
SS 41	To secure the construction, pending approval by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, of the N2 bypass and N52 bypass and preserve free of development their proposed routes.

Policy Objective	
SS 42	To facilitate the provision of a new link road from Rathgory and Mulladrillen to Black Road.

Policy Objective	
SS 43	To upgrade footpaths and provide a cycle lane along Sean O'Carroll Street.

Policy Objective	
SS 44	To facilitate the provision of a north-south link road to the west of the town.

Policy Objective	
SS 45	To examine the feasibility of a running track for Ardee during the lifetime of this Plan.

2.15.2 DUNLEER

Dunleer is a small settlement to the east of the M1 situated between Drogheda and Dundalk. The R169 links Dunleer to the motorway at Junction 12, providing excellent connectivity via the National and Regional road network.

Whilst the population and service provision in the town is lower than that of Ardee, it has a strong employment sector, with over 800 jobs in the town in 2016. In fact in 2016 there were more jobs than resident workers, resulting in a Jobs:Workforce ratio of 1.10. This was the highest rate recorded in the County and is confirmation of the strength of the employment base.

Table 2.19: Overview of Key Statistics for Dunleer

DUNLEER	
Population	1,822
Projected population 2027	2,757
Projected population increase	935
Housing Stock	719
Projected Housing Stock increase 2021-2027	146
Residents Workers	751
Total Jobs	822
Job: Workforce Ratio	1.10

The development strategy for Dunleer during this Plan will be to continue to support economic and employment related development in the town in addition to residential growth that meets the housing requirements of the local population.

This growth shall be complementary to the development of the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

This Plan will promote the consolidation of the urban core of Dunleer and support the development of vacant or under-utilised infill and brownfield lands. Economic and employment related development shall be concentrated in the established employment areas in the town.

A Masterplan for the undeveloped lands zoned for employment related uses to the south west of the town centre will be required to be prepared and agreed with



the Planning Authority prior to any planning application being lodged.

Recent residential activity in the town includes the construction of 80 social housing units at Ravel Grange. Any future residential developments shall be of a high quality that promote connectivity and permeability and meets the residential needs of all members of the community.

A Land Use Zoning Map has been prepared for Dunleer and can be viewed in Volume 1A of this Plan.

2.15.3 Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Dunleer

Policy Objective	
SS 46	To support the role of Dunleer as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town, which shall be complementary to the Regional Growth Centres, and to facilitate balanced population and economic growth that will meet the needs of the residents of Dunleer and its hinterland.

Policy Objective	
SS 47	To continue to support the sustainable economic growth of Dunleer by facilitating and supporting a range of employment generating uses in the town.

Policy Objective	
SS 48	To support the creation of a sustainable compact settlement in Dunleer that provides opportunities for walking and cycling and to encourage a minimum density of 25 units/ha for new residential developments.

Policy Objective	
SS 49	To support the creation of sustainable attractive and inclusive communities where the residential needs of the entire population are met with the commensurate provision of community and social infrastructure.

Policy Objective	
SS 50	To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area of Dunleer and to provide for town centre living.

Policy Objective	
SS 51	To require the preparation of a Masterplan on the lands to the south-west of the town centre zoned for Industry, Enterprise, and Innovation. No planning application shall be submitted prior to the agreement of this Masterplan.

Policy Objective	
SS 52	To work with local landowners and businesses in facilitating and carrying out public realm works in Dunleer including works to roads and footpaths and existing lane-ways / cycle ways.

Policy Objective	
SS 53	To examine the feasibility of providing additional off-street car parking locations in Dunleer.

2.16 SELF-SUSTAINING TOWNS



There are 5 settlements in the County which are identified as Self-Sustaining Towns:-

- Carlingford;
- Clogherhead;
- Castlebellingham/Kilsaran;
- Termonfeckin; and
- Tullyallen.

They have experienced residential expansion with varying levels of growth and investment in employment generating development and service provision.

Carlingford, which is an important tourist destination in the County, recorded the highest number of jobs in this settlement category, with 370 jobs and a Job:Workforce ratio of 0.81. Castlebellingham/Kilsaran is another settlement with a strong employment base, with a jobs ratio of 0.65. However Clogherhead, with the highest population of 2,145 in 2016, has the lowest Job:Workforce ratio of 0.17.

This is an indication that a high proportion of the residents in the town are required to travel outside the settlement for employment.

The growth strategy for these Self-Sustaining Towns will focus on driving investment in services, employment growth and infrastructure while balancing housing delivery, including consolidation of the core areas and delivery of compact growth.

Volume 2 of this Plan provides a Written Statement and associated Land Use Zoning and Composite Maps for each of the Self-Sustaining Towns.

Table 2.20: Overview of Key Statistics for Self-Sustaining Towns

Settlement	Population 2016	Projected Population 2021-2027	Housing Stock 2016	Housing Allocation 2021-2027	Resident Workforce 2016	Total Jobs 2016	Job:Workforce ratio 2016
Carlingford	1,445	1,645	840	50	459	370	0.81
Castlebellingham /Kilsaran	1,126	1,236	510	65	451	295	0.65
Clogherhead	2,145	2,445	895	75	860	150	0.17
Termonfeckin	1,579	1,829	582	70	629	204	0.32
Tullyallen	1,547	1,767	500	65	675	138	0.20

2.17 SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES



There are 8 settlements in the category Small Towns and Villages. These settlements have an important function in supporting local growth. They range in size with Baltray being the smallest settlement, with a population of 132 in 2016, while Dromiskin is the largest settlement with a population of 1,195 persons. Annagassan is another small settlement with a population of 201 in the last census, while the remaining settlements in this category had a population between 600-900 persons.

Depending on the size, function, and location of the settlement, the employment provision varies. All settlements in this category had a jobs ratio of less than 0.4, which is an indication of a weak employment base and a dependence on outbound commuting for employment.

Omeath, with a jobs ratio of 0.38, and Collon, with a jobs ratio of 0.31, had the highest Job:Workforce ratio in this category of settlements.

The growth strategy for the Small Towns and Villages in this Plan will focus on localised sustainable growth that meets the needs of the local population.

Any new residential development shall be proportionate to the size of the settlement in which it is located with priority given to infill and brownfield development. New development in settlements that have experienced high levels of growth in recent years will be carefully managed to avoid the creation of commuter settlements.

Economic and employment related development that would strengthen the local employment base and reduce the dependence on commuting will be supported.

Volume 2 of this Plan provides a Written Statement and associated Land Use Zoning and Composite Maps for each of the Small Towns and Villages.

2.18 RURAL NODES

There are 24 Rural Nodes identified in Level 5 of the settlement hierarchy. These nodes are characterised by clusters of residential properties with limited local services and facilities. As part of the strategy of strengthening the fabric of rural nodes and creating sustainable rural communities this Plan has identified lands within nodes that are suitable to meet rural generated housing needs. This Plan supports the development of a '*New Homes in Small Towns and Villages*' initiative advocated in Regional Policy Objective 4.78 of the RSES. This initiative will involve a coordinated approach between Local Authorities, Irish Water and local communities in the provision of serviced sites in rural nodes to meet local housing demand. This policy initiative will assist in strengthening and rejuvenating rural towns and villages throughout the County. Section 3.17.6 of the Housing Chapter provides further guidance on development in Rural Nodes.

A map of each of the Rural Nodes can be viewed in Volume 2 of this Plan.

2.18.1 Strategic Policy Objectives for Self-Sustaining Towns, Small Towns and Villages and Rural Nodes

Policy Objective	
SS 54	To support and facilitate balanced and proportionate population and economic growth in the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Small Towns and Villages, and Rural Nodes that will meet the needs of the residents of the settlements identified in each of the settlement categories.

Policy Objective	
SS 55	To support the creation of vibrant rural communities by promoting and targeting sustainable growth in rural towns and managing the growth of rural areas under pressure for development.

Policy Objective	
SS 56	To support the development of a 'New Homes in Small Towns and Villages' initiative between the Local Authority, Irish Water, communities, and other stakeholders that would identify opportunities for providing serviced sites to meet rural housing requirements in Towns and Villages in the County.

Policy Objective	
SS 57	To support the rejuvenation of the central areas of settlements by facilitating sustainable development that would assist in reducing the level of vacancy and/or create locally based employment opportunities.

Policy Objective	
SS 58	To require the design, scale, and layout of residential development to be proportionate to and respect the character of the settlement in which it is located and to avoid any layout that would result in a suburban style development alien to the local environment.

Policy Objective	
SS 59	To support the creation of sustainable attractive and inclusive communities where the residential needs of the entire population can be met.

Policy Objective	
SS 60	To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise town and village centres and reduce the level of vacancy and to encourage town and village centre living.

Policy Objective	
SS 61	To work with local landowners and businesses and community groups in facilitating and carrying out public realm works including works to roads and footpaths.

Policy Objective	
SS 62	To encourage the re-use and rejuvenation of vacant and under-utilised lands in rural towns, villages and rural nodes for appropriate uses.



Chapter 3

Housing

"To facilitate the provision of a high quality, suitable mix of adaptable, lifetime housing that meets the needs of all residents in the County; based on the principles of place making, compact growth, and healthy, sustainable communities where housing is close to services and where sustainable modes of transport can be facilitated."

3 HOUSING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will set out the strategy for the provision of housing in urban and rural parts of the County during the life of this Plan. It will focus on creating places where people want to live and delivering well designed and located housing that is adaptable and resilient to the impacts of climate change and capable of meeting the current and future housing needs of the County. It will also take account of the national and regional policy focus of achieving compact growth and will consider the role of building height in achieving higher residential densities in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

3.2 RECENT TRENDS IN HOUSING

The effects of the global financial crisis in 2008 and the recession that followed are still evident in the residential sector, with demand for housing continuing to outstrip supply. This is due to a prolonged period of inactivity in residential construction which saw the number of housing units completed go from record highs in 2006 to record lows in the period 2008-2013. As the economy began to recover from 2014, the level of activity in residential construction began to increase, albeit from a relatively low base. Associated with the economic recovery is the increased demand for housing with inward migration increasing as employment opportunities improve. This placed additional pressures on an already dysfunctional housing market, resulting in record increases in rent and unprecedented levels of homelessness across the country.

At the time of writing this Plan the country was emerging from an unprecedented lockdown in attempts to slow down the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19).

This lockdown resulted in disruption to almost all sectors of the economy. The economic impact of this lockdown on the national and global economy is unclear.

This uncertainty and disruption in the economy may have significant impacts on the housing market, including a decrease in the number of residential units completed. This is dependent on a number of factors including; the extent of the disruption, the speed of any recovery, the impact on household incomes, and international investment into the country.

3.2.1 Legislative Changes and Policy Response

The response to the housing shortage has been co-ordinated by the government at a national level through the introduction of legislation and policy initiatives that aim to increase the output of housing. Consequently, there has been significant new legislative provision since the adoption of the last plan.

The following pieces of legislation were enacted as part of the response to the housing shortage:

- The *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015* included changes to Part V of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*, with the affordable housing requirement being removed and the social housing obligation being lowered from 20% to 10% for developments of 10 or more units. Provision was included for the introduction of a Vacant Site Levy.

- *Section 24A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as amended)* sets out the requirements for designating a Rent Pressure Zone. At the time of writing, all Local Electoral Areas in Louth with the exception of Clogher were designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.
- *Section 38 of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019* sets out the legislative requirements for a person who intends to let their property for short-term letting purposes if the property is located within a Rent Pressure Zone.
- *Section 3 of the Planning and Development Residential Tenancies Act 2016* introduced, for a limited period, arrangements for fast track planning applications for Strategic Housing Developments (SHDs) of 100 or more housing units, student accommodation of 200 or more bed spaces, or shared accommodation of 200 or more bed spaces, to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

The Housing Action Plan 'Rebuilding Ireland – *An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness'* published in 2016 sets out the strategy for dealing with the housing shortage at a national level.



It is a multi-annual plan that seeks to increase the overall supply of housing to 25,000 units per annum by 2021.

Accelerating the delivery of housing for the private, social and rented sectors is the core objective of Rebuilding Ireland.

Supporting measures include a €6 billion fund that will deliver an additional 50,000 social housing units by 2021.

Examples of recently completed developments supported by this fund in the County include Ravel Grange in Dunleer and Castleguard in Ardee.

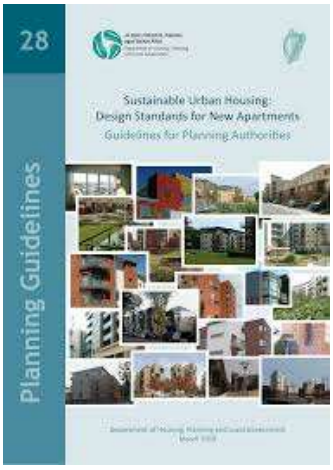
A €200 million Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) has been allocated to Local Authorities to provide enabling infrastructure for the release of large tracts of strategically located residential lands for the delivery of housing.

The Council was successful in its LIHAF funding application for the Mount Avenue Road upgrade in Dundalk, which will support an initial development of 200 homes with a potential for up to 1,200 units on the wider lands and the upgrade of a road at Newtown in Drogheda which will support the delivery of up to 700 residential units in the long term.

The Land Development Agency was established in 2018. It is a commercial, state-sponsored body that will coordinate land within State control and identify any under-utilised lands with the potential for regeneration and residential development. In the longer term it is envisaged that the Agency will assemble strategic land banks from a mix of public and private lands which will bring long term stability to the housing market.

In addition to legislative changes and policy initiatives there has been new and updated planning guidance published.

The Design Standards for New Apartments published in 2018 are an update of the 2015 guidelines.

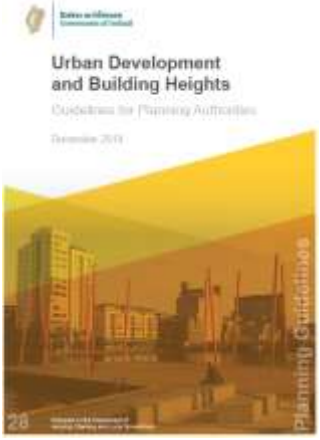


These guidelines acknowledge that apartment developments will play a significant role in securing more compact and sustainable towns and cities and that they must be an attractive and desirable housing option if compact growth is to be achieved. The amendments to the guidelines focus on:

- Enabling a mix of apartment types that better reflects contemporary household formation and demand patterns;
- Making better provision for building refurbishment and small scale urban infill schemes;
- Addressing the emerging 'build to rent' and 'shared accommodation' sectors;and
- Removing requirements for car parking in certain circumstances where there are better mobility solutions and to reduce costs.

The Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines published in 2018, are closely aligned with the national strategic outcomes and objectives in the National Planning Framework, which support higher densities and more compact urban growth. These Guidelines support increased building heights in appropriate urban locations.

The housing policy in this Plan has taken account of the updated legislation and policy response and guidance provided at a national level.



3.3 HOUSING SUPPLY IN LOUTH

There has been a steady increase in the supply of housing in the County since 2015. This increased supply is concentrated in the urban settlements of Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee and Dunleer. In the open countryside the construction and demand for one off housing remains high.

3.4 HOUSING STRATEGY

In accordance with the requirements of Section 94 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended),* a Housing Strategy has been prepared for this Plan. The purpose of a Housing Strategy is to ensure that provision is made for the housing requirements of the existing and future population of the County.

National Policy Objective 37 of the National Planning Framework (NPF), requires each Local Authority to develop a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA), which must underpin and support the preparation of housing strategies and all related housing policy outputs.

A detailed analysis of socio-economic data was used to create a robust, evidence based baseline that informed the policy framework for household growth during the plan period.

It is anticipated that the HNDA carried out as part of the Housing Strategy in this Plan will enhance how acute and unmet demand for housing is identified before it arises.

It provides a robust assessment of regional and localised influences, such as population and migration in quantifying needs and demands. The analysis of the socio-economic data provided the baseline for projecting future household tenure and size during the lifetime of the Plan.

Further details are set out in Section 4.0 of the Housing Strategy 'Housing Needs' (Volume 3, Appendix 3).

The Housing Strategy has determined that 1,949 households will not qualify for a mortgage during the plan period.

It has also been determined that these 1,949 households will not meet the affordability criteria for private rental. These households are considered to require social and affordable housing. This equates to 29.1% of the additional anticipated households during the plan period.

Full details of the Housing Strategy are set out in Volume 3, Appendix 3.

Policy Objective	
HOU 1	To secure the implementation of the *Louth Housing Strategy 2021-2027.*

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

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

Policy Objective	
HOU 4	To facilitate the development of emergency accommodation, including hostels for homeless individuals and families, in a balanced way throughout the County but based on needs in particular areas.

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

Policy Objective	
HOU 6	To monitor and maintain a record of residential development permitted in settlements designated under the settlement hierarchy and development permitted in rural nodes and the open countryside for compliance with the objectives of the Core Strategy and in accordance with any Departmental guidance published around the establishment of a HNDA coordination and monitoring unit and related implementation of a centralised spatial database for Local Authority Housing.

Policy Objective	
HOU 7	To support the ongoing monitoring and review of the HNDA in accordance with any guidance on HNDA methodology issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

3.5 VACANT SITE LEVY

As part of the government strategy to incentivise the use and development of vacant and under-utilised lands as a means of supporting economic development in urban areas, a Vacant Site Levy was introduced. The legislation for this levy is set out in the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015.*

The intention of the Vacant Site Levy is to function as a site activation tool that incentivises the development of vacant or idle sites that will allow the Council to engage in a strategy of active land management. This Levy will assist in the implementation of the Development Plan strategy of supporting compact growth, the regeneration of under-utilised lands in urban areas and meeting the housing needs of the County.

The levy is applicable to residential and regeneration lands, which are defined as follows:

- Residential lands means lands zoned for use solely or primarily for residential purposes in accordance with Section 10(2)(a) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended);* and
- Regeneration land means lands identified for renewal or regeneration in accordance with Section 10(2)(h) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*.

3.5.1 Lands Identified for Residential Use

The following land use zonings are applicable to the residential category of the Vacant Site Levy:

- A1 Existing Residential;
- A2 New Residential Phase 1;
- B1 Town or Village Centre; and
- C1 Mixed Use.

3.5.2 Lands Identified For Regeneration

The lands identified with a 'D1 Regeneration' zoning objective are applicable to the regeneration category of the vacant site levy.

3.5.3 Implementation of the Vacant Site Levy

As part of the active land management strategy for the County, the Council will establish a Vacant Site Register, by identifying sites which are vacant and meet the requirements of the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act (as amended)*. This Register will be monitored and reviewed by the Council on a regular basis. Section 16 of *the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (as amended)* sets out the levy due, which is equal to 7% of the market value of the site for 2019 and subsequent years (unless otherwise revised).

Policy Objective	
HOU 8	To promote the sustainable development of vacant residential and regeneration sites in all development centres in the County, as appropriate, in accordance with the requirements of the *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (as amended).*

3.5.4 Regeneration Areas

In recognition of the need to promote and facilitate compact growth and the consolidation of development in urban areas, this Plan has identified lands on which regeneration proposals will be supported. Such regeneration projects will assist in the creation of more sustainable neighbourhoods and communities through enhancements to the public realm and built environment which will make the areas more attractive for economic investment. These regeneration areas are set out in Table 3.1.

Policy Objective	
HOU 9	To support and facilitate investment in areas and lands in the County identified for regeneration including those as set out on the Land Use Zoning Maps and to collaborate with landowners and stakeholders in the development of these lands.

Table 3.1: Lands/Areas identified for Regeneration in Louth

Settlement	General Location	Overview
Drogheda	Docklands Area	An extensive area of lands to the north and south of the River Boyne with potential for a new urban quarter. Drogheda Docklands Area Plan was published in 2007.
Drogheda	Westgate Area	An area to the west of the town centre characterised by a high level of underutilised buildings and vacant lands with potential for a mixed use development including commercial and residential uses. The Westgate Vision was published in 2018.
Drogheda	Former Quarry	A former quarry located in the northern part of the town with potential for tourism, recreation and residential uses.

Settlement	General Location	Overview
Dundalk	Carroll Village	The land includes the former Carroll Village Shopping Centre and a large surface car park with a total area of 2 hectares. The site is suitable for a mixed use development including commercial, retail and residential uses.
Dundalk	Longwalk Shopping Centre	The existing Longwalk Shopping Centre is located immediately south of the former Carroll Village Shopping Centre. The shopping centre has declined significantly in recent years. Tesco remains the anchor tenant within the centre. The former Toymaster building to the north-east of the centre is included within this regeneration area. There is a potential for this area to be redeveloped for retail and associated mixed uses.
Dundalk	St. Nicholas Quarter	This area of the town has experienced high levels of vacancy, ad-hoc development and dereliction. The area has the potential to be rejuvenated and developed as an urban quarter along Bridge Street, Northgate Street, and Linenhall Street.
Ardee	Former Bakery Site	This site is the former Ardee Bakery and is located on the eastern side of Castle Street. The building is a Protected Structure of notable design with significant development potential for a range of uses.

3.6 SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

The way we experience our towns and villages is through local neighbourhoods – where we live, work, spend our free time and socialise. It is within these neighbourhoods that communities develop. As we strive to create more compact settlements and facilitate population growth in a consolidated urban environment, it is critical that such growth provides for the creation of sustainable, healthier neighbourhoods and communities. This can be achieved by:

- Connecting residential, employment, commercial and recreational areas with footpaths, cycle paths and public transport;
- Promoting wellbeing and an active lifestyle in the local community;
- Engagement with the local community and promoting sustainable practices such as energy and water conservation and waste reduction;
- Promoting social integration that supports the creation of mixed tenure communities where there is an appropriate mix of housing to meet the needs of the entire community; and
- Creating safe, accessible neighbourhoods that encourage more social interaction and outdoor activities.

This Plan seeks to support the continued development of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities throughout the County. It will facilitate employment creation and economic investment in locations that would reduce journey times to work.

It will promote healthy living by encouraging compact growth and the development of infill and brownfield sites in preference to edge of centre greenfield locations, and promote quality residential developments with a suitable mix of housing in proximity to local services and community and recreational facilities.

Policy Objective	
HOU 10	To continue to support the creation of sustainable communities throughout the County for people across all the life stages by facilitating the creation of attractive neighbourhoods where there are strong links and connections to local services, community facilities and employment areas and where walking, cycling, and public transport is prioritised.

3.7 Town Centre Living

The traditional role of the town centre was to meet the retail needs of the local community. Changing consumer habits, continued competition from out of town shopping and the increasing presence of online retailing is resulting in town centres facing unprecedented challenges, resulting in a decrease in footfall and an increase in vacancy.

Taking account of the changing retail environment, a new approach is required to assist in revitalising town centres.

This Plan will support a multi-dimensional approach to re-energising and returning the vibrancy to town centres.

This includes support for different business uses that will allow town centres to become multi-functional destinations providing services, leisure, cultural, civic and residential uses.

Part of this multi-dimensional strategy is to bring people back to the town centre by facilitating town centre living. This will include the re-use or adaptation of vacant and under-utilised buildings.

Residential development may be considered at ground floor level in certain circumstances, or locations where there has been a sustained level of vacancy over a prolonged period. This will normally be on lands outside the Core Retail Area of town centres.

The provision of such accommodation will only be facilitated in circumstances where it is demonstrated that the development would complement the role of the town centre as a 'destination' for commercial, social or cultural activities.

Policy Objective	
HOU 11	To encourage and support a range of appropriate uses in town and village centres that will assist in the regeneration of vacant and under-utilised buildings and land and will re-energise the town and village centres, subject to a high standard of development being achieved.

3.8 HOUSING FOR OLDER PERSONS

With people living longer and the proportion of older persons in the population projected to increase, it is important that there is a suitable choice of accommodation for older persons that will allow them to live independently for longer and remain part of the community.

The Council has been proactive in its support for older persons and has published '*The Louth Age Friendly Strategy'*, which seeks to strengthen the wellbeing of older persons within their communities.

At a national level the Government recognises the evolving needs of older persons, who should be encouraged and supported to live independently for as long as possible.

The Policy Statement '*Housing Options for Our Ageing Population'* published by the Government in 2020 identifies the need to plan ahead to meet the needs of an ageing population.

This Policy Statement has identified 6 principles for Housing for our Ageing population as follows:

Ageing in Place: Housing should be located close to amenities and services to enhance independence;

Supporting Urban Renewal: The provision of quality urban centres with a choice of housing tenures will support ageing in place and will allow older persons to choose housing options appropriate to their needs;

Promoting Sustainable Lifetime Housing: Accommodation should be adaptable and accessible to meet the changing housing and health requirements of people as they get older;

Using Assistive Technology: Accommodation should be designed to facilitate the installation of smart technology to facilitate assistive technologies such as TeleCare, TeleHealth, and Remote Monitoring, in order to provide a sense of security and connectivity for older persons living alone;

Staying Socially Connected: Accommodation should be located in areas where social supports are available, and where there are opportunities to integrate and connect with the local community; and

Working Together: It is essential that all stakeholders work together to develop appropriate housing options and choice for people as they age.

This Plan will support the implementation of these principles in order to ensure housing for older persons is appropriately located to allow people to retain their independence and remain part of the community as they get older.

As part of the strategy of consolidation and compact growth, there will be opportunities for the redevelopment of infill and brownfield land in central areas of towns and villages. Such lands may be suitable for accommodation for older persons

In larger developments, consideration should be given to providing single storey units. This would give older persons living in larger houses the choice to 'rightsize' if they desire.

Further details on housing options for older persons are set out in Chapter 4 'Social and Community'.

Policy Objective	
HOU 12	To support the implementation of the Policy Statement '*Housing Options for Our Ageing Population'* and the provision of independent and/or assisted living for older persons such as purpose built accommodation, the adaptation of existing properties, and opportunities for older persons to avail of 'rightsizing' within their community at locations that are proximate to existing services and amenities including pedestrian paths, local shops, parks and public transport.

3.9 SPECIALIST HOUSING

The provision of appropriate housing for people with disabilities or mental health issues, including specialist and supported housing, is crucial to helping them live safe and independent lives.

Location is key when considering housing for people with disabilities.

Access to public transport, local community services and facilities are significant factors in improving quality of life.

In terms of housing design, compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations expands options available to people with a disability.

The Council will support development which will provide respite and/or residential care at appropriate locations in the County, which should be designed and constructed in accordance with the principles of universal design.

In all cases, development must be in accordance with the principles of universal design and the National Disability Authority's '*Building for Everyone: A Universal Approach' (2012)* publication and shall have regard to the Government's '*National Disability Strategy'* (2004) and '*National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2015'*.

In 2016 the Council published a strategy for Housing Persons with a Disability.

This Strategy seeks to facilitate access for people with disabilities to the appropriate range of housing and support services and to deliver this housing in the mainstream housing environment.

Policy Objective	
HOU 13	To support the provision of independent and/or assisted living for people with disabilities or mental health issues such as purpose built accommodation or the adaptation of existing properties.

3.10 TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

The *Louth County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024* sets out the Council's policy in relation to Traveller Accommodation. There are a full range of housing options available in the provision of accommodation for Traveller's including; standard social housing, traveller halting site accommodation, private house ownership and private rented accommodation, with the support of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

The Programme includes proposals to carry out refurbishments and energy upgrades to existing traveller group housing schemes in Drogheda and Dundalk. It is also proposed to progress four group housing schemes in Dundalk during the life of the Programme.

With regard to halting sites there was a major refurbishment to the Woodland Park halting site in Dundalk. It is envisaged that the need for halting site accommodation will be met through re-letting of the existing bays.

The requirement for a halting site in Drogheda will be reviewed during the life of the Programme.

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

3.11 DENSITIES

As part of the strategy of securing more compact growth and consolidating development in central locations there will be a greater focus on delivering developments at a higher density.

Such an approach would make more effective use of land, would increase the critical mass of population in the urban core of settlements and maximise the return on infrastructure investment.

Depending on the built form of a development, different densities can be achieved. This can include apartment developments in courtyards or single/multiple blocks, terraces consisting of standard housing or apartments and duplex units, and detached and semi-detached units.

When identifying the potential density of a site, consideration must be given to the surrounding context and how the development would relate to the existing built form and character of its location.

One of the key elements of making a high density development an attractive place to live, is in the quality of the internal design such as the amount of daylight the accommodation receives and the external space on which the building(s) is located i.e. the quality of the public realm. The quality of the open space is also a critical aspect.

The densities in this Plan are informed by national and regional policy and the *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, which requires higher density developments in centrally located areas, large urban areas and along public transport corridors.

Whilst it is an objective of this Plan to support higher densities, this will take account of the capacity of the lands to accommodate this type of development, the location of the lands and public transport accessibility.

The primary considerations will be the quality of the residential environment that will be created. The recommended density of residential developments in the County is detailed in Table 3.2.

In the Self-Sustaining Towns and Small Towns and Villages, the density of development will be reflective of the character of the settlement and the existing pattern of development in the area.

Whilst all developments should strive to achieve the recommended densities, it is acknowledged that there will be cases where there are specific constraints (such as topography) that will restrict the scale of development that can be delivered. In such cases a lower density than that prescribed may be considered acceptable.

Table 3.2: Recommended Densities in Higher Tier Settlements

Settlement Category	Recommended Minimum Density per Hectare	
	Town Centre	Edge of Settlement
Regional Growth Centres Dundalk and Drogheda	50	35
Self-Sustaining Growth Town Ardee and Dunleer	35	25

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

3.12 BUILDINGS OF HEIGHT

In the right location higher buildings can raise the profile of an area, signal change, support regeneration and create local employment opportunities.

National and Regional policy supports compact growth and consolidating and strengthening the existing built up areas of settlements.

It is envisaged that this will be achieved by increasing the building height and density of residential development in urban settlements.

The traditional height of buildings in Louth consists of low rise buildings. In the town centre areas of Drogheda and Dundalk buildings are generally 2-3 storeys high. However, in recent years, a number of taller buildings have been developed for commercial and residential uses.

This Plan will support increased building heights particularly in Drogheda and Dundalk, signifying their importance as regional growth centres.

When identifying a potential location for higher buildings the following principles and criteria shall be taken into account:

Location: Higher buildings will normally be located in central areas of towns close to public transport, in strategic locations at the entrance to towns or on strategic lands on the approach road to the town centre.

The local area shall have the social and physical infrastructure to accommodate the increased levels of activity.

Strengthened Legibility: Higher buildings shall be a positive landmark in the streetscape and shall respect and respond to the character of the area.

Strengthen the Sense of Place: Higher buildings have an important role in shaping the perceptions of an area. If they are poorly designed or located in the wrong area they can create a negative image for an area.

Promote Quality Design: Higher buildings must make a positive and lasting contribution to their location.

Protect and Enhance the Existing Streetscape and Heritage: It is important that higher buildings do not disrupt or negatively impact on the historic areas of towns or intrude on important views. They should only be located in places that would enhance the character of an area.

Policy Objective	
HOU 16	To support increased building heights in appropriate locations in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

3.13 Principles for Quality Design and Layout

A well designed development can add value to the local environment by creating a sense of wellbeing and community, improving the quality of the built environment and promoting active and healthy lifestyles. There are various guidelines that have been published over the past decade which provide a policy foundation for the design of residential developments and neighbourhoods. These include:

- The policy statement *Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities* and associated guidelines *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities*, (published in 2007) and
- The *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines* and accompanying *Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide,* (published in 2009).









A full list of the guidance documents relating to residential developments is available in Section 13.8 'Housing in Urban Areas' of the Development Management Guidelines in Chapter 13.

The Urban Design Manual demonstrates how the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines can be implemented.

The Manual is based on twelve criteria that incorporate the design considerations for a residential development. These criteria are intended to act as a practical guide in the urban design process and can assist in identifying a design response and solution during this process.

3.13.1 Placemaking

Placemaking is a design approach that can add value to a development. This takes account of the location, character, topography, history and any other issues that have shaped the area in which a development is located. It is a broad concept that brings together a range of interrelated disciplines including planning, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering and infrastructure, ecology, economics and social work.

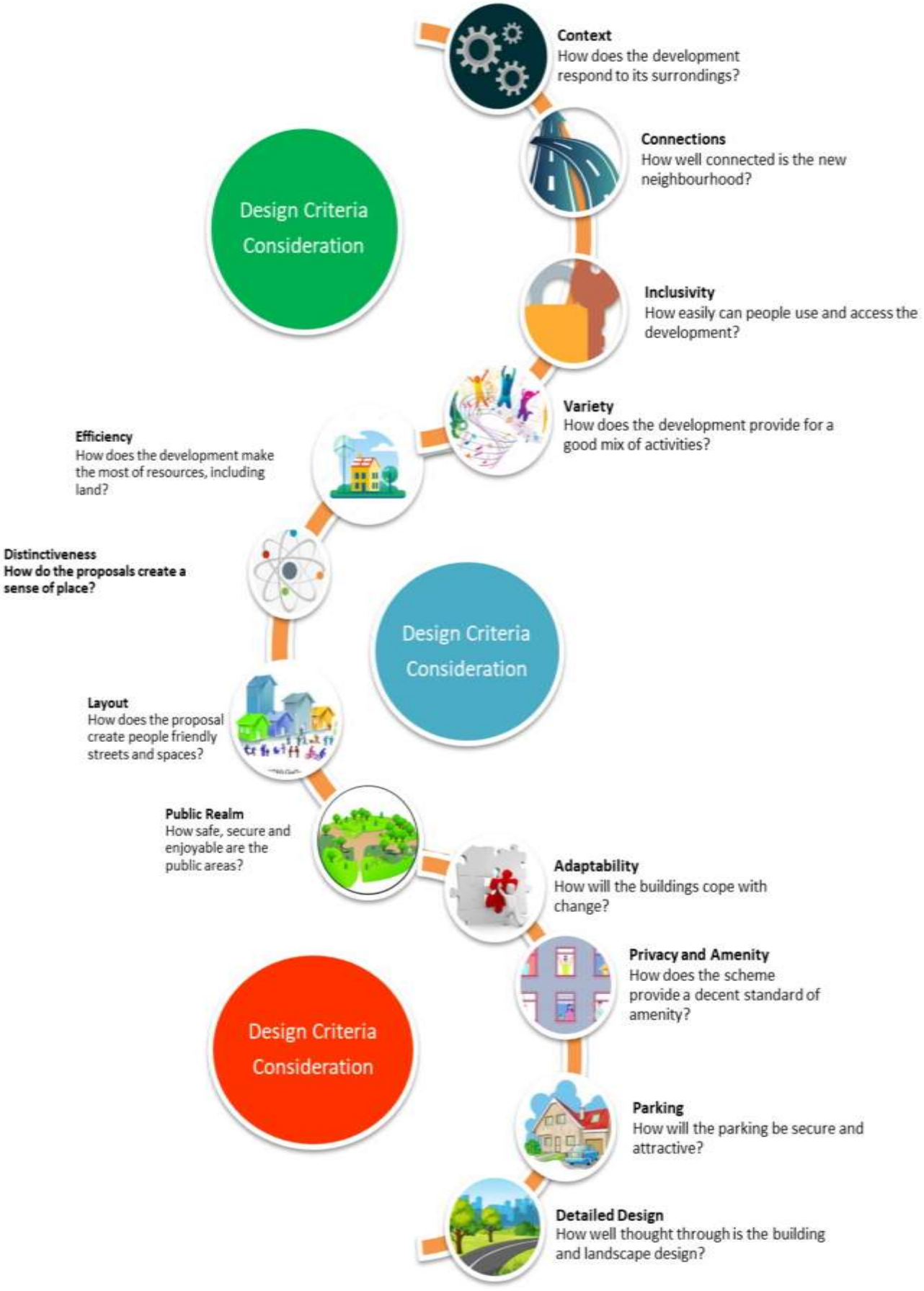
The RSES sets out a series of Guiding Principles for 'Healthy Placemaking' which includes multi-functional open spaces, connectivity between schools, workplaces, and residential areas, and giving priority to walking, cycling and accessibility. This Plan will seek to implement these Guiding Principles, which are set out in further detail in Section 9.4 of the RSES.

Some of the key principles of placemaking include the creation of neighbourhoods where people can fulfil their daily needs and feel safe. The most successful neighbourhoods are well-connected, multi-functional and tend to have a wide variety of things to do in them.

They have attractive streets and spaces that are safe, secure and easy to navigate. These principles assist in creating a sense of community and identity and make places more attractive to live, due to the vibrancy and quality of life associated with such places and neighbourhoods.

Policy Objective	
HOU 17	To promote and facilitate the sustainable development of a high quality built environment where there is a distinctive sense of place in attractive streets, spaces, and neighbourhoods that are accessible and safe places for all members of the community to meet and socialise.

Figure 3.1: Urban Design Manual Criteria



3.14 Creating a Well Designed Place

In achieving a well-designed place there are a range of factors that need to be considered, including:

i. **Layout**: The layout of a development sets out its arrangement, the distribution of uses, and how the buildings, streets and open spaces connect to one another. The layout should be functional and be designed to promote social interaction where people are encouraged to walk, cycle and utilise areas of open space.

   This can be achieved by creating an active frontage where buildings front onto streets and open spaces and by positioning open spaces in accessible and centrally located areas. In larger developments, a well-designed layout should be able to accommodate a range of uses including residential, community, educational, commercial and employment related uses.

   In such a mixed use scheme, the layout should ensure that the location of the various land uses would minimise the requirement to travel by car, whilst also protecting the amenity of residential neighbourhoods and creating a safe and secure environment where children can play and neighbours can interact. The limited use of vehicular cul-de-sacs may be considered in residential developments where there is a particular concern regarding through traffic or challenges in creating an inclusive, safe, and secure living environment. This will only be considered where their use would not dominate such layouts. On larger and/or irregular blocks short cul-de-sacs may also be used for midblock penetration to serve a small number of dwellings and to enable more compact /efficient forms of development.

ii. **Form, Scale and Mass:** The form of a building refers to its three-dimensional shape, which is dependent on its size, height and bulk/volume. The mass of a building combines with its shape and bulk and refers to the actual size of a building, or its size relative to its local context. It is directly related to the visual impact of a building.

   The scale of a building refers to its height, width and length in relation to its surroundings. It can relate to the size of a building in the context of its surrounding area or the relationship between different parts of a building, which are known as its proportions. The scale of a building can affect how the space around it can be used and experienced.

iii. **Visual Appearance:** The appearance of a building refers to its design aspects which determine the visual impact it has both in isolation and in the surrounding environment. This includes the style of the building, and its scale, proportions and finishes.

iv. **Hard and Soft Landscaping:** Hard landscaping includes surfacing, boundary treatments, street furniture and play equipment while soft landscaping includes trees, shrubs, grassed areas and other planting. These are important features in determining how a building or development integrates with the surrounding environment.

v. **Finishes:** The finishes to a building or space can affect the overall design quality of a development and can influence the relationship between the building or space and what is around it. The finishes should be appropriate for the location, be durable and attractive, and facilitate the integration of the building or development into the local landscape.

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

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

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

Policy Objective	
HOU 21	To ensure that new residential developments are consistent, in so far as practicable, with the '*Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*' in creating attractive, sustainable, climate resilient and healthy communities.

Policy Objective	
HOU 22	To require residential developments to prioritise and facilitate walking, cycling, and public transport and to include provision for links and connections to existing facilities and public transport nodes in the wider neighbourhood.

Policy Objective	
HOU 23	To require the layout of residential developments to take account of the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019)* in the provision of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and crossing points and the design of estate roads and junctions.

Policy Objective	
HOU 24	To require the provision of high quality areas of public open space in new residential developments that are functional spaces, centrally located, and passively overlooked.

Policy Objective	
HOU 25	All new residential and single house developments shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the Development Management Guidelines set out in Chapter 13 of this Plan.

3.15 Dwelling Mix and Adaptable Homes

It is important for new residential areas to include an appropriate mix of house types to meet the needs of all tenures and age groups including families, persons living alone and older persons. This will provide choice for people and will support the creation of a balanced, sustainable community.

The provision of a range of housing types and sizes in the County will become more important, as trends show a decline in family housing and an increase in older and single person households.

New homes should be designed so that they are adaptable and can be altered to meet the needs of residents through different stages of life.

The application of the 'Universal Design' concept at the design and construction stage of a development can be a cost effective way of future proofing a home and incorporating sustainable designs and smart technologies that will allow people to live independently for longer.

In larger housing developments of 100 residential units or more provisions shall be made for single storey properties to broaden the choice of accommodation available.

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

Policy Objective	
HOU 27	To require the provision of single storey properties in residential developments in excess of 100 units at a rate of at least 1% single storey units per 100 residential units unless it can be demonstrated by evidence based research carried out by an appropriately qualified professional that there is no demand for this type of accommodation.

Policy Objective	
HOU 28	To encourage innovation in design that delivers buildings of a high quality that positively contribute to the built environment and local streetscape.

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

Policy Objective	
HOU 30	To encourage building design and layout that maximises daylight and natural ventilation and incorporates energy efficiency and conservation measures that will improve the environmental performance of buildings in line with best practice.

Policy Objective	
HOU 31	To actively support proposals that encourage town centre living such as converting upper floors of buildings (above ground floor) into residential use in order to revitalise the social and physical fabric of urban centres in the County and to facilitate a relaxation of development standards for such projects subject to the provision of good quality accommodation.

3.16 Other Residential Developments in Urban Areas

3.16.1 Infill, Corner and Backland Sites

The development of underutilised infill, corner and backland sites in existing residential areas is generally encouraged. A balance is needed, between the protection of amenities, privacy, the established character of the area and new residential infill.

The use of contemporary and innovative design solutions will be considered for this type of development.

Policy Objective	
HOU 32	To encourage and promote the development of underutilised infill, corner and backland sites in existing urban areas subject to the character of the area and environment being protected.

Policy Objective	
HOU 33	To promote the use of contemporary and innovative design solutions subject to the design respecting the character and architectural heritage of the area.

3.16.2 Extensions to Dwellings

The need for people to extend and renovate their dwellings is recognised and acknowledged.

Extensions of appropriate scale will be considered favourably where they do not have a negative impact on adjoining properties or on the nature of the surrounding area.

Policy Objective	
HOU 34	To encourage sensitively designed extensions to existing dwellings which do not negatively impact on the environment, residential amenities, surrounding properties, or the local streetscape and are climate resilient.

3.16.3 Student Accommodation

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) is the most significant third level institution in County Louth. Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE) located in Moneymore also provides many training courses and programmes. The Lourdes Hospital is also a major training hospital in close proximity to DIFE.

In considering planning applications for student accommodation the Council will have regard to the *'Guidelines on Residential Developments for 3rd Level Students'* updated in 2020 (particularly in relation to location and design).

Policy Objective	
HOU 35	To support the provision of accommodation for third level students on the campus of third level institutions or at other appropriate locations with access to high quality cycling and walking linkages and public transport that are proximate to centres of third level education.

3.17 Housing in the Open Countryside

The open countryside in Louth is a valuable resource to the County and wider Region. The scenic landscape and the local amenities are an important source of enjoyment and the farmland produces high quality agricultural produce. The quality of life associated with rural living means there is a high demand for housing in the open countryside.

This is presenting challenges for the long term sustainability of rural areas as the landscape is being gradually eroded and farmland is slowly being depleted.

This Plan recognises the importance of rural life and the rural economy to the County and will strive to support the continued growth and development of rural areas.

It is important that a balance is achieved that will allow the countryside to be preserved for future generations whilst also facilitating the growth of the rural economy and rural communities.



3.17.1 Rural Housing and Climate Change

In achieving a balance of supporting rural communities and protecting the countryside, consideration must be given to the impact of the pattern of development associated with one off housing on the climate and environment.

The sporadic nature of one off housing results in an over-dependence on the car, with limited opportunities for people to walk or cycle due to the distance between homes and school, work or local services. The proliferation of individual septic tanks and waste water treatment systems is also impacting on soil and water quality.

As we strive to mitigate against the impacts of climate change, it is important that future development patterns reduce our carbon footprint, protects our environment and promotes more sustainable ways of living.

3.17.2 Policy Context

The policy for single housing in the countryside in this Plan has been guided by national and regional policy, a summary of which is set out as follows:

The National Planning Framework (NPF) acknowledges the contribution of rural areas to the economic, social and cultural development of the country. It seeks to strengthen rural communities, improve connectivity and address decline by focusing on the potential for the renewal and development of smaller towns and villages.



The document identifies a link between the spatial imbalance created by one off housing and the impact this has had on the decline of smaller settlements and the level of services available. There is therefore a strong emphasis on revitalising towns and villages and focusing local housing and employment growth in these locations.

The NPF developed an evidence based approach to the identification of rural areas under pressure for development, by including a definition of the functional urban area or commuter catchment around a city or large town[1]. Any rural areas located within the commuter catchment of a city or large town are considered to be areas under urban influence. Applications for one off rural dwellings in these locations are to be considered with regard to an economic or social need to live in the rural area, siting and design criteria and the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements[2].

Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 recognises that in planning for rural areas, a balance is required between managing urban generated demand and supporting the sustainable growth of rural communities and economies.

The Strategy highlights the significant levels of growth experienced in rural areas close to large urban settlements and the need to manage the level of growth in these locations.

There is an acknowledgement that support for housing and population growth within rural towns and villages would provide a viable alternative to one-off rural housing. This is confirmed in the policy objective supporting the development of a 'New Homes in Small Towns and Villages' initiative in Development Plans included in the Strategy[3].

Sustainable Rural Housing, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, published in 2005, advocate that Planning Authorities should take an analytical and plan led approach to enable Development Plans to respond to the challenges facing rural areas. They require the needs of rural communities to be identified in the development plan process and that residential development is accommodated at appropriate locations necessary to sustain rural communities.

[1] This definition is based on the EU/OECD definition of a city region which is where 15% of the principle workforce is employed in the principle city area.

[2] This criteria is set out in National Policy Objective 19 of the National Planning Framework.

[3] Regional Policy Objective 4.78

The Guidelines require the Council to identify the different types of rural areas within the County, depending on the pressure the area is under for development.

There is also an emphasis on ensuring the planning system guides development to the right locations thereby protecting natural habitats such as environmentally sensitive areas and important scenic landscapes.

In 2017, the DECLG issued a Circular Letter PL 2/2017 indicating that the Guidelines are currently being reviewed to take account of the 'Flemish Decree Case' by the European Court of Justice and the updated policy approach to rural development set out in the National Planning Framework. At the time of writing the updated guidelines had not been published.

3.17.3 Identifying Rural Area Types

As part of the information gathering and evidence base on which this Plan has been prepared, an analysis of the level of development in rural areas in the County was carried out. This included:

- The use of POWSCAR [4] data from Census 2016 to identify where people in rural areas are working;
- An analysis of census data to examine population and housing levels, and vacancy in rural areas;
- An analysis of CSO 'New Dwelling Completions' data to identify the number of new dwellings completed in rural areas ;and
- An identification of areas and landscapes that are environmentally sensitive or of high scenic value.

In the analysis of the POWSCAR data, it was evident that there is a strong relationship between large urban centres and the rural areas with high volumes of commuting to Drogheda, Dundalk and the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

This analysis is consistent with the approach taken in the NPF and RSES, where the 'Functional Urban Area' (FUA) or commuter catchment of cities and large urban centres was identified[5].

Following a detailed analysis of the information gathered it was concluded that the entire county is 'under strong urban influence'.

This is due to a number of factors including the following:

- The high rate of outbound commuting from rural areas in Louth to the Dublin Metropolitan Area and the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk for employment;
- Recent and historic levels of one off housing in rural parts of the County;
- Pressure on infrastructure in rural areas such as local roads; and
- Pressure on rural areas of high scenic quality and environmental sensitivity.

In addition to being under pressure from urban generated development, there are parts of the County that are environmentally sensitive areas due to their high scenic quality and cultural value. It is important that development in these locations is carefully managed in order to preserve these sensitive landscapes.

[4] Place of Work, School or College – Census of Anonymised Records.

[5] Based on the OECD definition of a 'Functional Urban Area' if more than 15% of the resident population from an Electoral District travel to a city/large urban centre to work they are considered to be within the 'Functional Urban Area' or commuter catchment of that settlement.

These locations are as follows:

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty:
  - Carlingford and Feede Mountains, and
  - Clogherhead and Port Oriel.
- Areas of High Scenic Quality:
  - Feede Mountains and Cooley Area;
  - Monasterboice;
  - Boyne Valley/King Williams Glen;
  - Collon Uplands;
  - Dunany and
  - Ardee Bog.
- Areas of Cultural Value:
  - The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne:
  - The Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice; and
  - The Battle of the Boyne Battlefield Site.

Further details on the importance of these landscapes can be found in Chapter 8 Natural Heritage, Biodiversity, and Green Infrastructure, and Chapter 9 Built Heritage and Culture.

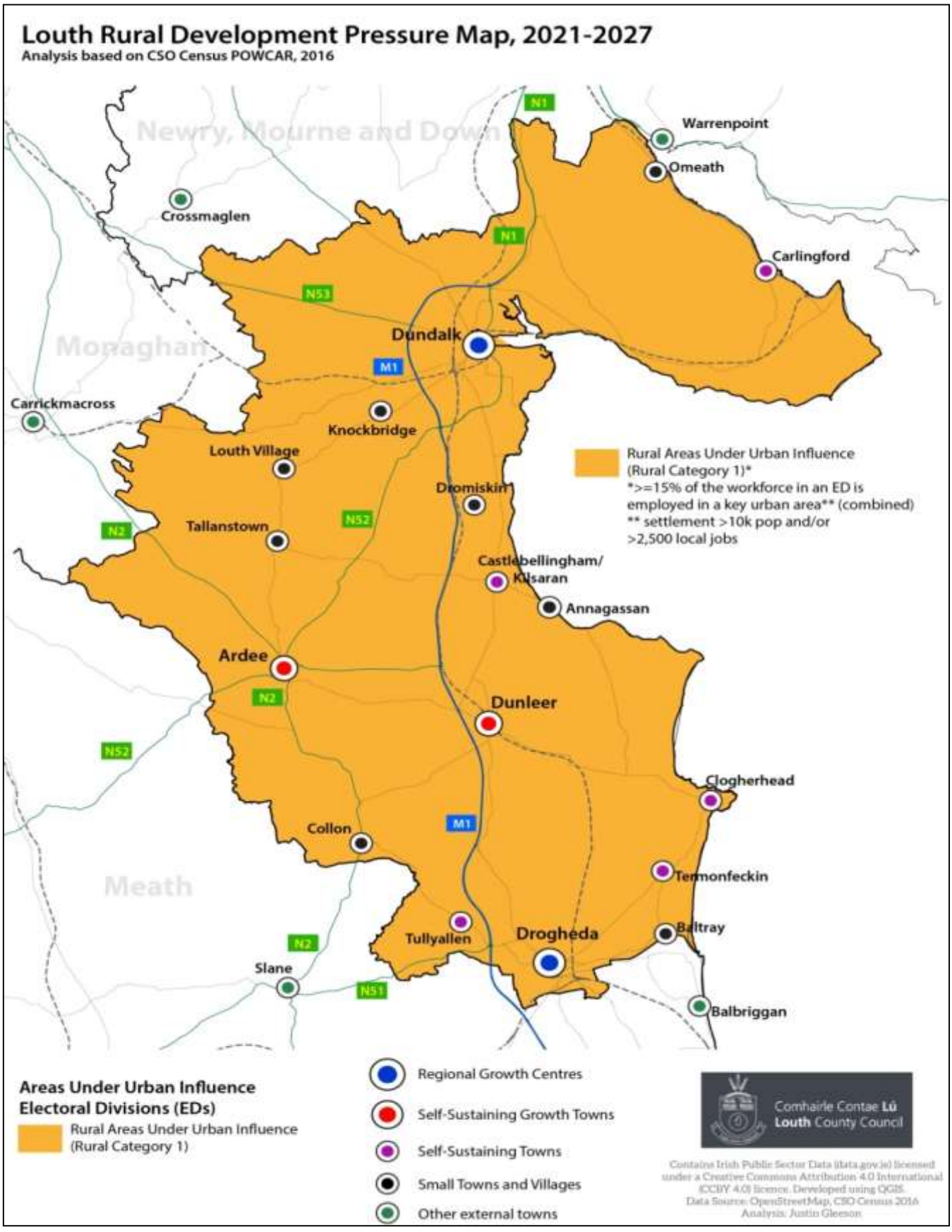
Taking this into account, two Rural Policy Zones have been identified in the County as follows:

Table 3.3: Rural Policy Zones

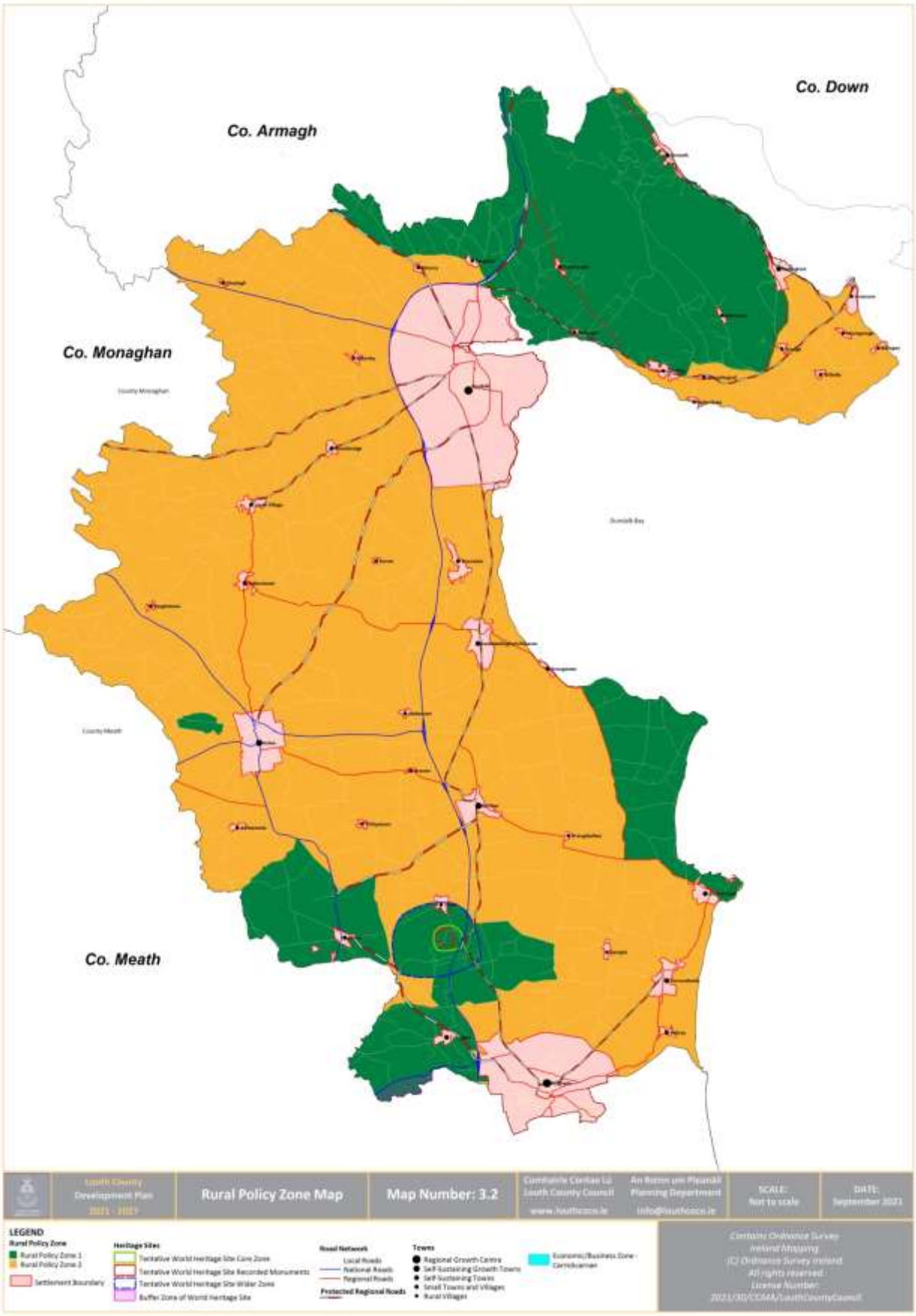
Policy Zone	Description
Rural Policy Zone 1	Area under strong urban influence and of significant landscape value
Rural Policy Zone 2	Area under strong urban influence

The extent of these policy zones are set out in Map 3.2.

Map 3.1: Louth Rural Development Pressure Map 2021-2027



Map 3.2: Rural Policy Zones in County Louth



3.17.4 Rural Generated Housing Need

This section sets out the policy for rural housing in the open countryside, which is defined as all areas outside the development boundary of settlements in Levels 1-5 identified in the settlement hierarchy in Table 2.4. It recognises the importance of facilitating people with a strong economic or social link to their local rural area, in strengthening the rural community. There is a specific qualifying criteria for each of the Rural Policy Zones that is set out in Tables 3.4 and 3.5.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate to the Planning Authority that they qualify with one of the criteria in the relevant Rural Policy Zone.

For clarification any persons from Rural Policy Zone 1 who are native residents of the area and have demonstrated a rural housing need but are not engaged in full time agricultural activities will be deemed to qualify to build on a suitably located site in Rural Policy Zone 2. The application site shall not normally be a distance of more than 6kms from the qualifying family residence.

Local Rural Area:
The radius of 6km from the qualifying family residence. Where the qualifying area is reduced by reason of its location, for example proximity to the coast, county boundaries, or development zone boundaries, the 6km radius may be extended to include an area equivalent to the area lost.

Qualifying Landowner:
A person who owns a landholding of at least 1.5 hectares and has owned the land for a minimum of 15 years.

Table 3.4: Local Housing Need Qualifying Criteria in Rural Policy Zone 1

Qualifying Criteria Rural Policy Zone 1 – Area Under Strong Urban Influence and of Significant Landscape Value

1. Persons engaged in full time agriculture. This includes livestock, poultry, dairy, and tillage farming, bloodstock and equine related activities, forestry, and horticulture. The nature of the agriculture activity shall, by reference to the landholding, livestock numbers, or intensity of the use of the land, be sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Depending on the activity the documentation available will vary however the onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate the viability of the enterprise. Information to be provided shall include:
    - The size of the landholding;
    - The nature of the operations;
    - Buildings and storage associated with the operations;
    - Number of persons employed;
    - Livestock numbers (if applicable);
    - Participation in government schemes/ programmes e.g. Bord Bia Quality Assurance, Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), GLAS, or any similar/updated programmes or schemes;
    - Any other information that would support the application.

Qualifying Criteria Rural Policy Zone 1 –
Area Under Strong Urban Influence and of Significant Landscape Value

Or

2. A son or daughter of a landowner (see definition above) who is/are seeking to build a first home for permanent occupation. A qualifying landowner is defined as a person who owns a landholding of at least 1.5 hectares and has owned the land for a minimum of 15 years. Any applicant under this category must demonstrate a rural housing need and have a demonstrable social or an economic need to live in the area and shall not have previously owned a dwelling. No more than three houses (exclusive of the family home) shall be permitted on the landholding. Any application will be subject to the appropriate siting and consideration of proper planning and sustainable development.

Or

3. A person who has an established business which is intrinsically reliant on being located in Rural Policy Zone 1 and consequently requires them to reside in Rural Policy Zone 1 of the rural area. The nature of the operations of the business shall be specific to this rural area being cognisant of the need to protect the high amenity value of the landscape. Any application shall demonstrate the viability of the business and clearly set out the nature of activities associated with the business and why it requires the owner to reside in the vicinity.

Or

4. Persons who are required to live in the rural area of Rural Policy Zone 1, for exceptional health reasons. The person will be required to have demonstrable economic or social ties to the area in the first instance to be considered under this category. Any application shall be accompanied by a medical consultant's report and recommendation outlining the reasons why it is necessary for the applicant to live in a rural area. The application shall also demonstrate why the existing home of the family member cannot be adapted to meet the needs of the applicant.

Or

5. Residents who have demonstrable social ties to the area and are providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. Any application shall demonstrate why the existing property cannot be extended or modified to provide residential accommodation for the carer. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the elderly person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

Or

6. A person who has been a resident for at least 10 years that previously owned a home and is no longer in possession of that home due to the home having been disposed of following legal separation / divorce / repossession and can demonstrate a social or economic need for a new home in the rural area.

Table 3.5: Local Housing Need Qualifying Criteria in Rural Policy Zone 2

Qualifying Criteria Rural Policy Zone 2 – Area Under Strong Urban Influence

1. Persons engaged in full time agriculture. This includes livestock, poultry, dairy, and tillage farming, bloodstock and equine related activities, forestry, and horticulture. The nature of the agriculture activity shall, by reference to the landholding, livestock numbers, or intensity of the use of the land, be sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Depending on the activity the documentation available will vary however the onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate the viability of the enterprise. Information to be provided shall include:
   - The size of the landholding
   - The nature of the operations
   - Buildings and storage associated with the operations
   - Number of persons employed
   - Livestock numbers (if applicable)
     i. Participation in government schemes/ programmes e.g. Bord Bia Quality Assurance, Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), GLAS, or any similar or replacement programmes or schemes.
     ii. Any other information that would support the application.

Or

2. A person whose business requires them to reside in the rural area. The nature of the operations of the business shall be specific to the rural area. Any application shall demonstrate the viability of the business and clearly set out the nature of activities associated with the business and why it requires the owner to reside in the vicinity.

Or

3. Landowners including their sons and daughters who have demonstrable social or economic ties to the area where they are seeking to build their home. Demonstrable social or economic ties will normally be someone who has resided in the rural area of Louth for at least 18 years prior to any application for planning permission. Any applicant under this category must demonstrate a rural housing need and shall not own or have sold a residential property in the County for a minimum of 10 years prior to making an application.

Or

4. A person who is seeking to build their first house in the area and has a demonstrable economic or social requirement to live in that area. Social requirements will be someone who has resided in the rural area of Louth for at least 18 years prior to any application for planning permission. Any applicant under this category must demonstrate a rural housing need and shall not own or have sold a residential property in the County prior to making an application.

Qualifying Criteria Rural Policy Zone 2 –

Area Under Strong Urban Influence

Or

5. An emigrant who was resident of the area (previously resided in the area for at least 18 years in total) and wishes to return to the area to live. The applicant shall not own or have sold a residential property in the County for a minimum of 10 years prior to making an application.

Or

6. Persons who are required to live in a rural area, for exceptional health reasons. Any application shall be accompanied by a medical consultant's report and recommendation outlining the reasons why it is necessary for the applicant to live in a rural area. The application shall also demonstrate why the existing home of the family member cannot be adapted to meet the needs of the applicant.

Or

7. Residents who have demonstrable social ties to the area and are providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. Any application shall demonstrate why the existing property cannot be extended or modified to provide residential accommodation for the carer. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the elderly person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

Or

8. A person who has been a resident for at least 10 years that previously owned a home and is no longer in possession of that home due to the home having been disposed of following legal separation / divorce / repossession and can demonstrate a social or economic need for a new home in the rural area.

3.17.5 Strengthening Rural Communities by Supporting the Rejuvenation of Small Towns and Villages

The NPF and RSES recognise the importance of towns and villages in creating a vibrant and sustainable rural community. Throughout the County there is evidence of decline in rural towns and villages which has resulted in a reduction of services and a loss of vitality in the community. This Plan recognises the importance of striking a balance between facilitating residential development in the open countryside and reinvigorating towns and villages. It therefore supports the implementation of a *'New Homes in Small Towns and Villages'* initiative which will involve Local Authorities, Irish Water, and local communities working closely to provide serviced sites in towns and villages.

If successfully implemented, this would provide a platform for the creation of sustainable rural communities, whereby an increase in population in towns and villages would increase the critical mass, create greater demand for services and establish a catchment population for local businesses. In developing these serviced sites the Council will also encourage close collaboration between other infrastructure providers including electricity, telecommunications and broadband providers.

3.17.6 Development in Level 5 Settlements – Rural Nodes

There are 24 Level 5 Settlements in the County. These rural nodes consist of a cluster of houses and a limited level of services. Some of these nodes are served by public mains water and/or waste water supply, whilst there are others that are unserviced.

There is capacity in these rural nodes to accommodate a small level of growth, with the capacity to accommodate growth dependent on the size of the settlement.

Any applicants applying to build a new dwelling in a Level 5 Rural Node will be required to demonstrate a rural housing need in accordance with the rural housing policy set out in Table 3.5 of this Plan. A person living in a Level 5 Rural Node and considered to qualify under Table 3.5 is considered eligible to build a dwelling in any Level 5 Rural Node.

The design and layout of any dwelling or development will have regard to the existing pattern of development in the settlement.

3.17.7 Capacity of Areas to Absorb Further Development

As part of the management of development in the countryside, consideration will be given to the ability of an area to absorb further development of one off housing. Whilst this Plan recognises the importance of supporting rural communities, there is also a requirement to protect the landscape and countryside for future generations. In this regard, if it is considered that an area is becoming over developed due to the proliferation of one off housing and the local infrastructure does not have the capacity to accommodate further development, it is unlikely that planning permission will be granted.

Further details on the criteria, and considerations for the siting and design of one off rural dwellings, is set out in Section 13.9 and Section 13.9.4 of the Development Management Guidelines in Chapter 13.

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

Policy Objective	
HOU 37	To support the growth and development of rural communities in the County by strengthening the role of rural towns and villages and facilitating development that would rejuvenate these settlements and make them an attractive location in which to live.

Policy Objective	
HOU 38	To reserve as decarbonisation zones, agricultural, open space, or recreational use, lands immediately surrounding or in the immediate vicinity of the development boundary of towns and villages in the County in order to prevent sprawl and a linear pattern of development, and to ensure there is a distinction between built up areas and the open countryside.

Policy Objective	
HOU 39	To support the development of a *'New Homes in Small Towns and Villages'* initiative in consultation with Irish Water, local communities, and other stakeholders in the provision of services and serviced sites to create 'build your own home' opportunities within the existing footprint of rural settlements.

Policy Objective	
HOU 40	To recognise the sensitive scenic and culturally important landscape in Rural Policy Zone 1 which includes Carlingford Lough and Mountains, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice, and the Battle of the Boyne Battlefield Site, and the need to carefully manage development in these areas whilst recognising the existing communities in these areas.

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

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

Policy Objective	
HOU 43	To manage the development of new housing in Level 5 settlements by requiring applicants of new dwellings to demonstrate compliance with the Local Needs Qualifying Criteria as set out in Table 3.5.

Policy Objective	
HOU 44	To attach an occupancy condition of 7 years in the form of a Section 47 agreement in respect of all planning permissions for new dwellings in rural areas and Level 5 Settlements restricting the use of the dwelling to the applicant, or to those persons who fulfil the criteria set out in Tables 3.4 and 3.5.

Policy Objective	
HOU 45	To apply a presumption against granting planning permission for a rural one off dwelling in Rural Policy Zone 1 where there is an alternative site available on family lands in Rural Policy Zone 2.

Policy Objective	
HOU 46	To restrict residential development on a landholding, where there is a history of development through the speculative sale or development of sites, notwithstanding the applicant's compliance with the local need criteria.

Policy Objective	
HOU 47	To require applications for one off rural housing to comply with the standards and criteria set out in Section 13.9 of Chapter 13 Development Management Guidelines 'Housing in the Open Countryside' or Section 13.19.9 if the site is located within the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice, or the Battle of the Boyne Sites.

3.18 VERNACULAR DWELLINGS/ BUILDINGS

Traditional vernacular dwellings make an important contribution to the character of the rural landscape in the County. The Council will encourage the preservation of vernacular dwellings through careful restoration and adaptation over their demolition and replacement.

The Council will also encourage the restoration or adaptation of vernacular buildings such as former schoolhouses, churches and traditional farm outbuildings.

Any applicant proposing to restore, renovate or adapt a vernacular building for residential use will not be required to demonstrate a rural housing need in accordance with Section 3.17.4.

Sections 13.9.11 and 13.9.12 provide further information on the design criteria for the restoration of vernacular dwellings and buildings.

Policy Objective	
HOU 48	To encourage the sensitive refurbishment of existing vernacular dwellings and buildings and to generally resist the demolition and replacement of these buildings in order to protect the traditional building and housing stock and preserve the built heritage in the rural parts of the County.

Policy Objective	
HOU 49	To require applications for refurbishment of vernacular dwellings/buildings to comply with the standards and criteria set out in section 13.9.12 of Chapter 13 Development Management Guidelines which relates to the 'Refurbishment of Existing Vernacular Dwellings and Buildings.'

3.19 REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS

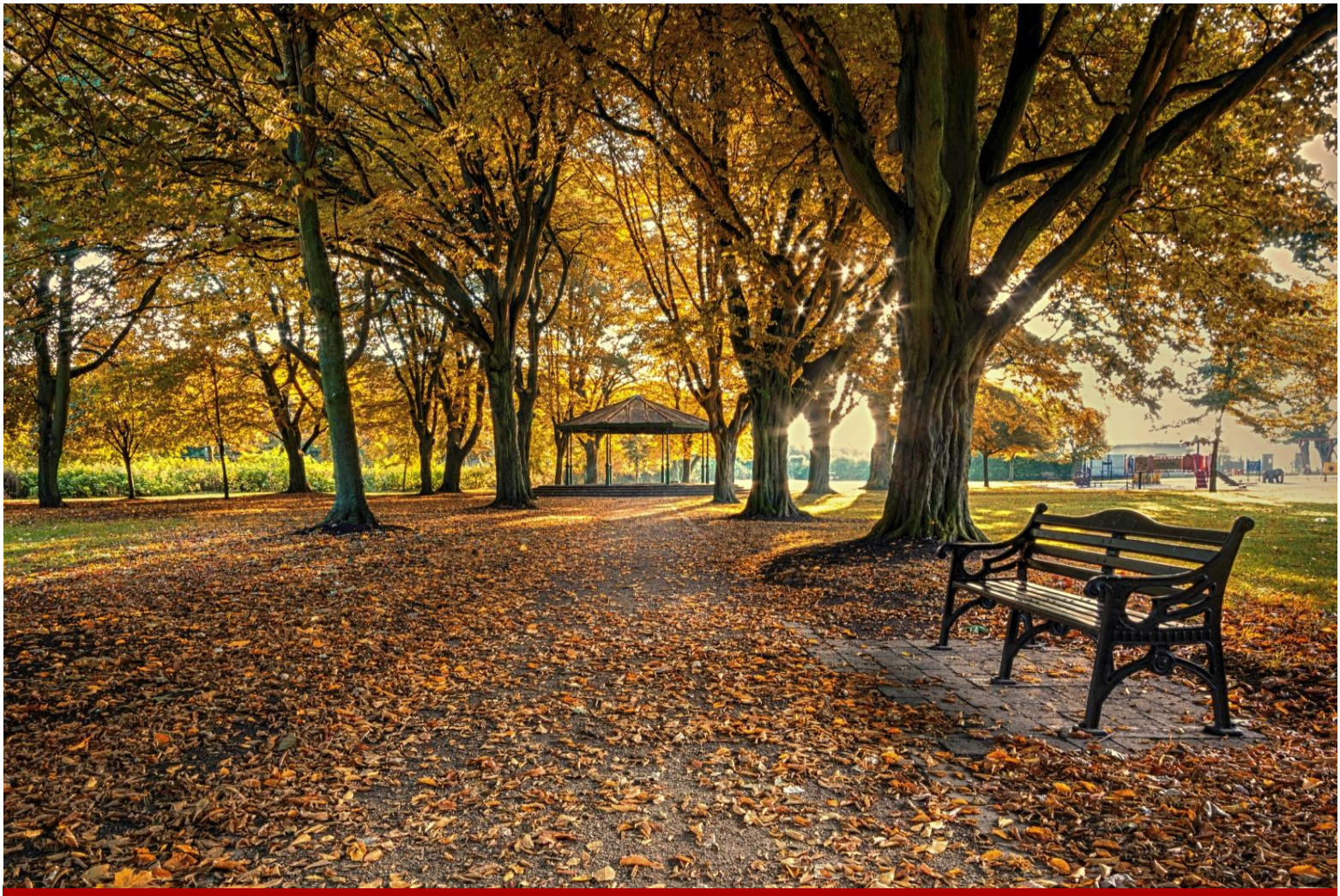
Whilst there is a general presumption in favour of retaining and refurbishing existing dwellings, particularly traditional vernacular dwellings that are part of the traditional housing stock and important features in the rural landscape, there will be instances where the replacement of existing dwellings may be acceptable.

Permission for the replacement of a vernacular dwelling will only be considered where it is demonstrated the subject vernacular dwelling is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved.

Any applicant proposing to replace an existing dwelling in residential use will not be required to demonstrate a rural housing need in accordance with Section 3.17.4, subject to the dwelling to be replaced fulfilling the criteria for a replacement dwelling. Section 13.9.13 provides further information on the design criteria for replacement dwellings.

Policy Objective	
HOU 50	To ensure the design, scale, and layout of any replacement dwelling does not have a visual impact significantly greater than the dwelling to be replaced.

Policy Objective	
HOU 51	To require applications for replacement dwellings to comply with the standards and criteria set out in Section 13.9.13 of Chapter 13 Development Management Guidelines 'Replacement Dwellings'.



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 Social and Community

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 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 Spatial and 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, including the provision of disability facilities such as those outlined by 'Changing Places Ireland' 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 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.

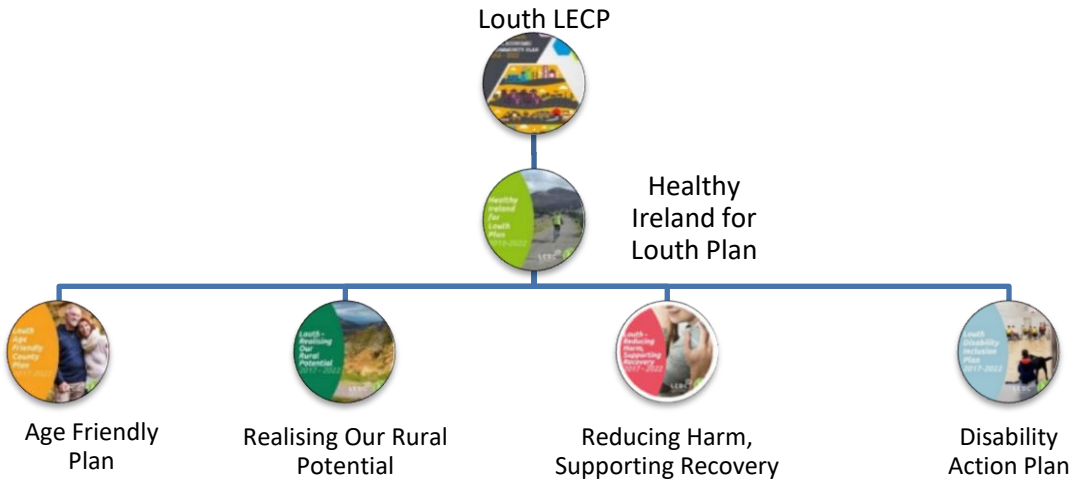
The PPN ensures access to information on funding, training events, networking, information gathering on decisions of Council, and input to policy.

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 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 RSES and the County Development 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 persons 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.

4.4.1 Healthy Ireland for Louth Plan 2018-2022

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 *Healthy Ireland for Louth Plan 2018-2022* and any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

Policy Objective	
SC 3	To support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the *National Physical Activity Plan,* through integrating such policies, where appropriate and of an applicable scale.

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 *Louth Disability Inclusion Plan 2017-2022* and any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

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 *Louth Age Friendly County Plan 2017-2022* and any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

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 persons, people with disabilities, and people with younger children can move about with ease, avoiding separation or segregation.

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 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 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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.



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 fulfil 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, older persons, 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' (2019)* 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 *Louth Local Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2018-2022* and any subsequent Plan prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

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.

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.

The importance of Arts and Culture and access thereto is acknowledged and supported in the RSES and the associated Regional Policy Objectives. The Plan in the formulation of its Policy Objectives has been in accordance with the RSES.

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.

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.

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 Louth *Library Service Development Plan 2020-2025 and* any subsequent plan to meet the needs of all members of the community and strengthen links with socially excluded members and groups of society.

Policy Objective	
SC 24	To deliver a library facility in the Cooley Area.

4.10 Education

Education is a critical driver of economic success and social progress. The provision of quality education and training is central to a 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 is responsible for the delivery of educational facilities and services. Louth County Council will continue to work closely with the Department of Education 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 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.

The Department of Education has identified that the two Regional Growth Centres of Dundalk and Drogheda will require additional sites to be zoned over the Plan period to accommodate the following:

- Drogheda: One new primary school and one new post primary school; and
- Dundalk: Two new primary schools and one new post primary school.

The identification and reservation of appropriate school sites will be further explored as part of the preparation of the Drogheda Joint LAP and the Dundalk LAP.

While the reservation of sites for educational use does not in itself guarantee the timely provision of necessary educational facilities, the Council will continue to liaise with the Department of Education, the Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) and other stakeholders to assist, where possible, in the development of suitable educational facilities.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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

Policy Objective	
SC 32	To continue to support and promote existing schools serving communities in town and village centres.

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, which extends north of the border. Coinciding with the expansion of its Research and Development and 3rd Level courses and services, the DkIT campus has expanded 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 33	To support the expansion and development of Dundalk Institute of Technology as a centre of excellence and its elevation to technical university status.

Policy Objective	
SC 34	To support the expansion and development of Drogheda Institute of Further Education.

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 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 35	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 *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)* and *Childcare Regulations (2006)* and any subsequent guidelines, in consultation with the Louth County Childcare Committee. Such facilities will be directed to settlements identified in the Settlement Hierarchy.

Policy Objective	
SC 36	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.

Policy Objective	
SC 37	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.

Policy Objective	
SC 38	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 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 located in the Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements within the County.

Policy Objective	
SC 39	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 40	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 41	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
- A combination of visitor trips can be accommodated.

In general, there is a presumption against the provision of these facilities in the open countryside for reasons relating to un-sustainability, 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 42	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.

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 43	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.

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 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 44	To deliver national funding programmes in conjunction with the strategic vision of both the 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.

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 45	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.

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 46	To support the development of new or extended burial grounds, including natural 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.

Policy Objective	
SC 47	To protect historic graveyards and encourage their management and maintenance in accordance with best conservation practice.

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 48	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.



Chapter 5

Economy and Employment

"To strengthen the employment base and economic profile of Louth that builds on the designation of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres and maximises the strategic location of the County along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. The prioritisation of Drogheda and Dundalk for economic investment with the complementary supporting economic role of the smaller towns and villages will ensure the Job:Workforce ratio continues to improve thus creating more balanced and sustainable communities."

5 Economy and Employment

5.1 Introduction

This Plan seeks to support and facilitate viable economic development and job creation, across a range of sectors, in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. As the population of Louth continues to grow, it is essential that the County continues to be well positioned to facilitate further economic investment and respond to any economic uncertainties.

This chapter will set out the vision and strategy for economic development in the County during the life of the Plan. It will identify the opportunities for Louth to strengthen its economic base and continue to attract investment and support job creation for both indigenous and international businesses. The spatial framework for enterprise and employment development is consistent with and aligned to national, regional and local level economic development policies.

5.2 Economic Profile of Louth

The locational advantage of Louth along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor with excellent access to Dublin and Belfast City Centre, Airport, Port, and surrounding Key Towns in the Region means the County is well positioned to attract economic investment.

The identification of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres (RGCs) in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Strategic Economic Strategy (RSES) is recognition of the importance of these settlements at both a regional and national level in facilitating future population and economic growth.

Economic development and employment in the County is concentrated in business parks, industrial estates, and town centres in Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee, and Dunleer. Outside of these settlements there are smaller scale enterprises in the small towns, villages, and open countryside.

With over 35,000 jobs in the County and a Jobs:Workforce ratio of 0.71 recorded in Census 2016, the economic benefits associated with the strategic location of the County, and in particular the strength of the employment base, are apparent. With a net outward migration rate of almost 30% of resident workers travelling outside the County, the majority of whom work in Dublin, the interdependency between Louth and Dublin is also evident.

At a settlement level, Dundalk is the primary centre of employment in the County, with almost 14,200 jobs in 2016. This equates to 40% of the total jobs in the County and is an indication of the strength of this Regional Growth Centre as a location for employment. The Job:Workforce ratio in the town was 0.99 in 2016, highlighting the close alignment between population and employment growth in the town and the sustainable platform on which the town is developing.

Drogheda is also an important centre of employment with over 12,300 jobs in the town in 2016[1]. The lower Job:Workforce ratio is an indication of the interdependency of the town with Dublin, due to the higher volume of outbound commuting for employment.

[1] This includes the Southern Environs of the town which had 1,216 jobs and 3,700 resident workers in 2016.

Ardee and Dunleer have a solid employment base, with both towns experiencing a sustainable balance of population and employment growth. When compared to settlements of similar sizes, it is apparent that both towns outperform many other towns in the Region and across the country with regard to total jobs. This is an indication of the importance of the towns in employment and service provision in their surrounding hinterland. Dunleer is the only town in the County with a net in-flow of workers in that there are more jobs in the town than resident workers, resulting in the town having a Job:Workforce ratio of 1:10.

The smaller settlements in the County have a more limited employment base resulting in fewer jobs. Carlingford and Castlebellingham/Kilsaran are the exceptions with these towns having a Job:Workforce ratio of 0.8 (370 jobs in the town) and 0.65 (295 jobs in the town) respectively.

The remaining smaller settlements are dependent on outbound commuting and have a Job:Workforce ratio ranging between 0.17 (Clogherhead) and 0.32 (Termonfeckin). This is an indication of a weak employment base. Full details of the breakdown of resident workers, total jobs and jobs ratio in each settlement in Louth are set out in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.2 provides a breakdown of the occupational groups in the County in 2011 and 2016. It is a useful indication of the broad range of employment in the County, in addition to highlighting the skill sets of the workforce. These include business and administrative roles, corporate management, research and engineering, and skilled trades. There was a modest increase in most occupational groups between 2011-2016, with professional and service occupations recording the highest increase. Skilled construction trades recorded the largest decrease during this period.

Fig 5.1: Resident workers, jobs, and jobs ratio in Louth by settlement in 2016

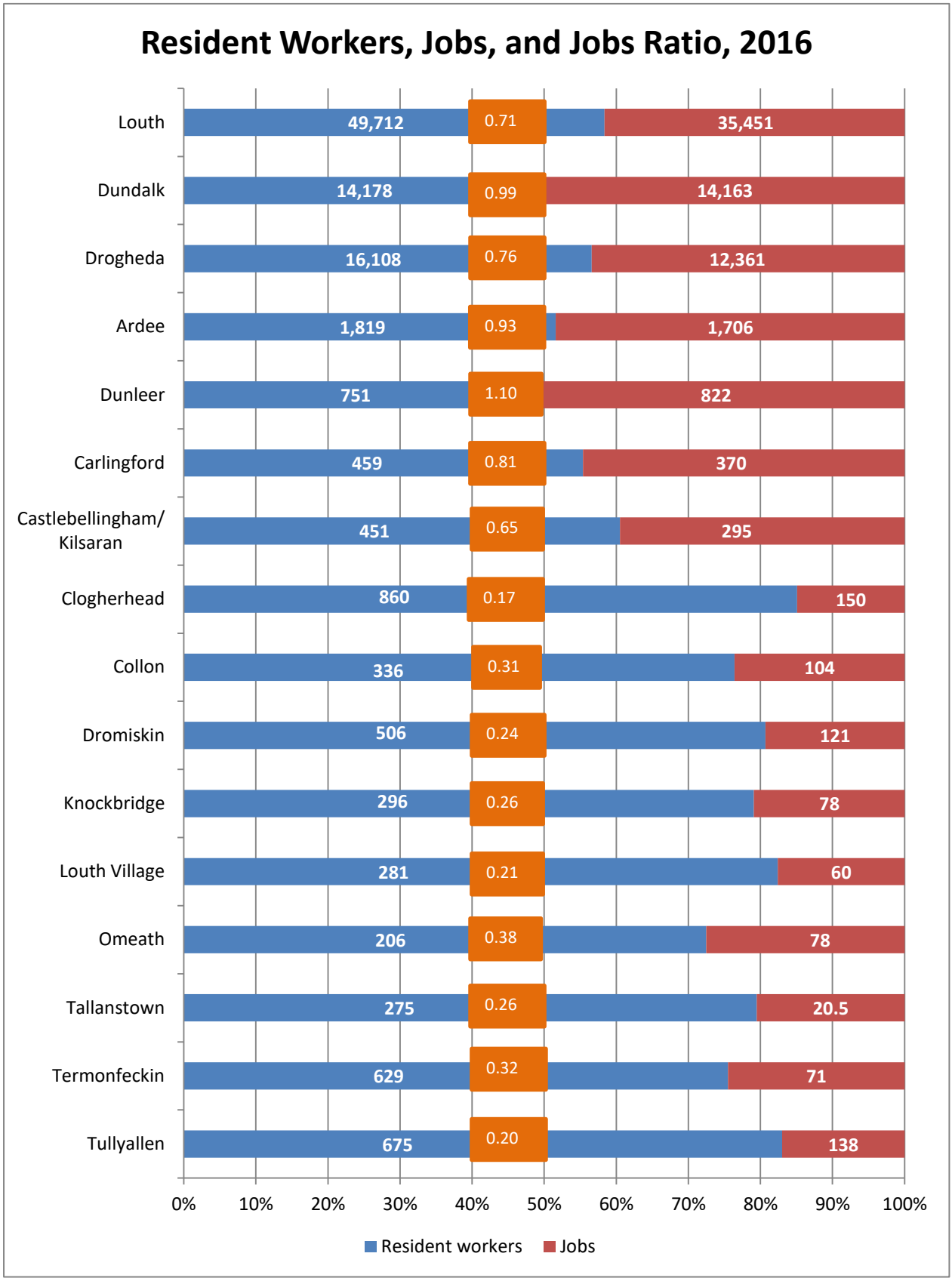
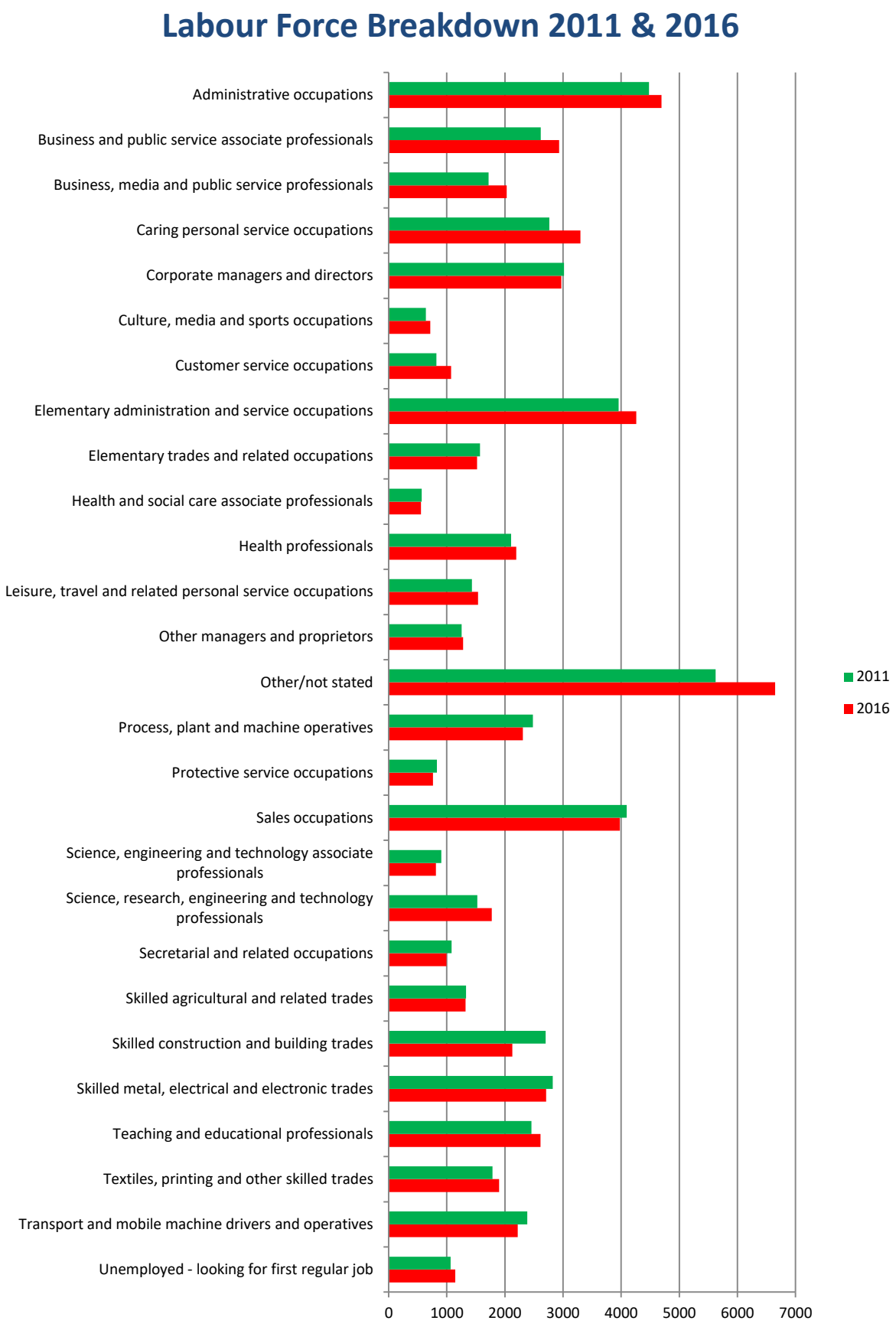


Figure 5.2: Breakdown of the labour force in Louth in 2011 and 2016



5.3 EMPLOYER PROFILE

There are a broad range of employers from various industrial sectors based in Louth. The most prominent sectors include bio-pharma, food and beverage production, manufacturing, financial services and ICT.

In addition to providing direct employment, the large businesses and employers in the County create higher productivity in the wider economy as they provide indirect employment in areas such as service provision, maintenance and logistics.

Health and education are also prominent employment sectors, with two hospitals (Our Lady of Lourdes in Drogheda and Louth County Hospital in Dundalk) and a third level education facility (Dundalk Institute of Technology, (DkIT) and Drogheda Institute of Further Education, (DIFE)) located in the County.

Within the various employment sectors in the County there are opportunities for continued growth and expansion.

5.4 ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The Plan provides a framework for economic growth and investment at a County level. This framework is closely aligned with national and regional policy and has taken account of recent government publications relating to economic development, including the Action Plan for Jobs and Enterprise 2025. The economic strategy for the County is based on a vision of developing a strong economic base supported by enterprise, innovation and skills. This Plan seeks to reinforce this vision by aligning with the key economic principles set out in the RSES.

Whilst a Development Plan cannot create employment, it has a critical role to play in facilitating development and supporting economic growth. If a Plan is to support economic growth, it needs to ensure that there are sufficient lands available for investment and that these lands can be serviced by the required roads, water services, energy, and telecommunications infrastructure. Any deficits in infrastructure can result in inefficiencies, loss of output, and higher costs for businesses which ultimately impacts on economic competitiveness. Regular engagement and collaboration with infrastructure agencies and providers in identifying and progressing projects that will facilitate economic growth is required to ensure there is a coherent and holistic approach to development. Furthermore, creating the right environment for enterprise and employment to thrive can deliver high-quality places as they become attractive locations to work, live, invest, study and visit.

The primary location for employment related development during this Plan will be in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk. These settlements have a strong employment base, a wide range of services, and a large market and catchment, with capacity to accommodate further investment in centrally located areas where there are opportunities to cluster with existing enterprises.

By concentrating growth in these settlements there is an opportunity to create a critical mass of population that will support infrastructure investment and consolidate development in these large urban areas.

Figure 5.3



5.5 POLICY CONTEXT

In response to the high levels of unemployment experienced across the country during the recession, the Government published a number of policy initiatives aimed to support economic growth and job creation. The key publications are as follows:

5.5.1 Action Plan for Jobs

This is an annual publication by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment that outlines the Government's approach to maximising job creation across the country. It has been ongoing since 2012, with each Action Plan including specific targets relating to employment growth.

Regional Enterprise Plans have also been prepared, with Louth located within the North East/North West Region. This Enterprise Plan recognises that this region has a diverse enterprise base and a flourishing Small and Medium sized Enterprise (SME) sector with capacity for expansion. The talent base and location of Institutes of Technology in the Region are recognised as being important in providing an educated workforce. The *North – East Regional Enterprise Plan* aims to build on the strengths of the Region, support continued collaboration between businesses, stakeholders and public agencies, and increase employment.

5.5.2 Realising our Rural Potential Action Plan for Rural Development

In recognition of the challenges facing rural areas, an *Action Plan for Rural Development* was published in 2017. This Action Plan *'Realising Our Rural Potential'* aims to boost economic development in rural areas by improving infrastructure, rejuvenating towns and villages, addressing social exclusion and supporting job creation.

5.5.3 Strategic Policy

The NPF and RSES set out the planning policy approach for economic development at a national and regional level. There is an emphasis on taking a plan led approach to economic development that focuses on building resilience in the economy, promoting collaboration, innovation, and entrepreneurship, enhancing connectivity and accessibility and aligning infrastructure investment with settlements designated for growth.

The RSES seeks to support economic growth and job creation in the Region through the concept of smart specialisation. This is a European Strategy that seeks to boost economic growth by enabling Regions to identify and develop competitive advantages. It is a partnership approach that brings together local authorities, universities, business groups and organisations, and the general public. The RSES has identified Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres and recognises the significant potential of these settlements to function as drivers for economic development in the Region.

5.5.4 Local Economic and Community Plan

As part of the restructuring of local government through the implementation of *'Putting People First'* and the *Local Government Reform Act 2014,* local authorities were given a greater role in economic development. This included the creation of a Local Enterprise Office in each local authority, which replaced County Enterprise Boards, and the requirement for each local authority to prepare a *'Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022 (LECP)'*[2]. The Louth LECP was adopted in March 2016. The economic goals of the LECP are closely linked to the 10 point plans prepared by Louth Economic Forum. The primary objective of the LECP is to create a thriving economy and community where both indigenous and international businesses can prosper. The LECP is required to be consistent with the County Development Plan and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, meaning it is closely aligned with planning policy at a local, national, and regional level.

[2] Section 44 of the Local Government and Reform Act 2014 sets out the requirements to prepare for each local authority to prepare a Local Economic and Community Plan.

Figure 5.4: Louth LECP Economic Goals



5.5.5 Louth Economic Forum

Louth Economic Forum was established in 2009 and consists of a multi-disciplinary team from the public and private sector including local businesses, state agencies, and the Council. The forum functions as a one stop shop for potential investors providing advice and information.

A 10 Point Plan published by the Forum identified 10 specific areas on which to focus. A series of Action Plans have been prepared by the task groups in the Forum. These Action Plans provide a useful insight into the local economy in Louth in addition to setting out a vision as to how it is intended to grow and develop the economy[3].

5.6 Recent Economic Trends

The Irish economy was performing strongly until March 2020 when the economic shock associated with the Covid-19 pandemic became apparent. At the time of writing there were various arrangements and policy responses in place for people, businesses, and government agencies and services across the economy and society to cope and manage in these uncertain times. These responses are impacting on economic output and performance.

Prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic the Irish economy had emerged from a prolonged period of economic contraction and stagnation to become one of the best performing economies in Europe in recent years. Year on year growth had been experienced since 2014, resulting in increased employment, wages, and consumer spending. In Q4 of 2019 the unemployment rate was 4.8%, the lowest since 2007[4].

The pace of growth in comparison to the rest of Europe was evident by a comparison of growth rates.

Between 2010-2019 the annual average growth rate of the Irish economy was 4.5%, whilst in the rest of Europe, during the same period, it was 1.6%[5].

Economic projections following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic indicate that the economy will shrink in 2020 and fall into recession[6]. This is in contrast to the projections prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, which had projected a continuation of growth, albeit on a more modest trajectory than previous years. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, it is difficult to predict its long term economic impact. However it is widely accepted it will take a significant period of time to return to a normal functioning economy.

This Plan will support the collaboration between the Council, its Local Enterprise Office and the agencies such as the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and Enterprise Ireland in working closely with businesses and employers in responding to the pandemic and providing assistance where possible. It will also seek to set out a framework that will support the creation of an environment attractive for economic investment and employment creation when growth begins to return to the economy.

[3] Click here to access the Action Plans published by the Louth Economic Forum

[4] Labour Force Survey Q4 2019

[5] ESRI Quarterly Economic Commentary Winter 2019

[6] ESRI Quarterly Economic Commentary Spring 2020

5.6.1 Challenges to Future Economic Growth

Covid-19: The Covid-19 pandemic is the greatest threat the Irish economy has faced since the global financial crisis. The response to the spread of the virus has resulted in significant job losses across the economy, with an unemployment rate of 28.2% recorded in April 2020 [7]. In September 2020 the Government published a *'Resilience and Recovery Plan for Living with COVID 19'* to manage the risk associated with the pandemic and deal with the social and economic consequences. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the medium-long term impacts of the pandemic it is anticipated that the opportunities for economic growth and investment in the immediate future will be limited.

International Trade Tensions: Ireland has an open economy which means it is exposed to any changes or volatilities to the economic environment at a global level. Foreign owned multinational companies make a significant contribution to the Irish economy in terms of jobs, exports, and fiscal revenue. The restrictions on international travel and the lockdown put in place in countries across the world, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, has had significant implications for international trade, commerce, and tourism. Ireland's open economy is exposed to these volatilities.

The reliance and interdependency of Ireland on global trade and investments means the response of the global economy to the management of the pandemic will have a significant impact on the future performance of the Irish economy. Other concerns in the global economy relate to ongoing trade tensions between the US and China, and the uncertainty surrounding the future partnership between the UK and the EU following their withdrawal from the EU. These uncertainties may result in businesses holding back on investment and a reduction in consumer spending, with people saving more of their disposable income.

Brexit: The location of Louth along the border makes the County particularly exposed to the uncertainties surrounding Brexit, with businesses having customers, supply chains, and producers on both sides of the border. At present there is a seamless transfer of goods and services across the border as both countries are within the Single Market. The agri-food sector will be particularly affected by any changes to these circumstances as it will impact on supply chains and logistical arrangements.

The possible introduction of tariffs, or regulatory divergence, would increase costs and result in delays in transporting goods and services and would therefore increase the cost of doing business. Fluctuations in currency also have an impact on costs and can result in changing patterns of consumer behaviour, particularly in border locations where people take advantage of the lower exchange rates. This can have a particular impact on tourism, with less visitors travelling from Northern Ireland and Britain due to the devaluation of sterling.

Whilst there are challenges to the Irish economy as a result of Brexit, opportunities also exist. Ireland will retain all the benefits of EU membership and the access to an educated, skilled, English speaking workforce will be an important factor in attracting foreign direct investment.

[7] CSO Monthly Unemployment, April 2020. Note that when persons on the special pandemic payment are excluded, the unemployment rate was 5.4%.

Opportunities: The location of Louth along the border, where there is excellent connectivity with both Dublin and Belfast and access to a well-educated and skilled workforce, makes the County an attractive location to UK businesses who require access to the European market and Irish, European, and International businesses who require access to the UK market.

5.7 Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor

Louth is strategically located between the two largest cities on the island, Dublin and Belfast. The excellent connectivity between the cities via the high capacity road link (M1 Motorway), which forms part of the EU TEN-T Core Network, the inter-city rail link, in addition to the international links via the ports and airports, has created significant opportunities for economic investment and job creation.

The NPF and RSES highlight the importance of this corridor in supporting economic growth and maintaining economic competitiveness. Opportunities to strengthen links along this corridor and in particular, the cross border links between Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry, have been identified as a potential driver for economic growth. The international dimension of this corridor has added significance in the context of the UK withdrawing from the EU.

In addition to the cross-border links, there is also a strong connection between Louth, Meath, Monaghan and Cavan in the provision of services, employment, and education, which creates a wider cross-border network of counties and settlements in the north-east of the country.

This Plan will continue to promote and support economic development along this Corridor. As part of the strategy of developing centres of scale, the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk will be identified as the primary locations for economic growth.

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

Policy Objective	
EE 2	To engage and work closely with the Eastern and Midlands Regional Authority and adjoining Local Authorities in promoting economic development along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

5.7.1 Cross Border Investment

There is strong support from governments on both sides of the border for continued co-operation in cross border projects and initiatives. The economic potential of the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network is identified in the NPF and RSES. These settlements have the critical mass to compete in the global economy and appeal to higher value segments of the business chain by offering sizeable pools of suitably qualified workers, supporting infrastructure, and high quality public and commercial services.

EU Structural Funds such as the INTERREG VA Structural Programme provides funding for cross border projects. This fund is designed to help overcome issues that arise due to the existence of a border. The issues can range from health, transport, environmental issues, and enterprise development. The fund is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). There is a commitment from the EU to continue funding for cross border projects after the UK withdrawal from the EU.

At a local government level cross border cooperation is evident in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was developed and signed by both Louth County Council and Newry, Mourne, and Down District Council. The MOU sets out the detailed workings, which seek to support and promote the economic development and competitiveness of the region. The focus for both Councils is on strength in people working together to help and support the local communities they serve. An example of some of the ongoing cross-border projects in the area are set out in Table 5.1.

5.8 Education and Training

A well-educated, skilled, and adaptable labour force is a fundamental part of economic growth and development. Louth has benefitted from the presence of a higher education facility in the County, with Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) providing opportunities for education and skills development for people and collaboration between local businesses and industry.

DkIT is the focal point for higher education in the north-east and has a catchment extending to both sides of the border. The research portfolio of DkIT in addition to the access to an educated workforce strengthens the knowledge based economy in the County which makes the area attractive to potential investors.

DkIT has responded positively to the changing educational and training needs of both business and industry. A strong partnership has developed between DkIT and local employers, with the Institute adapting modules and courses to be more responsive to the needs of employers. This partnership approach has been a key element in supporting enterprise development in the County.

The Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) was awarded funding in June 2020, through the Border Enterprise Fund, for an Advanced Manufacturing Education and Training Centre in Dundalk. The investment and development of this facility will provide the labour force with opportunities to develop and enhance their skills in Advanced Manufacturing techniques, which is a recognised area of innovation and competitive advantage required if businesses are to successfully compete in the global market.

Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE) provides a range of Further Education courses for school leavers and adults returning to education. The modern facilities available, and the close relationship with employers means courses remain relevant and students can become familiar with the technology of the workplace.

Table 5.1 Ongoing Cross-Border Projects in Louth

Themes	Projects
Renewable Energy and Green Technology	VARSITIES, Action for Biodiversity; Energy Efficiency and Micro Generation; Source to Tap; SWELL project
Tourism and Recreation	Carlingford Lough Greenway; Tourism Management; Greenore to Greencastle Ferry; EU_SHAFE
Sustainable Economic Growth and Job Creation	Drogheda/Dundalk/Newry Cross Border Economic Zone, CO INNOVATE
Emergency Planning	Major Emergency Management Service

5.9 Co-working Facilities and Home based Activities

Advances in technology have resulted in changing working environments. There are occupations where employees do not have to be in their main place of employment all the time, as they have the ability to work remotely. This is recognised by employers who acknowledge the benefits of remote working. These benefits include an improved quality of life for employees due to a reduction in commuting, with businesses benefitting from a reduction in costs for large areas of office space in prime commercial locations.

This Plan supports the development of co-working facilities which provide flexibility in the working arrangements that will meet the needs of both start-up enterprises and established businesses, where employees have a local base that reduces the requirement to commute long distances on a daily basis.

It is also recognised that small scale home based economic activities can be appropriate in certain locations, subject to the nature of the business operations and uses not negatively impacting on the character and amenities of the area in which they are located.

Policy Objective	
EE 3	To facilitate and support the sustainable growth of the economy in County Louth whilst maintaining and improving environmental quality. This economic development policy shall strive to deliver the following key aims: • To strengthen existing employment centres supported by enterprise, innovation and skills; • To strengthen the integration between employment, housing and transportation with a view to promoting compact urban areas and reducing car dependency; • To promote measures to improve the County's attractiveness as a location for investment and increase entrepreneurial activity; • To improve the cluster-specific business environment by putting in place a favourable business ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship that supports the development of new industrial value chains and emerging industries; • To facilitate economic growth by consolidating existing industrial and commercial areas and by ensuring that there is an adequate supply of serviced employment lands at suitable locations; • To promote the regeneration of underutilised industrial and town centre areas in a manner which enhances the local economy and encourages a sequential approach to development; and • To provide for a range of business accommodation types, including units suitable for small business.

Policy Objective	
EE 4	To work in partnership with national employment agencies including Enterprise Ireland and the IDA, the EMRA, and the Council's Local Enterprise Office in promoting Louth as a location of choice for economic investment and supporting employment generating initiatives and maximising job opportunities within the County.

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

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

Policy Objective	
EE 7	To engage with the Local Community Development Committee, the Local Enterprise Office, Louth Economic Forum and various stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Development Plan 2016-2021 and any subsequent Plans.

Policy Objective	
EE 8	To promote the work of the Louth Local Enterprise Office in providing support and guidance to small and micro enterprises in the County.

Policy Objective	
EE 9	To continue to promote collaboration and partnerships between business and industrial groups and DkIT that will encourage research and development and provide further education and training opportunities for workers.

Policy Objective	
EE 10	To collaborate and work in partnership with Local Authorities in the Eastern and Midland and Northern and Western Regions in attracting and facilitating economic investment and employment generating projects and developing the all-island economy.

Policy Objective	
EE 11	To engage with Government agencies and key stakeholders in Northern Ireland in developing joint economic programmes and initiatives that support cross-border economic co-operation and development.

Policy Objective	
EE 12	To support the development of a strong economic base particularly along the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor that is supported by enterprise, innovation and skills whilst maintaining environmental quality.

Policy Objective	
EE 13	To support businesses and enterprises, in association with agencies and stakeholders including the IDA Enterprise Ireland, and the Council's Local Enterprise Office, in responding to challenges and uncertainties associated with the UK withdrawal from the EU.

Policy Objective	
EE 14	To ensure there are sufficient appropriately located lands identified for enterprise and industrial uses in the County in accordance with the designation of each settlement in the Settlement Hierarchy that will support economic investment and employment growth.

Policy Objective	
EE 15	To promote and facilitate the provision of a range of employment and enterprise units of different size, scale, and layout that will increase the choice of such facilities to meet the requirements of the various enterprise and employment sectors in the County.

Policy Objective	
EE 16	To facilitate and support unexpected opportunities for valid propositions for enterprise development that may emerge for which there are strong locational drivers that do not apply to the same extent elsewhere.

Policy Objective	
EE 17	To recognise that attractive, healthy, and sustainable communities have a fundamental role in delivering economic success and attracting foreign and domestic investment.

Policy Objective	
EE 18	To encourage and facilitate the re-use and rejuvenation of vacant and under-utilised industrial, enterprise, manufacturing, and warehousing units.

Policy Objective	
EE 19	To identify locations in the County for different enterprise activities including start-up/incubator units, small-medium sized enterprise development, micro enterprises and large international businesses and corporations.

Policy Objective	
EE 20	To recognise the significant economic and employment benefits of similar enterprises clustering in an area.

Policy Objective	
EE 21	To support the implementation of the concept of 'smart specialisation' as part of the Economic Strategy for Louth.

Policy Objective	
EE 22	To recognise the importance of and to encourage and facilitate the growth and development of local indigenous enterprises in appropriate locations in the County.

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

Policy Objective	
EE 24	To support home based economic activity where it can be demonstrated the nature of the business operation is of an appropriate scale for its location and would not be detrimental to the character or amenities of the area.

5.10 Marine Opportunities Including Ports

Louth has a coastline of over 90kms providing significant opportunities for the support of a range of marine activities such as aquaculture, defence, energy, fisheries, mining and aggregates, ports, harbours, and shipping, telecommunications cables, tourism, safety at sea, sport and recreation, and waste-water treatment and disposal.

The National *Marine Planning Framework* (NMPF) is Ireland's first plan for more sustainable, effective management of marine activities. This will guide decision makers, users and stakeholders towards more strategic, plan-led and efficient use of marine resources.

Following the preparation of the Marine Spatial Plan the Council will ensure that there is alignment and consistency between land use and ocean based planning. A challenge to the maritime economy is the effective management of available space and the ability to maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits of access for all. Consideration will be given to the co-existence of activities where possible.

This will enable activities to continue and/or grow while minimising competing demands for limited space and/or resources. This is particularly important in areas close to the coast where many locations are already busy, with aspirations for emerging growth, such as in Carlingford and Clogherhead.

The Council recognises the importance of the blue economy and maritime heritage and recognise that there are significant opportunities in the marine or blue economy relating to fishing, renewables, seaweed harvesting, aquaculture, and tourism.

Ports have an important role in enabling economic growth and providing international connectivity. This is recognised in the RSES, which identifies regional ports as important centres of economic activity. Regional Policy Objective 8.23 of the RSES supports the protection of marine related functions of the ports in the Region while also pointing to the potential opportunities around offshore renewable energy development.

There are three commercial ports in Louth at Drogheda, Dundalk and Greenore, all of which have been identified as Ports of Regional Significance in the National Ports Policy 2013[8]. Drogheda is the largest of these ports, and principally handles bulk traffic. It also operates a limited roll-on, roll-off service.

Greenore Port is a deepwater port with lift on/lift off facilities. It handles non-containerised cargo including bulk animal feed, feed chemicals, fertiliser, rock, steel, and woodchip. There are bulk dry storage facilities a short distance from the Port that can cater for a range of dry bulk products. Dundalk Port is a general cargo Port. The Port imports materials such as plasterboard, feedstuff, oil, coal, timber, and steel. Exports include scrap metal and turf. Clogherhead Port functions primarily as a fishing port. The harbour area was recently upgraded which provides facilities for a large fishing fleet. In addition there are facilities for sea anglers.

Figure 5.5 provides details of the tonnage of goods handled by commercial ports in Louth in 2019[9].

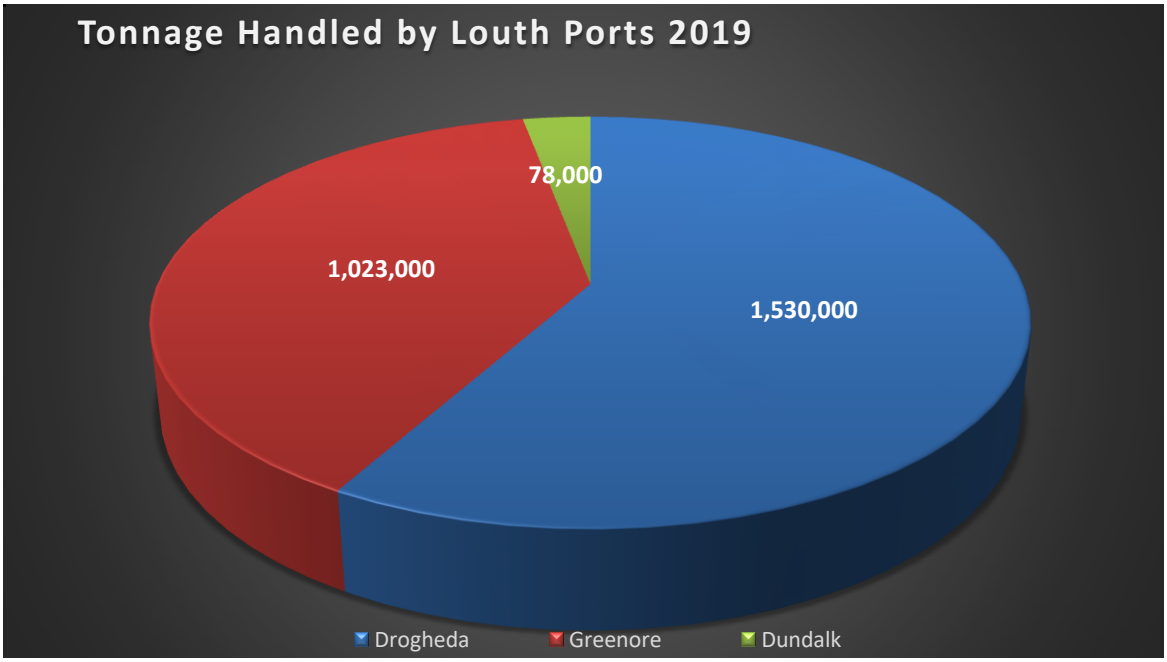
This highlights the volume of goods passing through the ports and is an indication of the importance of these facilities in providing international connectivity to business and industry in the region.

This Plan will support the expansion and improvements to Port facilities in the County in order to maintain connectivity and competitiveness and support the economic growth of the County and wider Region.

[8] Table 2.8 of the National Ports Policy (2013, Dept. of Transport, Tourism and Sport

[9] Statistics of Port traffic, CSO

Figure 5.5: Tonnage handled by Louth Ports 2019



Policy Objective	
EE 25	To ensure alignment between the policy objectives of this Plan and the Marine Spatial Plan following its publication.

Policy Objective	
EE 26	To support the development and growth of the maritime economy and balance the competing demands for available space along the coast by different users and encourage co-location and co-existence of activities and infrastructure while having regard to appropriate environmental considerations.

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

5.11 Areas to be Identified for Growth

The following sections of this chapter will provide an overview and strategy for employment related development in the County.

5.11.1 Regional Growth Centres

The NPF identified settlements below city level with an important function in the context of regional development. In the Eastern and Midland Region the settlements identified were Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk. In the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region these settlements were designated 'Regional Growth Centres' and are to be a focal point for population and employment growth. The following section will provide an overview of the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

The concentration of development in these settlements will create a critical mass of population and employment opportunities and will allow these settlements to develop as centres of scale, and act as a counter balance to Dublin thereby supporting more balanced regional development.

Regional Policy Objective 6.30 of the RSES seeks to support existing smart city initiatives such as Smart Dublin and the All Ireland Smart Cities Forum, as well as supporting the development of smart city programmes in Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk. Smart cities boost the location's attractiveness for people and business, especially those who want to innovate.

While there is no universal definition for a 'Smart City' this term generally refers to a city or town that uses technology to provide services and solve city/town problems such as improved access to transport services, reducing waste and inconvenience and maximising social inclusion. A key component to a 'Smart City' is the use of real-time data to support the introduction of tools that create well-being within that city/town.

Policy Objective	
EE 28	To prioritise economic development in Drogheda and Dundalk taking account of the strategic importance of the settlements along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and their designation as Regional Growth Centres in the RSES.

Policy Objective	
EE 29	To take a positive and pro-active approach when considering the economic impact of major planning applications in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk in order to support economic development and employment growth and to deliver high quality outcomes.

Policy Objective	
EE 30	To promote and facilitate the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk as creative and innovative centres that are competitive, accessible and attractive, each with their own distinct identity and built heritage.

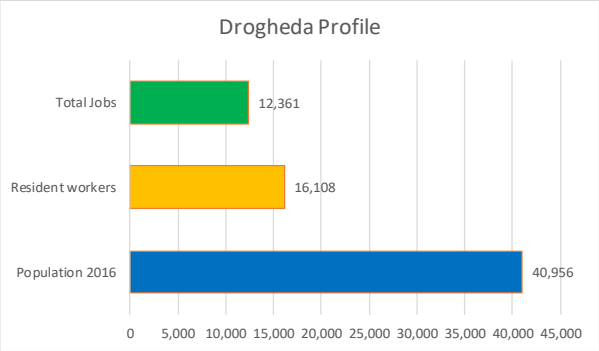
Policy Objective	
EE 31	To promote the delivery of essential infrastructure and utilities that support businesses in establishing a competitive and resilient stronghold at local, regional and national level.

Policy Objective	
EE 32	To support the development of Smart City Programmes in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

5.12 DROGHEDA

5.12.1 Profile

Drogheda[10] is strategically located on the southern boundary of Louth, approximately 30 minutes from Dublin airport. The town functions as an important service centre for the south of the County with a catchment extending to east Meath and north Fingal.



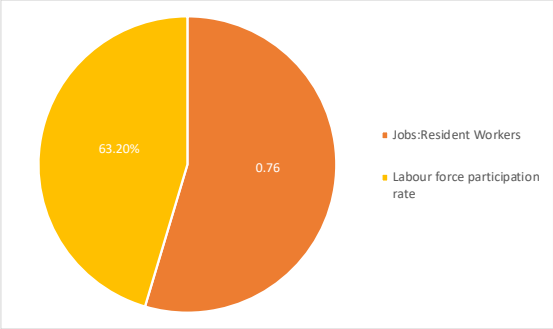
5.12.2 Existing Employment

Employment sectors in the town include information and communications technology, business, professional and financial services, manufacturing, healthcare, food and drink processing, tourism and hospitality services, and retailing. In 2016 there were over 12,300 jobs in Drogheda [11] which represents almost 35% of the total jobs in the County.

Outside the town centre, established employment areas are in proximity to the Port along the Boyne Road and along the Donore Road in the western part of the town.

Our Lady of Lourdes hospital at Moneymore in the northern part of the town also provides significant employment. RHI Magnesita (Premier Periclase) manufacturing facility is a significant employer adjacent to the Port. The nature of the works at this facility requires a large landholding and associated structures.

Closer to the town centre on the Greenhills Road, the Greenhills Industrial Estate includes manufacturing and services based enterprises.



The Boyne Business Park is located to the rear of this facility and is the base for a number of indigenous engineering, environmental, and food processing enterprises. On the southern side of the River Boyne along the Marsh Road there is a Marine Terminal operated by Flogas.

There is potential for additional employment uses on undeveloped lands adjacent to this facility. Drogheda Industrial Park is located on the Donore Road on the western side of the town in proximity to Junction 8 of the M1. This Park hosts a mixture of businesses related to wholesale, retailing, and servicing enterprises.

[10] The economic profile for Drogheda includes the Southern Environs of the town which is in the administrative area of Meath. In 2016 the population of Drogheda within the administrative area of Louth was 34,199. There were 12,408 resident workers in the Louth area of the town and 11,145 jobs resulting in a Job:Workforce ratio of 0.90.

[11] Including 1,216 jobs in the Southern Environs

5.12.3 Drogheda Port

Drogheda Port is an important economic asset to the town and local businesses for importing and exporting raw materials and products. It provides for both general freight and container services and can handle various types of cargo. There are two facilities for the loading and discharging of cargo; the inner north quays port and the deep water facility at Tom Roes Point Terminal.

Tom Roes Point is the primary container and paper and timber handling facility, while the inner north quay port is a general cargo facility catering for products including bulk grains, steel, and timber. In addition there is a private hydrocarbon facility and a private bulk cement/magnesite/coal facility. The regional significance of the Port [12] is recognised in the RSES.



This Plan also recognises the economic importance of the Port in providing access to international markets for local businesses and therefore supports the sustainable growth of the facility, subject to any expansion meeting the necessary environmental criteria. Section 5.10 provides additional details in relation to port facilities in the County.

5.12.4 Undeveloped Employment Lands

The existing industrial parks in the town are well established with limited capacity for expansion.

There are two large parcels of undeveloped lands zoned for employment uses to the north of the town. These are located adjacent to the M1 Retail Park and opposite Tom Roes Point ferry terminal.

The release of employment lands opposite Tom Roes Ferry terminal will require the delivery (or partial delivery) of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) and water services infrastructure. The PANCR is part of the long term transport strategy for Drogheda that would improve connectivity to the port and remove port related traffic from the town centre and facilitate the regeneration of town centre lands.

At present there is no funding available for the construction of this road or the water services infrastructure therefore its delivery would have to be developer driven. Taking account of the extent of these lands and the interdependency of the lands with the construction of the PANCR and delivery of water services infrastructure, a Masterplan will be required to be prepared and agreed with the Planning Authority prior to any planning application being lodged.

A Masterplan will also be required for the employment lands in the vicinity of the M1 Retail Park. Provision of the aforementioned Masterplans will ensure a holistic and co-ordinated approach is taken to the development of the lands. These Masterplans will set out a conceptual layout and provide infrastructural details including roads, water services, and surface water in addition to a phasing programme for the build out of the lands.

[12] Regional Policy Objective 4.12 of the RSES supports the role of Drogheda Port.

5.12.5 Employment Areas in the Southern Environs of Drogheda

In developing a coherent employment strategy for Drogheda, consideration must be given to existing employment lands in the Southern Environs of the town located in County Meath. These employment lands include an IDA Business and Technology Park along the Donore Road, which has had limited success in attracting investment, and a substantial tract of undeveloped employment lands south of the Platin Road.

As part of the Joint Urban/Local Area Plan with Meath County Council, a co-ordinated approach to the future development of employment lands will be required to ensure the town develops in a holistic manner.

Policy Objective	
EE 33	To promote the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda as a primary centre for employment in the County that maximises the locational advantage of the town along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

Policy Objective	
EE 34	To develop an economic vision and strategy for Drogheda in association with Meath County Council and other stakeholders as part of the Joint Urban / Local Area Plan for Drogheda.

Policy Objective	
EE 35	To promote Drogheda as a location for Foreign Direct Investment.

Policy Objective	
EE 36	To recognise that the Port facility at Drogheda is an important economic resource and to support any improvements or expansion to the Port facilities subject to the preparation of a Masterplan and compliance with relevant planning and environmental criteria.

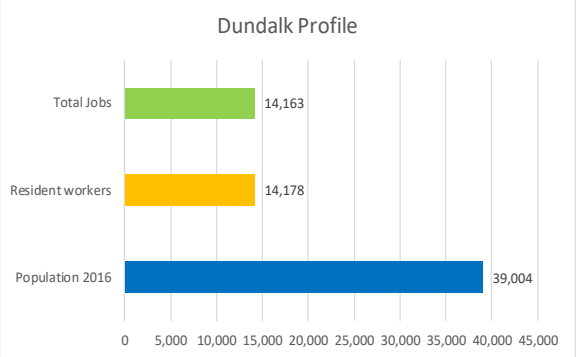
Policy Objective	
EE 37	To support the development of employment lands in the town including: i) The lands in the northern part of the town adjacent to the M1 Retail Park ii) The lands adjacent to Tom Roes Point The development of these lands shall be for economic investment and employment generating uses. Development shall only take place in areas where a Masterplan has been agreed in writing with the Planning Authority in accordance with the requirements set out in Section 13.5 'Masterplans' in Chapter 13 - Development Management Guidelines.

Policy Objective	
EE 38	To support the delivery of the Port Access Northern Cross Route which will release strategically located lands for economic development and employment related uses.

5.13 DUNDALK

5.13.1 Profile

Dundalk is an important employment hub in the north-east of the country with an established base of both indigenous and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) businesses.

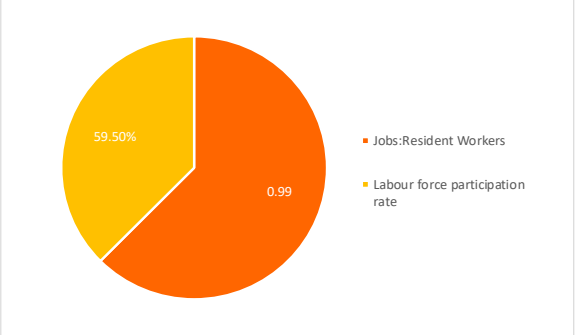


The town has continued to broaden its employment base and has benefitted from the presence of a third level education facility in the town, with Dundalk Institute of Technology developing a partnership with local businesses and enterprises and providing employers with a skilled and educated workforce. In 2016 there were over 14,100 jobs in Dundalk, which equated to 40% of the total jobs in the County.

5.13.2 Existing Employment Environment

The location of the town on the border provides challenges and opportunities. The challenges relate to uncertainty and increased costs of doing business as a result of the UK withdrawal from the EU, which may ultimately result in a loss of customers and trade. On a more positive note, there are opportunities for both UK based and EU based companies who wish to retain strong connections with both jurisdictions, to locate in Dundalk due to the accessibility to both markets from the town.

There are employment parks and industrial estates located in various parts of the town, with the older, established industrial estates closer to the town centre on the Coes Road and Ardee Road.



Local and indigenous businesses are located in these estates and include manufacturing, engineering, servicing, and wholesale suppliers.

Foreign Direct Investment companies are clustered in an established education and industrial zone in the southern part of the town, where there are approximately 450 hectares of land identified for employment related uses. The Mullagharlin Framework Plan for these lands was adopted in 2008. Approximately 116 hectares of the Framework Plan lands have been developed. This includes the DkIT campus and the IDA Business Park.

5.13.3 Dundalk and Greenore Ports

Dundalk is connected to international markets via the existing port facilities in the town and at Greenore. These facilities are an important resource to local businesses in the import and export of products and raw materials to international markets. Section 5.10 provides further details on these facilities.

5.13.4 Sustainable Energy Zone

Dundalk has been at the forefront in the area of energy conservation and development of renewable technologies through the identification of a 'Sustainable Energy Zone' in the town. The objective of the designation was to promote and stimulate a shift in the use of energy by industry, public bodies, education facilities, and residential communities. This Plan will continue to support the creation of sustainable energy communities.

5.13.5 Creating an Attractive Public Realm

As part of the strategy of creating an attractive environment for people to live and work, the Council is in the process of implementing a Public Realm improvement project in the centre of the town. This includes improvements to the streetscape, replacement of street furniture and landscaping, with the objective to improve access for people in the town centre whilst also retaining ease of access for buses, cyclists and cars.

5.13.6 Strategy for Future Employment Growth

The strategy for economic development in Dundalk during the life of this Plan, is to build on recent economic successes and continue to maximise the potential of the town for job creation and economic growth. The Council will continue to work closely and engage with infrastructure providers in investing in infrastructure and identifying future requirements to facilitate economic development.

Future employment and enterprise development in the employment areas will be concentrated on appropriately zoned lands in the northern and southern parts of the town. FDI investments will continue to be concentrated primarily in the IDA Business Park at Mullagharlin. The employment generating lands on the Armagh Road, and the south-west of the Ballymacscanlon roundabout, opposite Dundalk Stadium, are suitable for various uses including offices, industrial, storage, warehousing and logistics operations.

Policy Objective	
EE 39	To promote the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk as a primary centre for employment in the County that will allow the town to function as a driver for economic growth in the border area.

Policy Objective	
EE 40	To continue to promote collaboration and partnerships between business and industrial groups and DkIT that will encourage research and development and provide further education and training opportunities for workers.

Policy Objective	
EE 41	To support the role of DkIT as a centre of excellence for education, innovation and research.

Policy Objective	
EE 42	To promote Dundalk as a location for Foreign Direct Investment.

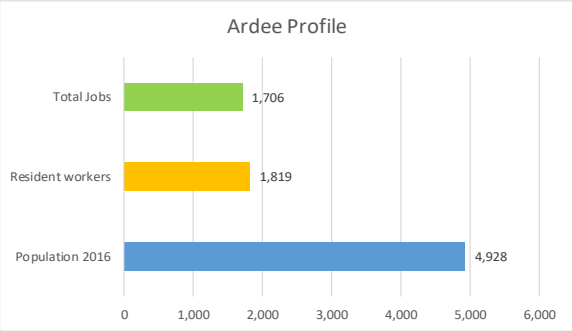
Policy Objective	
EE 43	To continue to support the implementation of the Mullagharlin Framework Plan 2008 which will ensure that future development in the Framework Plan area will be of a design and layout of international quality that will allow Dundalk to continue to compete for international investment.

Policy Objective	
EE 44	To support the development of undeveloped employment lands in Dundalk for economic investment and employment generating uses.

Policy Objective	
EE 45	To support economic development and regeneration at Dundalk Port Harbour area.

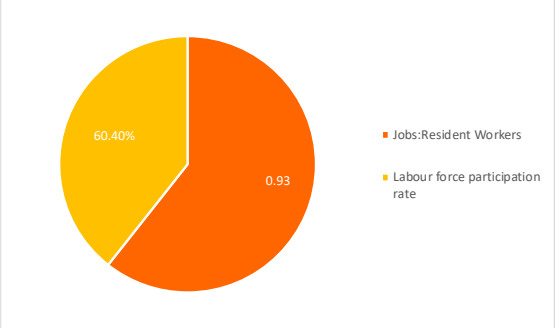
5.14 ARDEE

The designation of Ardee as a Self-Sustaining Growth town is testament to the solid employment base in the town, where, in 2016 there was a Jobs:Workforce ratio of 0.93, with in excess of 1,700 jobs in the town.



The town has a well-connected road network within the region and border areas via national primary and secondary roads in addition to being in proximity to the motorway. This strategic location, in addition to the availability of lands for employment uses, places Ardee in a strong position to accommodate further employment growth during the life of this Plan.

Existing employment in Ardee is concentrated in Ardee Business Park, on the eastern side of the town, and Farrell's Business Park, to the north of John Street, on the western side of the town. There are also a number of individual businesses operating in various parts of the town. St. Brigid's Hospital, which is a HSE residential facility, is located on the N52.



On the northern edge of the town off the N33 at Cappocksgreen there is a large parcel of undeveloped lands zoned for employment related uses. These lands have the capacity to accommodate significant economic investment. There are also lands available adjacent to Farrell's Industrial Estate which are presently undeveloped.

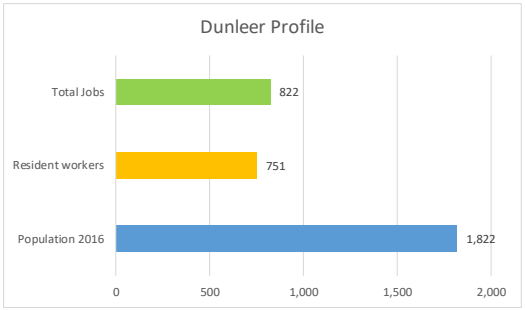
Policy Objective	
EE 46	To continue to promote Ardee as a competitive and attractive location for economic development emphasising Foreign Direct Investment.

Policy Objective	
EE 47	To work in partnership with development agencies in the County to promote economic development, enterprise, innovation, research and development, and employment in Ardee.

Policy Objective	
EE 48	To promote and support the development of the lands zoned for employment generating uses at Cappocksgreen in the northern part of the town.

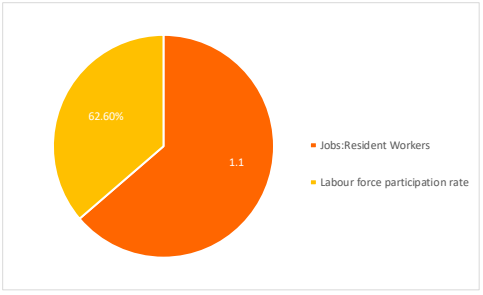
5.15 DUNLEER

Dunleer benefits from convenient access to the motorway which makes the settlement an attractive location for economic investment.



Whilst it is a relatively small settlement in terms of population, it has a solid employment base with in excess of 800 jobs in the town in 2016. In the 2016 census the town had the highest Jobs:Workforce in the County with a ratio of 1.1.

Employment in Dunleer is concentrated in the Enterprise Park on the Ardee Road where there are a cluster of businesses located, and on the Barn Road to the south east of the town centre.



This Plan will continue to promote the economic growth of Dunleer which will allow businesses to cluster with established enterprises thereby strengthening and broadening the employment base and ensuring the town continues to develop on a sustainable platform. Lands in the south-western edge of the town to the west of the R132 have been identified for employment related development. The development of these lands will be subject to the preparation of a Masterplan.

Policy Objective	
EE 49	To continue to promote Dunleer as a competitive and attractive location for economic development.

Policy Objective	
EE 50	To work in partnership with development agencies in the County to promote economic development, enterprise, innovation, research and development, and employment in Dunleer.

Policy Objective	
EE 51	To require the preparation of a masterplan for the lands zoned for Industry, Enterprise and Innovation uses in the south western part of the town. This Masterplan shall include details of the conceptual layout, infrastructure details, and phasing of the development (including the provision of infrastructure).

5.16 Self-Sustaining Towns

A number of the self-sustaining towns such as Clogherhead, Tullyallen and Termonfeckin have experienced residential growth in the absence of employment generating development, resulting in the towns having a weak employment base. This Plan has identified these settlements for locally based employment growth including start up and micro-enterprises.

Policy Objective	
EE 52	To promote Self-Sustaining Towns as an employment base for start-up businesses and rural based enterprises.

5.17 Small Towns

Below the Self-Sustaining Towns within the Settlement Hierarchy is a network of small towns that provide an important function at a local level. The employment base in these settlements is not as broad as the larger settlements and is reflective of the size of the settlements and supporting infrastructure available. Locally based employment generating development of a scale reflective of the size of the settlement will be supported.

Policy Objective	
EE 53	To promote employment and enterprise development in Small Towns in order to develop a cluster of enterprises and support the rejuvenation of rural settlements.

5.18 Rural Nodes

The Rural Nodes in the County have a lower provision of services and amenities than Small Towns. There is a map setting out the development boundary of the Rural Nodes, however, there is no specific land use zoning within the settlement boundary. Whilst the Plan will support small scale rural enterprises in these Nodes, including start-ups or incubator units, any development of scale should be located in the larger settlements where there is capacity to accommodate growth.

Policy Objective	
EE 54	To support the development of small scale rural enterprises where the scale and nature of the enterprise is appropriate for the location and surrounding land uses.

5.19 Rural Economy

Rural areas make an important economic contribution to County Louth, including the provision of local employment, access to areas of high amenity, and the output of high quality agricultural produce. In 2016 33.9% of the population was identified as living in rural areas in Louth[13]. This Plan supports the sustainable development of rural communities and seeks to address the challenges they are facing. It will support job creation, social inclusion, the rejuvenation of towns and villages, and improvements to infrastructure including transport and broadband.

At a national level, the Action Plan for Rural Development *'Realising Our Rural Potential'* published in 2017 sets out the policy approach for Rural Development by the Government.

The EU LEADER Programme supports private enterprises and community groups in delivering projects that aim to improve quality of life and diversification of economic activity in rural areas. Between 2014-2020 Louth received an allocation of €6.1 million to support rural development projects and initiatives.

The rural economy in Louth consists of a range of businesses and enterprises including agriculture, equine, construction, manufacturing, and tourism. There is often a high degree of interdependency between rural enterprises in both the supply and manufacturing of products and materials. This is particularly evident in the agricultural and equine industry, where the nature of activities is such that there is a high level of direct and indirect employment. Any volatility in the agricultural sector therefore extends into the wider rural economy.

5.19.1 Agriculture

The agriculture industry is facing challenges which may have significant impacts on the profitability of farms. Irish farms are heavily dependent on the UK as an export market and the uncertainty surrounding any trade agreements associated with Brexit brings serious concerns to farmers in relation to prices, potential tariffs and the associated higher operating costs associated with this. In addition the industry is coming under pressure to play a greater role in climate change and the reduction of carbon emissions. This may require changes to farming practices which may result in higher costs. The EU Farm to Fork Strategy and EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 are key policy documents in the development of sustainable agriculture and the protection integration and management of wildlife habitats. This Plan will continue to support the agriculture industry and will promote any changes to farming practices that will adapt to climate change and provide more sustainable methods of production.

[13] The Census defines an 'aggregate rural' area as anywhere with a population of 1,500 or less

5.19.2 Diversification

The changing pattern of employment in agriculture has resulted in a new approach to the sustainable use of the countryside. Farm diversification has been identified as a method of broadening the employment base of rural areas and providing an alternative source of income to traditional farming methods. Examples include renewable energy development, energy crops, forestry and forestry recreation, rural tourism such as open farms/pet farms or equestrian activities, and the production of speciality products such as cheese or beef or artisan food and drink on a farm. This Plan will support rural diversification projects subject to the use and scale of the development being compatible with the surrounding area.

5.19.3 Rural Enterprises

Rural businesses and enterprises are an important source of local employment in the County. This includes agricultural, equine, engineering/manufacturing, recreational, tourism, energy/renewable energy, and rural resource based enterprises. Whilst this Plan supports such enterprises and the diversification of the rural economy, it is also recognised that a balance is required between supporting rural based enterprises and projects and protecting the local environment.

In the first instance, new employment related developments are directed to settlements where services are available and lands have been identified for employment uses.

It is also recognised that there are instances where a development can be more readily accommodated or is more appropriate to a rural area. This can be due to a locational specific, or resourced based development, or a development of regional or national importance.

An Economic Business Zone has been identified at Carrickcarnan which will facilitate employment related development, subject to the preparation of a Masterplan. These lands are strategically located along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and will assist in providing strategic employment to the surrounding rural area. The location of this Economic Business Zone is identified on Map 3.2 (Volume 1A) and Section 4 of Volume 2.

In relation to the expansion of an existing rural enterprise, consideration will be given to the scale of the existing and proposed development, the capacity of local infrastructure to accommodate the expansion, and the compatibility of the development with the surrounding area.

Any development of a rural based enterprise, either new or expansion to existing in the open countryside, must take account of the traffic related impacts and in particular the traffic movements and capacity of the road network to accommodate a development. There are restrictions on accesses to National and Protected Regional Roads in order to maintain the efficiency and functionality of the National and Regional road network which shall be considered if the development is to be accessed off a Protected Road. Further details on these restrictions and exemptions are set out in Tables 7.9 and 7.10 in the Movement Chapter. Chapter 13 (Section 13.13.11) provides further information on employment development in rural areas.

Policy Objective	
EE 55	To support rural entrepreneurship and rural enterprise development of an appropriate scale at suitable locations in the County.

Policy Objective	
EE 56	To support the implementation of the LEADER Programme for the County.

Policy Objective	
EE 57	To recognise the contribution of niche enterprises such as distilleries and breweries in supporting economic development and promoting tourism.

Policy Objective	
EE 58	To support the provision of whiskey maturation facilities within the open countryside where the scale of such development is appropriate to the location and surrounding area which is located in reasonable proximity to appropriate levels of infrastructure and road access.

Policy Objective	
EE 59	To secure vibrant and viable rural communities by supporting the development of rural based enterprises.

Policy Objective	
EE 60	To continue to support the agricultural sector and to facilitate the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural activities.

Policy Objective	
EE 61	To facilitate the diversification of the agricultural sector by supporting alternative farm enterprises subject to the nature and use of any enterprise being compatible with the environment in which it is located.

Policy Objective	
EE 62	To consider, subject to the preparation of a Masterplan, the development of the Economic Business Zone at Carrickcarnan for commercial development including an Off line Motorway Services area, truck stop, service, repair and parking area and associated ancillary infrastructure to include motel/hotel, ancillary retail shop and dining facility, light industrial, storage and logistics facilities, retail warehousing (bulky goods only) and motor sales.

Policy Objective	
EE 63	To ensure that all applications for industrial and enterprise development submit a carbon footprint calculation and demonstrates how the new buildings and processes/activities will seek to achieve the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan 2019 or any amendments to targets.

5.20 RETAIL

5.20.1 Introduction

The retail sector has long been a key sector and a major employer both nationally and locally and accounts for the largest proportion of the workforce in Ireland, with 298,000 employees working in the sector (CSO, 2019).

At a local level, the 2016 Census confirmed that the retail and wholesale sector was the largest industrial sector in the County employing 15.9% of the total working population. The retail sector also supports indirect employment within the County, in sectors such as logistics and distribution.

In this regard, the sector plays a crucial role in providing sustainable employment and supporting a vibrant economy in County Louth.

The retail sector has and continues to experience significant change.

The exponential growth of online shopping has altered the dynamic of consumer behaviour.

Nonetheless, the in-store shopping experience remains the most immediate interaction between consumer and product. The retail store continues to offer the most intrinsic connection between the consumer and product and spans across each settlement in the country.

The town and village centres also act as a focus for a variety of other activities including business, social, leisure and residential uses. The retail policies outlined in the Plan aim to preserve and enhance the viability and vitality of the town and village centres whilst recognising the need to provide for flexible retail formats in line with changes in consumer behaviour.

5.20.2 Policy Context

The policy context in relation to retail is derived from guidance documents at a national and regional level including the National Planning Framework (NPF), the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031* and the *Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012*.

5.20.2.1 National Planning Framework

National Policy Objective 7 in the NPF sets out the approach to urban development nationwide. This includes:

- Encouraging population growth in strong employment and service centres of all sizes;
- Reversing the stagnation or decline of smaller urban centres, by identifying and establishing new roles and functions and enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities;
- Addressing the legacy of rapid unplanned growth, by facilitating amenities and services catch-up, jobs and/or improved sustainable transport links to cities, together with a slower rate of population growth in recently expanded commuter settlements; and
- Supporting a continuation of balanced population and employment growth in self-contained settlements.

One of the key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities for the Eastern and Midland Region includes:

"A focused approach to compact, sequential and sustainable development of the larger urban areas along the Dublin – Belfast economic and transport corridor, along which there are settlements with significant populations such as Dundalk and Drogheda."

5.20.2.2 Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012

The Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 require local authorities to prepare retail strategies and policies for their areas which are to be incorporated into county development plans.

The 5 key Policy Objectives contained within the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012* are to:

- Ensure retail development is plan led and follows the settlement hierarchy;
- Promote town centre vitality through a sequential approach to development;
- Secure competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling good quality development proposals to come forward in suitable locations;
- Facilitate a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking in accordance with the Smarter Travel Strategy; and
- Deliver quality urban design (Retail Design Manual).

The Louth Retail Strategy has been prepared in compliance with the Retail Planning Guidelines and is included within Volume 3, Appendix 4 of this Plan. The *Retail Planning Guidelines* are accompanied by the *Retail Design Manual* (2012).

The Design Manual provides a planning framework for future development of the retail sector in a way which meets the needs of modern shopping formats, while contributing to protecting, supporting and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of city and town centres as places to live, work, shop and visit.

5.20.2.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019-2031

The RSES indicates that the retail sector is a significant employer and economic contributor in the Eastern and Midland Region and acknowledges the important role retail plays in place making and creating attractive liveable environments. It also acknowledges that retail can play a key role in the regeneration of areas.

The RSES states that EMRA will "*support and drive the preparation of a new retail strategy for the Region under the requirements of the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, or any subsequent update, to update this hierarchy and apply floorspace requirements for the Region".*

The Strategy also contains specific Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) concerning retail developments.

Table 6.1 of the RSES sets out the Retail Hierarchy for the Region, including County Louth, as follows:

Table 5.2: Table 6.1 of the RSES

Retail Hierarchy for the Region	
Level 1	Metropolitan Centre
Level 2	Major Town Centres and County Towns – Drogheda & Dundalk
Level 3	Town and/or District Centres & Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres) – Ardee, **Drogheda District Centre:** Matthews' Lane; **Dundalk District Centres:** Dublin Road & Ard Easmuinn.
Level 4	Neighbourhood Centres, Local Centres, Small Towns and Villages.
Level 5	Corner Shops/Small Villages

5.21 LOUTH RETAIL STRATEGY

The Louth County Retail Strategy (Volume 3, Appendix 4) has been prepared by Louth County Council in accordance with provisions set out in the '*Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* published by Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoECLG) in 2012.

The Retail Strategy informs the policy objectives of the Plan 2021-2027 in respect of retail development and ensures that such policy objectives are based on the most up to date information. The overarching aim of the Strategy is to ensure that future retail development in the County is accommodated in a manner that is efficient, equitable and sustainable.

The Strategy provides important information on the quantum, scale and types of retail development required over the period to 2027, with a further outlook to 2030.

A key focus of this Retail Strategy is to provide an up to date picture of the current retail landscape in Louth and to implement the objectives of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 with regards to future retail provision within the County. Its applied methodology considers the various trends within the sector and the ever changing nature of retail in Ireland.

It has been prepared in the context of national economic recovery in which the retail market is showing signs of improvement, with marked increases in the volume of recorded sales. However, the Strategy was prepared over the period of late 2019 and early 2020, prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is widely acknowledged that the impact of this global pandemic on the retail sector in Ireland will be wide reaching.

However, the long-term impact will not be measurable for some period of time and therefore, it is considered premature to attempt to capture such impacts within this Retail Strategy.

The Strategy provides a 'Health Check Analysis' for the towns of Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee. It is noted that there are significant levels of retail vacancy recorded in areas of the core shopping streets, particularly in Drogheda and Dundalk.

It recommends that where high levels of sustained vacancy are evident in Drogheda and Dundalk, uses other than retail should be considered, where this would contribute towards improving the overall vitality and viability of the town centre and which complement the town centre retail offer.

Policies to promote complementary non-retail uses in town centre areas (outside of the Core Retail Area) where a sustained level of vacancy is evident, have been included.

The Strategy also addresses the requirement for future retail floorspace within the County. The floorspace requirement is estimated having regard to the changes to population, population forecasts, updated information on expenditure, trading retail floorspace and vacant retail floorspace. A summary of the floorspace requirements is set out in Tables 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6.

5.22 LOUTH COUNTY RETAIL HIERARCHY

The purpose of establishing a county retail hierarchy is to indicate the role and importance of each development centre and to guide retail development in accordance with the framework provided, thus enabling each centre to perform its overall function within the County's settlement hierarchy. The retail hierarchy for County Louth is illustrated in Table 5.3 below and is consistent with the Regional Retail Hierarchy set out in Table 6.1 of the RSES.

Table 5.3: County Louth Retail Hierarchy

Retailing Level	Type of Centre	Centre
Level 2 * *Level 1 is Dublin City Centre	Major Town Centre / County Town	Drogheda Dundalk
Level 3	Town and/or District Centres and Sub County Town Centres	Ardee Drogheda District Centre: Matthews Lane Dundalk District Centres: Dublin Road & Ard Easmuinn
Level 4	Neighbourhood Centres, Local Centres, Small Towns And Villages	Dunleer, Annagassan, Bellurgan, Baltray, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Carlingford, Clogherhead, Collon, Dromiskin, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Omeath, Tallanstown, Termonfeckin, Tullyallen, Drogheda Neighbourhood Centres, Dundalk Neighbourhood Centres
Level 5	Small villages	Various

5.23 Regional Growth Centres

5.23.1 Drogheda

Drogheda is a multi-modal settlement with excellent bus and rail connections, advantageously located adjacent to the M1. The town is a designated Level 2 Centre in the Retail Hierarchy, reflective of its status as a 'Regional Growth Centre' in the National Planning Framework.

The 'Love Drogheda Business Improvement District' (BID) came into operation in 2020. A key objective of the Love Drogheda BID is to continue to develop and implement a series of new initiatives designed to both further promote and improve the trading environment for the area, within the proposed BID area, in which the ratepayers operate their businesses.

Drogheda is well provided for in retail terms. The core retail area is delineated from Narrow West Street through to Scotch Hall Shopping Centre.



Narrow West Street faces particular challenges with regards to vacancy and dereliction, while the remainder of West Street (further east) remains relatively strong and vibrant comprising a mix of convenience and comparison shopping, complemented by cafes and restaurants. Laurence Shopping Centre, which is located in the core retail area, has experienced high levels of vacancy since opening in 2005.

There is a large volume of retail floor space available within the town centre including units with modern floor plates particularly within the Laurence Shopping Centre and redevelopment opportunities in the Narrow West Street area. There is a large quantum of convenience floorspace throughout the town beyond the core retail area including supermarkets operated by Tesco, Dunnes Stores, Aldi and Lidl.

The M1 Retail Park and Donore Road Retail Park (located within County Meath) are the principle destinations for bulky goods shopping within Drogheda.

The Retail Strategy included within Volume 3, Appendix 4 of this Plan provides further details in relation to Drogheda's retail environment.

5.23.2 Dundalk

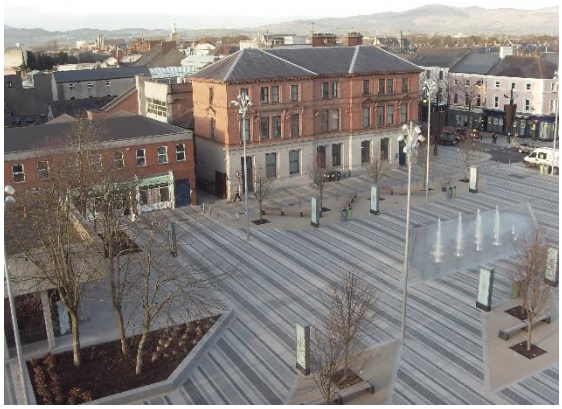
Dundalk is strategically located along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor with excellent road and rail connectivity to both cities. It is designated as a Regional Growth Centre in the RSES. The accessibility of the town has helped to attract significant investment in recent years. The town also benefits from having Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) located on its southern approaches, attracting students from throughout the north east region.

There is a Business Improvement District (BID) scheme in operation in Dundalk. The scheme is a not for profit organisation charged with creating a welcoming and economically viable town centre environment.

It includes a collective of 1,200 businesses in the town centre, who work collaboratively with stakeholders, to enhance the appeal of the town centre as the place for shopping, recreation and business development by increasing footfall and collectively improving its overall trading performance.

Dundalk has a number of prime redevelopment sites within the town centre, offering the opportunity to further enhance the town centre. The town also has appealing shopping streets including Clanbrassil Street and Park Street which offer a good range of high end independent clothing stores.

Market Square has been regenerated in recent years and offers an attractive public space for seasonal events and festivals.



The Marshes Shopping Centre continues to attract a wide range of national and international retailers while Dundalk Retail Park is the principle destination for bulky goods shopping. There remain challenges within the retail environment, specifically in relation to vacancy and the proliferation of lower order retail and retail service units within the retail core.

The Retail Strategy included within Appendix 4, Volume 3 of this Plan provides further details in relation to the retail environment within Dundalk.

5.23.3 Additional Retail Floorspace

Retail Strategies are required to provide a broad assessment of the additional retail floorspace required in counties over the lifetime of their strategies. The requirement for additional retail floorspace within County Louth is set out within the Retail Strategy. The floorspace requirement is estimated having regard to the changes to population, population forecasts, updated information on expenditure, trading retail floorspace and vacant retail floorspace.

It sets out broad guidance on the type and amount of additional floorspace that will be required to accommodate additional expenditure over the timescale of the Strategy and up to 2030.

A summary of the floorspace requirements is set out in Table 5.4. Tables 5.5 and 5.6 also set out the indicative potential for additional convenience, comparison and bulky comparison floor space in the towns of Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee up to 2027 and 2030.

The potential floor space capacity for each town is in accordance with the settlement and retail hierarchy of the County and has been proportioned in accordance with the population target of the aforementioned settlements for 2027. In accordance with the *Retail Planning Guidelines*, the indicative floorspace requirements set out in the tables below are only intended to provide broad guidance as to the additional quantum of floorspace provision. The quantum of floorspace should not be considered as upper or lower limits, merely as indicative of the scale of new floor space required to meet the needs of existing and future population and expenditure within the County.

Any additional new floorspace proposed could replace some existing outdated or poorly located retail floor space. In the event that a planning application is submitted for retail development, which does not conform to the scale outlined in this retail strategy, the onus is on the applicant to prove to the Planning Authority that the development will not detract from the vitality, or viability of the town centre.

Table 5.4 Indicative Floorspace Requirements for County Louth

Year	Convenience (m^2)	Comparison (m^2)	Bulky Comparison (m^2)
2027	6,479	4,749	2,098
2030	8,039	11,242	5,849

Table 5.5: Indicative Floorspace Potential by Settlement – 2027

2027	Convenience (m^2)	Comparison (m^2)	Bulky Comparison (m^2)
Drogheda	3,060	2,243	1,043
Dundalk	2,696	1,976	919
Ardee	399	292	136
Remainder of County	324	238	-

Table 5.6: Indicative Floorspace Potential by Settlement – 2030

2030	Convenience (m^2)	Comparison (m^2)	Bulky Comparison (m^2)
Drogheda	3,797	5,310	2,908
Dundalk	3,345	4,678	2,562
Ardee	495	692	379
Remainder of County	402	562	-

5.24 Town Centre First Approach

The Town Centre First Approach recognises the importance of a holistic, cross-sectoral and collaborative approach, and of people living in town centres. It places the health of town centres at the heart of decision making. The Town Centre First Approach also reinforces the need for our towns to be thriving places for living well and requires the introduction of national programmes for the revitalisation of town centres of different scales. This approach will require a collaborative and strategic approach to the regeneration of our towns and villages. Vacant units provide opportunities for retailers to locate in town centres and add to the overall diversity of retailer representation and are a function of the economic cycle. However, where excessive levels of vacancy are evident it can be indicative of the relative underperformance of a town centre or retail core. The Council will support the preparation and implementation of Town Centre Renewal Plans for Drogheda and Dundalk by applying the national framework for 'Town Centre Renewal' comprising of three core elements:

- Town Centre Health Check;
- Formation of Town Teams; and
- Preparation of Town Centre Plan.

The Council will seek to ensure that town centres become more attractive and greener environments, that are age friendly, easily accessible, legible and which give people confidence to visit and live in the centres. This Plan will also seek for town centre to address the zero carbon agenda and mitigate climate change while building a resilient and inclusive local economy.

Taking account of the changing retail environment, a new approach is required to assist in revitalising town centres.

This Plan will support a multi-dimensional approach to re-energising and returning the vibrancy to town centres.

This includes support for different business uses that will allow town centres to become multi-functional destinations providing services, leisure, cultural, civic, and residential uses.

Part of this multi-dimensional strategy is to bring people back to the town centre, by facilitating town centre living, particularly in the upper floors of buildings. This will include the re-use or adaptation of vacant and under-utilised buildings.

Residential development may be considered at ground floor level in certain circumstances or locations where there has been a sustained level of vacancy over a prolonged period. This will normally be on lands outside the core retail area of town centres. The provision of such accommodation will only be facilitated in circumstances where it is demonstrated the development would complement the role of the town centre as a 'destination' for commercial, social, or cultural activities.

The Council will continue to promote the provision and modernisation of residential accommodation over commercial or retail premises, within the core retail area of towns and villages, in order to improve the vibrancy of their centres. This will be subject to the provision of good quality accommodation with separate and safe access from the street and the protection of residential amenities from any possible conflict with other uses.

In encouraging the residential use of the upper floors of commercial properties in established retail/ commercial areas of Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee, the Council will consider possible dispensations from normal standards, to facilitate 'Living-Over-The-Shop' developments that will contribute positively to the renewal of areas, provided any proposed modifications will not have a negative impact on visual amenities or the existing streetscape.

- Derogations for older commercial buildings in appropriate cases may be given in respect of private open space, parking, and unit size standards;
- Derogations for car parking may be allowed in acceptable existing town/central locations at the discretion of the Planning Authority.

Section 3.7 'Town Centre Living' in Chapter 3 – 'Housing' provides further detail in relation to the re-use of existing buildings in town centres for residential development.

5.25 Assessment of Retail Development Proposals

In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines and the RSES Retail Hierarchy for the region, the County Retail Hierarchy provides the strategic policy framework for the spatial distribution of new retail development. New retail developments of significant scale should be targeted primarily within the core retail areas of Level 2 and Level 3 centres, as identified within the Louth Retail Strategy. Retail development of significant scale beyond the core retail area will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where the Planning Authority is satisfied that there are no other sites available and the development is necessary to serve the needs of the area.

New retail development in Level 4 and Level 5 centres should be of an appropriate scale to serve the local retailing needs only. The Sequential Approach as set out in the *Retail Planning Guidelines 2012* shall be applied in the assessment of applications for new retail developments.

It recognises the importance of sustaining the vitality and viability of town and village centres. Planning applications for retail development proposals, including extensions or material change of use of existing developments (as introduced in the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012), must comply with the criteria of suitability of use, size, scale and accessibility. This will maintain the retail importance of the town centre and protect the viability and vitality of town centres within the county.

The visual prominence of retail within town or village centres is acknowledged.

As such, a high standard of design will be a prerequisite for all new retail developments in these locations.

Developments which enhance the vitality of town centres and contribute positively to the area will be encouraged by the Planning Authority. The Planning Authority will promote a suitable mix of day and night time uses within these locations. This may include commercial, social, residential, civic, cultural and recreational uses.

In areas where there are sustained levels of retail vacancy, the Council will consider alternative uses at ground floor level, which may be considered to be complimentary to retail.

Provision of secure cycle storage facilities is essential for supporting the promotion and development of cycling as a more sustainable mode of transport.

High quality secure cycle storage at origins and destinations is considered to be a key element of any strategy aimed at encouraging cycling. Bicycle parking for all new retail developments shall be provided in accordance with the standards set out within Chapter 13, Table 13.12 of the Plan.

5.25.1 Lower Order Retailing

In assessing planning applications for lower order retail uses including Betting Shops, Amusement Arcades, Casinos and Vaping Shops, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- The need to safeguard the vitality and viability of the defined core retail area and to maintain a suitable mix of retail uses;
- The proliferation of such existing facilities in the area;
- The effect on the amenities in the area arising from noise, hours of operation and litter; and
- The treatment of shop front advertising and window display.

Policy Objective	
EE 64	To promote a healthy competitive retail environment within County Louth and to maintain the vitality and viability of the town and village centres and their role as primary retail core areas.

Policy Objective	
EE 65	To encourage and support the re-use and revitalisation of vacant (and derelict) units and properties within town and village centres and assess change of use applications based on merit and overall contribution to the vitality of the town centre and the day and/or night time economy.

Policy Objective	
EE 66	To ensure that applications for retail development comply with the provisions of the Louth Retail Strategy.

Policy Objective	
EE 67	To generally support planning applications which propose complementary, non-retail uses in town centre areas, where sustained levels of vacancy are evident.

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

Policy Objective	
EE 69	To generally discourage permission for change of use from retail or service (including banks and similar institutions with over the counter services) to non-retail or non-service uses at ground floor level in areas where there is an existing strong retail provision.

Policy Objective	
EE 70	To support the 'Town Centre First Approach' and the establishment of any future town centre management initiatives that seek to promote this approach.

Policy Objective	
EE 71	To support the establishment of a Louth County Council led Town Centre Management Team for Drogheda and Dundalk.

Policy Objective	
EE 72	To create safe and clean town centre environments which give people confidence to visit centres.

Policy Objective	
EE 73	To support the development of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres and principle locations for future retail development, Ardee and Dunleer as Self Sustaining Growth Centres and the retail function of all other settlements, commensurate with locally generated needs.

Policy Objective	
EE 74	To promote the provision of local retail centres serving small, localised catchment populations in new residential areas, commensurate with locally generated needs.

Policy Objective	
EE 75	To promote the improvement of the environment and public realm of town and village centres through good design, landscaping, street furniture, improve mobility through traffic management, and co-operate with Tidy Towns Committees and other community groups in the implementation of environmental improvement schemes.

Policy Objective	
EE 76	To require security shutters on new shopfronts (where required) to be transparent and placed behind the shopfront window glazing or to consider innovative solutions including traditional wrought iron window guards.

Policy Objective	
EE 77	To promote the provision and modernisation of residential accommodation over commercial premises in towns and villages in order to improve the vibrancy of their centres.

Policy Objective	
EE 78	To encourage the preservation of authentic, traditional shopfronts and good quality contemporary designs.

Policy Objective	
EE 79	To have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2011 (DAHLG) and any subsequent guidelines, when assessing applications for shopfronts on protected structures or in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's).

Policy Objective	
EE 80	To encourage the incorporation of blinds, where required, into the shopfront fascia so that they are capable of being retracted when not in use. Curved and Dutch canopies will be discouraged.

Policy Objective	
EE 81	To ensure that all signage development complies with the relevant assessment criteria and guidance as set out within the Development Management Guidelines (Chapter 13) of this Plan unless otherwise provided for in a Local /Urban Area Plan.



Chapter 6

Tourism

'To support sustainable tourism development in Louth and strengthen the contribution that tourism makes to the local communities, culture and economy of the County. Continue to develop the role of tourism and the development of a high quality and diverse tourism product throughout the County in a balanced and sustainable manner.'

6 TOURISM

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Louth has a strong tourism product with significant potential for growth. The County has much to offer as a tourist destination, in particular its unspoilt natural environment, a rich and varied heritage and numerous cultural and man-made attractions. The County also has a wide range of quality accommodation and is ideally located equidistant between Dublin and Belfast international airports.

Tourism has played a significant role in the economic recovery in recent years and is fundamental in terms of the opportunities it generates for businesses and employment throughout the country. It is among the most important sectors of the Irish economy, employing more than 300,000 people and generating billions of euro in revenue.

Tourism is one of the largest and most important sectors of the national economy, providing employment for approximately 260,000 people, an economic contribution of €7.8 billion (excluding carrier receipts), and exchequer revenue of €1.8 billion, which helps fund other key public services. With regard to County Louth, Fáilte Ireland's figures indicate that 1% of overseas visitors overnight in Louth generating a similar share of revenue.

According to CSO figures, the total number of trips to Ireland made by overseas visitors in 2019 saw an increase of 1.8% on 2018. However, the tourism sector has been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent travel restrictions to, from and within Ireland. Tourism was one of the first sectors to be hit by the pandemic restrictions and is likely to be the last one to emerge from the crisis. It will likely take a number of years for the tourism sector to recover the ground lost during the Covid-19 crisis.

Since its launch in 2015, Fáilte Ireland has been actively marketing 'Irelands Ancient East' as a tourist destination.

The Ireland's Ancient East initiative, which includes County Louth, is designed to allow visitors peel back the layers of time and to go off the beaten track to experience thousands of years of history. It focuses on the wealth of cultural and heritage attractions in the area.

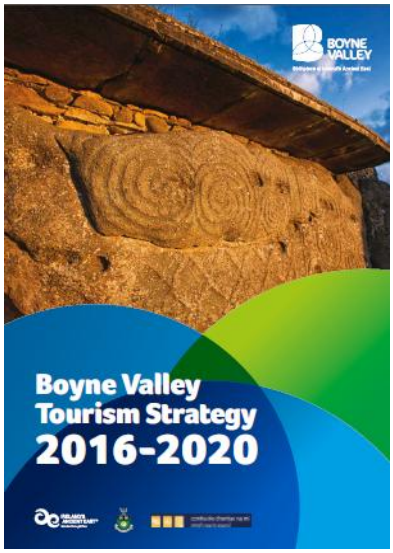
The future development of the tourism sector needs to capitalise on County Louth's unique location in relation to the Boyne Valley and the Mourne/Cooley/Gullion Regions.

A fine balance needs to be struck between capitalising on the resources of the County whilst protecting them from harm and over-development.

6.2 POLICY CONTEXT

6.2.1 Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020, (Boyne Valley Tourist Office 2016)

The Boyne Valley tourism region of County Louth and Meath contains the greatest concentration of national heritage assets in Ireland. The area is home to the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage site.



The *Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020* is designed to focus on areas of growth potential, identify key projects that will act as a stimulus for tourism development and bring the Boyne Valley tourism brand to the next level.

Boyne Valley Tourism represents a central destination marketing and advocacy body, however, the success of the plan will be through a collective approach with the tourism trade and other key stakeholders.

The Strategy sets out a pathway for the Boyne Valley to become one of the leading tourism destinations in Ireland based on a collaborative destination marketing approach and return on marketing investment focus.

Policy Objective	
TOU 1	To co-operate with all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the '*Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016 - 2020'*, and any subsequent strategy published during the life of this Plan.

6.2.2 People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025 (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport 2019)

People, Place and Policy -Growing Tourism to 2025 is a policy framework for the development of tourism within the country. The framework establishes the overall tourism goals of Government:

- Employment in the tourism sector will be 250,000 by 2025, compared with around 200,000 at present;
- There will be 10 million visits to Ireland annually by 2025; and
- Overseas tourism revenue will reach €5 billion in real terms by 2025.

6.2.3 Tourism Development and Innovation – A strategy for Investment 2016-2022, (Fáilte Ireland, 2016)

The *Tourism Development and Innovation Strategy* sets out a strategy which will be outcome based and will identify the types of projects to invest in that will achieve these outcomes, rather than specific projects or locations for investment.

To stimulate innovation and improve international competitiveness, Fáilte Ireland has launched a significant new Tourism Development and Innovation Fund which will be the main source of funding in the sector over the next five years.

This strategy sets out the framework and mechanism for the delivery of investment to cities, towns, villages, communities and businesses across the country.

It identifies priorities to support innovation in the sector to retain and grow the country's competitiveness in the marketplace.

Its ultimate aim is to strengthen the appeal of Ireland for international visitors.

The strategic objectives of the Tourism Development and Innovation Strategy are:

- To successfully and consistently deliver a world class visitor experience;
- To support a tourism sector that is profitable and achieves sustainable levels of growth and delivers jobs;
- To facilitate communities to play an enhanced role in developing tourism in their locality, thereby strengthening and enriching local communities; and
- To recognise, value and enhance Ireland's natural environment as the cornerstone of Irish tourism.

6.2.4 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019-2031

The *Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES*) highlights the importance of tourism to the regional economy and seeks to support Fáilte Ireland to deliver greater tourism benefits to the region.

The significant heritage and tourism potential of Drogheda is highlighted in the RSES, both within the town itself where its rich urban heritage is evident in the archaeology and architecture within the historic town core, and also as a gateway to heritage sites outside the town in the Boyne Valley.

The River Boyne is identified as the most important natural amenity of Drogheda, with the potential for the River to be a focal point of any regeneration projects highlighted.

The benefits of developing parklands in the west of the town in improving links to the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site are also acknowledged. Regional Policy Objective 4.15 provides specific detail in the promotion of Drogheda as a tourism destination.

6.2.5 County Louth Tourism & Heritage Action Plan 2016 -2021

The County Louth *Tourism & Heritage Action Plan 2016 -2021* was published as part of the Louth Economic Forum 10 Point Economic Action Plan.

Task groups were formed to drive each of these areas including Tourism and Heritage.

Louth Economic Forum consulted with stakeholders at a Regional and Local level, to ensure that the *Tourism and Heritage Action Plan* is in line with National and Regional tourism strategies, and to optimise the spirit of industry partnership which has underpinned the Tourism and Heritage Forum's approach from the outset.



It seeks to capitalise on Louth's opportunities and enhance local economies throughout the County. To achieve this, a partnership approach between the Louth Tourism Office and other sectoral players, including Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Tourism Board is required.

The vision of the Action Plan is to increase the number of visitors to the region by working in partnership to develop a world-class sustainable tourism experience. This vision will be achieved by:

- Increasing the number of bed nights and 'dwelling time' in order to generate further tourism revenue, create associated tourism employment and enhance local economies;
- Maximising revenue funding to achieve commercial advantage and sustainable tourism growth;
- Marketing and promoting Louth's unique heritage, arts and cultural strengths; and
- Leveraging off Louth's 'Green' county reputation, its quality environment credentials and its recreational, sporting and other activities.

Policy Objective	
TOU 2	To support the implementation of the '*County Louth Tourism & Heritage Action Plan 2016 -2021'* and any subsequent plans published during the life of this Plan.

Policy Objective	
TOU 3	To support the implementation of the *National Climate Action Plan 2019*, *Climate Action Charter* and the *Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024* by integrating climate change action measures into future tourism plans.

Policy Objective	
TOU 4	To promote and facilitate tourism as one of the key economic pillars of the County's economy and major generator of employment and to support the provision of necessary significant increase in facilities, visitor attractions and improvement in public spaces to promote attractive and vibrant town centres as key places for tourists.

6.2.6 Boyne Valley Strategy Working Group

The Boyne Valley forms part of Fáilte Ireland's national destination strategy. The Boyne Valley draws together the tourism industry of County Louth and County Meath. Since 2012 Louth and Meath County Councils have taken a collaborative approach to tourism whereby both councils have been working together to jointly market and develop the Boyne Valley as a tourism destination.

A Boyne Valley Tourism Development Officer has been appointed to work closely with the relevant stakeholders to promote and develop the Boyne Valley destination.

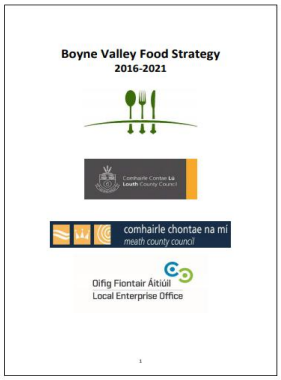
Louth and Meath County Councils have established a Boyne Valley Strategy Working Group with representation from the tourism trade and relevant bodies across both Counties, with the purpose of overseeing the preparation of a new strategy to guide tourism development.

This strategy's core objective is to make the Boyne Valley a leading tourism destination.

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

6.2.7 Boyne Valley Food Strategy 2016-2021

The development of a Boyne Valley Food Strategy was formulated to enhance the good work already commenced in the Region.



One of the main pillars of the strategy is to create a Louth/Meath food network, which supports and facilitates the growth of the local food community in both Counties and to develop the Boyne Valley Region as the Food Champion within Ireland's Ancient East.

While the strategy sits under the Boyne Valley banner, it is written with all parts of both Counties in mind, on the basis that the tourist or consumer does not necessarily recognise geographic boundaries.

The overarching strategic vision of the *Boyne Valley Food Strategy 2016-2021* is for the Boyne Valley region to be recognised as the leading national food and drinks destination and to be the stand out food region within Ireland's Ancient East.

Policy Objective	
TOU 6	To support the implementation of the Boyne Valley Food Strategy 2016-2021 and any subsequent plans published during the life of this Plan.

6.2.8 Mourne-Cooley-Gullion Geotourism Project

The Mourne-Cooley-Gullion Geotourism project is a cross border project that aims to develop a competitive, internationally recognised tourism destination taking advantage of the prized landscape and related cultural heritage of the Mourne-Cooley-Gullion area, improving visitor infrastructure and services while raising awareness of and protecting this natural resource.



The project covers the upland areas of the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Ring of Gullion as well as the Cooley peninsula and adjacent areas within County Louth. The project promotes the unique aspects of the region, its geology and the related fields of archaeology, mythology and heritage.

Policy Objective	
TOU 7	To promote and co-operate with all relevant stakeholders to facilitate the development of the Mourne Cooley Gullion Geotourism Project.

6.3 Tourism Attractions within County Louth

County Louth includes an array of tourism amenities and attractions, which span the entire county, from the Mourne /Cooley/ Gullion to the Boyne Valley Region:

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Scenic Quality;
- Boyne Valley Region: UNESCO World Heritage Site Brú na Bóinne and Site of the Battle of the Boyne;
- Archaeological sites and monuments including Mellifont Abbey and the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice;
- Mourne /Cooley/ Gullion Region incorporating the Geotourism project;
- Historic walled towns of Drogheda, Ardee and Carlingford;
- Historic houses and designed landscapes;
- Dundalk Stadium - all-weather horse racing track;
- Inland and sea fishing;
- Identified walks and cycle routes;
- Equestrian activity;
- High quality golf courses;
- In excess of 70 kilometres of clean coastlines including 3 blue flag sites and 1 green coast site (2019);
- High quality range of independent and multi-national retailers;
- Excellent hotels and conference facilities;
- Arts, crafts and food festivals;
- Places of recreation including cinemas, pubs, restaurants and theatres; and
- Ornithological opportunities.

6.3.1 Greenways - Walking and Cycling Routes

A greenway is a recreational or pedestrian corridor for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner, which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. Many greenways have been developed along abandoned rail lines, utility corridors or other natural linear open spaces, such as river banks and canals. Their development has occurred in scenic locations that were not previously accessible for pedestrians or cyclists.

These trails are proving to be popular entry points to a more active lifestyle and are also greatly enhancing the tourism attractiveness of these areas.

Figures from Fáilte Ireland indicate that there has been a significant upward trend toward walking and cycling tourism in Ireland.

The number of tourists coming to Ireland on walking and cycling holidays has grown exponentially in recent years, from 371,000 in 2012 to 1.8 million in 2017.

Last year, 46% of all overseas holidaymakers to Ireland engaged in walking and cycling as part of their holiday experience. Harnessing the potential of this tourism sector can have significant economic benefits. An *Economic Impact Case Study* undertaken in 2011 by Fáilte Ireland on the Great Western Greenway in Mayo found that there was an estimated local economic impact of about €6.3 million. 50% of businesses surveyed indicated that the Greenway has led to an increase in business turnover.

The Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport has published a '*Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways'*.



The objective of this strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant greenways in appropriate locations, constructed to an appropriate standard, in order to deliver a quality experience for all greenways users. Proposals for greenway/blueway development should contribute towards the protection or enhancement of existing green infrastructure and have regard to the *'Connecting with Nature for Health and Wellbeing'*, EPA Research Report 2020. Further information on Greenways can be found in Section 7.6.12 of Chapter 7.

6.3.1.1 Great Eastern Greenway

The purpose built greenway between Carlingford and Omeath is a section of 'The Great Eastern Greenway' currently being developed between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The 6km stretch of Greenway, which primarily utilises disused railway line between Omeath and Carlingford, opened in 2013.

The stretch of completed greenway between Carlingford and Omeath has seen over 50,000 users per year.

Since then Louth County Council and the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council in partnership have successfully secured over €3 million in funding to complete a 20km section cross-border Greenway project from Newry to Carlingford.

The Carlingford Lough Greenway, when completed, will link with the previously completed Portadown-Newry element resulting in a total length of scenic, safe and attractive cross-border greenway measuring approximately 52km.

Figure 6.1 Great Eastern Greenway



Figure 6.2: Boyne Greenway



6.3.1.2 Boyne Greenway

Running from Dominic's Park on the south bank of the River Boyne near the Bridge of Peace in Drogheda, the Boyne Greenway takes you along the river close to the Mary McAleese Cable Bridge and then along the Boyne Canal to the Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre at Oldbridge.

It is envisaged that the Boyne Greenway will extend eastward along the Boyne estuary to Mornington (presently the subject of a Part 8 application).

The walking and cycling facility utilises sections of boardwalk to create a riverside resource connecting Drogheda's town centre to the Oldbridge Estate, via the existing ramparts.

Along the boardwalk are a number of heritage signs with information about Irish Mythology relevant to the Boyne Valley.

There are also a number of self-guiding walks to be enjoyed through parkland at the Battle of the Boyne site, Oldbridge Estate.

The Boyne Greenway has the potential to capitalise not only on the scenic nature of the route but also the significant heritage assets within its environs.

It offers an opportunity for a unique visitor experience and a differentiation in visitor interpretation of the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage site and the iconic heritage trail.

Policy Objective	
TOU 8	To promote and facilitate the development of walkways and cycleways at appropriate locations throughout the County utilising disused transport links where feasible.[1]

Policy Objective	
TOU 9	To protect the integrity and scenic quality of existing and future walking and cycling routes and their setting.[1 above]

Policy Objective	
TOU 10	To work in conjunction with adjoining authorities including Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Meath County Council to extend and design new walking and cycling routes, including the Great Eastern Greenway and the Boyne Greenway. Ensure all proposals include appraisal of environmental impacts and take full account of the potential for negative impacts on European Sites through the process of Appropriate Assessment.[1 above]

Policy Objective	
TOU 11	To continue the development of a network of greenways in County Louth in accordance with the *'Strategy for Future Development of National and Regional Greenways'.*

[1] The above policies TOU 8 - 10 shall all be subject to compliance with all relevant EU policies such as the Water Framework, Birds, Habitats SEA &EIA Directives.

6.3.2 Heritage Tourism

County Louth has an array of heritage assets, ranging from the historic ruins at Monasterboice in the south of the County to the walled medieval town of Carlingford to the north of the County. Heritage Tourism is a branch of tourism that involves visiting historical, industrial or natural sites, and which is oriented towards the cultural heritage of a location. It is recognised as one of the most important and fastest growing aspects of the tourist industry and one of the pillars, which underpin the Irelands Ancient East initiative.

Tourism based on the heritage assets of a destination can provide an additional opportunity to increase the length of time visitors stay in the county, as well as reinforcing cultural identity by creating revenue to conserve built heritage and support cultural heritage.

County Louth has a rich and varied culture and heritage, which forms the basis of much of the County's tourism industry.

Many of the heritage sites within County Louth have significant tourism potential. Such sites include Mellifont Abbey and Millmount in Drogheda, King Johns Castle in Carlingford, Ardee Castle and the heritage site of Monasterboice.

In addition, Dundalk has a rich wealth of industrial heritage assets including the former Carroll's factory and the Great Northern Brewery site, as well as medieval sites such as Castletown Motte.

Carlingford, in particular, possesses the greatest concentration of heritage and natural assets within the County.

There is potential to further enhance tourism development in Carlingford through the integration of activities, the natural and heritage assets and the local history and myths associated with the area.

It is the Councils aim to protect and enhance these assets for the betterment of the tourism sector.

Policy Objective	
TOU 12	To work with the relevant stakeholders including the OPW, the Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, the Arts Council, local communities and businesses to support the development of heritage and cultural tourism in Louth.

Policy Objective	
TOU 13	To recognise the medieval and industrial heritage of Dundalk and its surrounding district through engagement with Fáilte Ireland and associated agencies.

6.3.3 Food and Craft

The food and craft market has become a key element within the tourism sector and feeds into the continuous development of visitor experiences. This is especially evident within the Boyne Valley region where the Boyne Valley Flavours group has spearheaded growth within the sector. Boyne Valley Flavours is a collective of producers, food service and food experience providers in the Boyne Valley.

The aim is to promote local, sustainable produce, develop the use of local produce in restaurants/cafes and to develop food tourism in the Boyne Valley region. Discover Boyne Valley Flavour's is funded by joint initiative between Meath and Louth County Council.

The group was formed in 2013 when the Boyne Valley Food Series commenced, and the development of a *Boyne Valley Food Strategy 2016-2021* was formulated to enhance the good work already commenced in the region from groups such as Meath Artisan Network and Oriel Food Group in County Louth.

The Boyne Valley Food Series is run by the Boyne Valley Flavours group each year. This is a calendar of events, which celebrates the unique land, heritage, people and produce of the Region. The Food Series has helped to cement the Region as leading player on the national food stage. The success of the Food Series has led to the Boyne Valley being named as one of the world's best food destinations, in 2019, by the National Geographic.

The food and craft market has the potential to enhance the blended experience model within the Boyne Valley region. There is also potential to enhance the sector through food trails and local food story telling.

6.3.3.1 'Sea Louth' Scenic Seafood Trail

'Sea Louth', scenic seafood trail is a tourism initiative and visitor experience developed to showcase Louth's picturesque coastline and local seafood offering, therefore giving Louth a standout factor in the busy food tourism landscape in Ireland.

sea louth
see eat admire

The initiative is driven by Louth County Council in partnership with the Boyne Valley Food Development Officer and Dundalk Tourist Officer, and is supported by the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) for the North East Region.

The aim of the initiative is to:

- Celebrate and showcase our locally sourced seafood ingredients;
- Raise awareness of Louth's standout coastal features;
- Drive footfall into our restaurants & eateries which serve good quality seafood dishes; and
- Enhance the visitor experience while in the county and increase dwell time.

Policy Objective	
TOU 14	To support the development of the food and craft tourism sector within the County and the promotion of food trails which enhance and promote a blended tourism experience model.

6.3.4 Beaches

Louth's coastline is a major asset in terms of tourism, recreation and marine leisure activities. Designated bathing areas, Blue Flag beaches and other high quality beaches within the County, are significant local amenities and are also important from a tourism and economic development perspective. Port/ Lurganboy, Clogherhead, and Shellinghill/ Templetown are high value beaches, which have considerable tourism potential. Each of these beaches were awarded Blue Flag status in 2020 while Seapoint beach achieved a Green Coast award in 2020 in recognition of its high environmental quality.

Identified bathing waters within the County, at all of the aforementioned locations, have achieved 'Excellent' water quality status for each of the last 4 years.

The EPA Bathing Water Quality in Ireland report commented that, *"bathing waters in Co. Louth continue to be of a very high quality with few pollution sources having been identified*"

Policy Objective	
TOU 15	To protect beaches, and bathing areas as valuable local amenities and as a tourism resource and support the maintenance, protection and improvement of access to these amenities.

6.3.5 Events and Festivals

Events and festivals are an important means of attracting additional visitors to the County thereby increasing expenditure, attracting visitors during the off-peak season and encouraging repeat visitation. The County presently hosts numerous events and festivals, which make an important contribution to the tourism and economic development of the County.

Such events have included Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann which was successfully hosted in Drogheda in 2018 and 2019, Púca Festival, Carlingford Oyster Festival and the International Harp Festival.





Policy Objective	
TOU 16	To support and promote existing festivals and sporting events to increase the cultural, heritage and lifestyle profile of the county, and where appropriate to promote and facilitate the development of new events and venues to host these events.

6.3.6 Additional Tourism Experiences

Louth County Council is supportive of the development of additional tourism experiences or tourism attractions of scale, which would serve to enhance tourism and employment within the County. The Plan supports the sustainable development of facilities such as outdoor activity or leisure parks at suitable locations throughout the County. Development proposals for unique tourism offerings will be considered subject to the protection of the integrity of the built and natural heritage of the County.

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

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

6.3.7 Narrow Water Bridge

The construction of a bridge between the Cooley Peninsula in County Louth and the southern section of the Mourne Mountains in County Down at Narrow Water would be a project of immense symbolic and historical significance.

The primary objectives of the project are to:

- Facilitate improved cross – border access to the scenic beauty on both sides of Carlingford Lough;
- Enhance the tourist potential of the cross-border region and stimulate job creation;
- Improve the leisure potential of the region for the residents as well as tourists/ visitors;
- Promote interaction between the communities north and south of the border;
- Encourage pedestrian and cyclist activity and complement other visitor initiatives in the cross border region; and
- Encourage a modal shift amongst those working in the area.

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

6.3.8 Carlingford Lough Ferry

The Carlingford Lough Ferry operates between Greenore Port, County Louth and Greencastle, County Down. The ferry accommodates a range of vehicle types including cars, vans, camper vans, caravans, minibuses and coaches.



The service departs hourly from each terminal throughout the year and every half hour during the summer months. The service began in 2017 and provides an important tourism link for County Louth.

6.4 Fáilte Ireland Strategies

6.4.1 Irelands Ancient East

Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism development authority, aims to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy.

IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

Ireland's Ancient East was established in 2015 to offer visitors a compelling motivation to visit the east of Ireland and create a new umbrella destination similar to that of the Wild Atlantic Way which has been highly successful. The concept covers coastal counties along the east of Ireland as well as counties in the north east region including Monaghan and Cavan and provides an opportunity for collaboration in the promotion and development of tourism.

The brand is rooted in the rich history and diverse range of cultural heritage experiences that are particularly prevalent in the Eastern and Southern regions of Ireland.

To date there has been a phased roll-out of the branding strategy, with investment in orientation signage and the enhancement of the visitor experience across the programme area.

The first phase of the orientation signage for Ireland's Ancient East began at the end of 2016 with a number of key visitor orientation signs now installed in the County. The signs are designed to encourage visitors to stay longer and explore the wider region and have been strategically sited in locations such as Drogheda Museum (Millmount), Dundalk Tourist Office, Carlingford Tourist Office, Mellifont Abbey and Monasterboice Round Tower & High Cross.

Ultimately the key strategic objective of the Ireland's Ancient East initiative is to increase the number of overnight stays by overseas visitors in the County as well as increase the tourism revenue generated and the associated tourism employment.

6.4.2 Ancient Destination Development Plan 2020 – 2024

The *Ancient Destination Development Plan* (ADDP) is a five year development plan designed to guide tourism development through a roadmap of key projects adopted by all stakeholders in the pursuit of sustained tourism growth.

Over the course of the ADDP, its success will be measured in the context of achieving growth across a range of indicators from new experience supply, visitor demand and destination development indicators.

The approach adopted within the ADDP is designed to be transformative in how the integrated approach to developing key projects will generate economic growth across the destination.

It is designed to harness existing assets and develop them to provide compelling reasons to visit, while providing the tourism industry with a central focus for experience development. The target outputs from the ADDP will include a reduction in seasonality, increase visitor spend, grow visitor bed nights, employment and visitor dispersion.

6.4.3 Drogheda – Destination Town

Drogheda has been designated as a 'Destination Town' by Fáilte Ireland. Funding will be allocated by Fáilte Ireland under this initiative to boost the attractiveness and tourism potential of the town. The Fáilte Ireland scheme is part of the National Tourism Development Authority's work to drive a better regional spread of overseas and domestic visitors and spend.

The scheme is funded under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy with the aim of driving sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector and higher revenue and job creation around Ireland.

Research by Fáilte Ireland has consistently shown that attractive towns and cities are key motivators for overseas holidaymakers coming to Ireland. The 'Destination Towns' scheme will seek to enhance public spaces such as squares, streetscapes and markets in a way that will engage tourists and enhance their experience. This may include spaces for food and craft markets, areas for town centre events, public art displays as well as orientation and signage to help visitors explore a town's local heritage.

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

Policy Objective	
TOU 21	To seek best-practice environmental management and climate proofing of tourism related developments and activities to include the circular economy, energy efficiency, waste management, procurement and recycling.

Policy Objective	
TOU 22	To assist in the development and marketing of identified Tourism Destinations including the Boyne Valley and Mourne Cooley Gullion destinations, in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders.

Policy Objective	
TOU 23	To support and promote Drogheda as a designated 'Destination Town' and engage with Fáilte Ireland in developing and promoting the tourism potential of the town.

Policy Objective	
TOU 24	To support and work with Fáilte Ireland on the development and implementation of Destination Experience Development Plans and to engage with Fáilte Ireland to deliver the implementation of the *Ancient Destination Development Plan 2020 - 2024* within County Louth.

6.5 TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

There is an underlying need to provide tourist and visitor accommodation which facilitates the growth of the tourism sector within the County.

The Council is keen to ensure that there is a range of high quality and affordable accommodation provided in order to meet the needs of visitors and tourists to the County.

Within the south of the County, there is an identified shortfall in tourist accommodation. This is highlighted within the *Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020* and has become a significant deterrent among tour operators for scheduling the area for overnight stays. However, tourist accommodation must be provided in a manner, which does not impact upon the unspoilt natural heritage of the County and does not compromise the very reason for many inward trips to the county.

Policy Objective	
TOU 25	To promote and support the development of additional tourism accommodation at appropriate locations throughout the County in particularly in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

6.5.1 Hotel, Guest House and Bed & Breakfast Accommodation

In 2019 there were 856 rooms and 2,097 beds available in the County across all major forms of tourist accommodation (hotels, guesthouses, bed & breakfast, hostels and self-catering), with 84% of the bed spaces provided for by existing hotels (Fáilte Ireland, Accommodation Capacity 2019).

It is also acknowledged that there has been a significant increase in short term letting and hosting across Ireland in recent years through platforms such as Airbnb. This has become a conventional option of accommodation for many tourists and visitors.

The hosting of conferences is an important element of the hotel trade and reduces the reliance upon seasonal tourism trade. Given Louth's strategic location along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and its proximity to international airports in Dublin and Belfast, there is significant potential for growth in this area.

Custom built guest houses should be located within existing towns and villages to avail of and support existing services. Bed & breakfast accommodation is normally provided within existing dwellings and can be accommodated in both urban and rural areas.

The Council is keen to ensure that there is a range of high quality and affordable accommodation provided in order to meet the needs of visitors and tourists to the County.

Policy Objective	
TOU 26	To direct tourism–based development including Hotels, Guesthouses and B&B's to Level 1, 2 and 3 Settlements where there is adequate infrastructure to service the development, except where the proposal involves the re-use or diversification of an existing building, subject to normal planning criteria.

6.5.2 Self-Catering Accommodation

Self-catering accommodation is defined as 'purpose built self-contained residential units, which provide accommodation on a short term basis for visitors to the area'.

In order to manage the provision of tourist accommodation in a manner that meets the needs of the tourist, while at the same time supporting the local economy, it is considered important that the provision of self-catering accommodation should be provided within the network of existing settlements and be of a scale that the settlement can sustain.

Therefore, the Council will resist proposals for the development of self-catering accommodation in the countryside, except where existing buildings of character are to be converted or where the restoration of vernacular dwellings is proposed.

Policy Objective	
TOU 27	To facilitate the provision of self-catering accommodation in locations within existing towns and villages, of a scale that the settlement can sustain.

Policy Objective	
TOU 28	To prohibit proposals for the development of self-catering accommodation in the countryside except where existing buildings of character are to be converted or where the restoration of vernacular dwellings including thatched cottages is proposed.

6.5.3 Caravan and Camping Sites

The provision of caravan and camping sites is an important element in the accommodation of holiday-makers. The provision of additional caravan and camping sites could potentially attract more tourists to the County and generate additional income. The Council recognises the need for the provision of camp sites to cater for touring holiday caravans, campervan and tents, which are appropriately located and sensitively designed.

The sector has also changed in line with consumer demand and its offering now includes accommodation such as glamping and pods. Glamping or pod units are seen as an upmarket style of camping and are usually fixed or semi-permanent structures.

If situated in the wrong location caravan and camping sites along with their ancillary buildings can be obtrusive features in the landscape detracting from its overall scenic quality and amenity.

In order to protect the visual amenity of the countryside new caravan parks and camping /glamping sites shall normally be located within existing settlements.

Small scale camping/glamping sites outside of settlements will be considered only where it can be demonstrated that there is a justifiable tourist product / demand in that area.

In exceptional circumstances, caravan parks or campsites may be permitted where the proposal:

- Involves the re-development of a previous worked site;
- Is within a forest or woodland; and
- Is within a demesne setting.

In all cases the proposal should be suitably screened, have an adequate road network to serve the development, in addition to adequate foul drainage.

Policy Objective	
TOU 29	To encourage new caravan parks and camping sites to locate within existing settlements which are appropriately screened and which are served by an adequate and acceptable road network and foul drainage. In exceptional circumstances caravan and camping sites may be permitted in previous worked sites, forest or woodland or demesne setting.

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

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

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

6.5.4 Hostels

Hostel accommodation catering primarily for those travelling on a limited budget, occupies an important niche within the tourist accommodation market. Whilst the individual spend on this type of accommodation is by definition low, the ancillary spend by such tourists in the locality can be considerable.

Policy Objective	
TOU 33	To facilitate the provision of budget hostels within existing Level 1, 2 and 3 Settlements ensuring high quality design and architecture, provision of adequate infrastructure, compliance with normal planning criteria and subject to the protection of the unspoilt natural environment and landscape amenity.

6.5.5 Short Term Lettings

Under the *Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019* and the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) No.2 Regulations 2019* reforms have been introduced to the short term letting sector.

These reforms are aimed at addressing the impact on the private rental market by the use of residential homes for short-term tourism type letting in areas of high housing demand. These provisions only apply to areas designated as 'Rent Pressure Zones' under the *Residential Tenancies Act (as amended).*

At the time of writing all of County Louth, with exception of the Clogher electoral area was designated a Rent Pressure Zone.

The Short Term Letting Regulations will only apply as long as there are designated Rent Pressure Zones, which, at the time of writing is until December 2021. There is provision to extend these designations further if rental supply issues still remain in 2021.

Under the new arrangements applicable in rent pressure zones:

- Short term letting is defined as the letting of a house or apartment or part of a house or apartment, for any period not exceeding 14 days;
- Homesharing continues to be permissible on an unrestricted basis;
- Homesharers are allowed to sub-let their entire principle private residence for a cumulative period of 90 days where they are temporarily absent from their home; and
- Where the 90 day threshold is exceeded, change of use permission will be required.

Homesharers in rent pressure zones who wish to avail of these exemptions are required to register with the Council.

Any property that is not a principle private residence that is to be used for short-term letting will require a change of use application. These applications will be assessed on a case by case basis and will take account of issues such as; the demand for private housing in the area, the suitability of the property for short term letting, the car parking, access and service arrangements, and the impact of the development on surrounding residential amenities and the local environment.

6.6 Visitor and Habitat Management

The following Policy Objectives relating to the sustainable development of tourism and environmental protection and management have been integrated into the Plan through the SEA and AA processes.

Policy Objective	
TOU 34	To seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance and ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.

Policy Objective	
TOU 35	To consider the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.



Chapter 7

MOVEMENT

'To facilitate investment and improvement in transport infrastructure in the County that will support economic growth and investment and the creation of healthy, sustainable communities; by improving connectivity and journey times within and between settlements, promoting and investing in more sustainable modes of travel including walking, cycling and public transport, creating a more attractive public realm, and reducing carbon emissions'.

7 MOVEMENT

7.1 INTRODUCTION

A modern, functional and sustainable transportation network that allows people and goods to move around efficiently contributes to an environment where businesses can thrive and people can enjoy a more balanced lifestyle. Louth benefits from a well-developed network of transport links at a national, regional and local level.



The strategic location of the County along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor provides excellent transport links to these cities via the motorway, national roads, and inter-city rail line. There is also a strong network of regional and local roads that provide connectivity between settlements within the County and key service centres in the wider region.

This Chapter will set out the strategy for transport infrastructure provision and investment in the County.

It will strive to strengthen the links between land use and transportation and will seek to promote more sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, public transport and car-share facilities, including the use of electric vehicles, so as to reduce urban congestion, create more attractive environments and to help transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County.

The Plan also seeks to progress key infrastructure projects that will facilitate economic growth in the County and maintain its economic competitiveness.

7.2 OVERSIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSPORT POLICY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

7.2.1 Department of Transport

At a national level, the Department of Transport is responsible for transport policy and the funding and oversight of transport infrastructure and services.

Working under the remit of the Department of Transport, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) are the state agencies with responsibility for providing and maintaining transport infrastructure.

7.2.2 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)

Transport Infrastructure Ireland was established through a merger of the National Roads Authority and the Railway Procurement Agency under the *Roads Act 2015*. TII's primary function is to provide an integrated approach to the future development and operation of the national roads network and light rail infrastructure throughout Ireland.

7.2.3 The National Transport Authority (NTA)

The NTA is responsible for planning, implementation and funding of public transport and infrastructure, regulation and contracting of public transport services, and providing facilities and infrastructure that promote walking and cycling.

7.2.4 Local Authorities

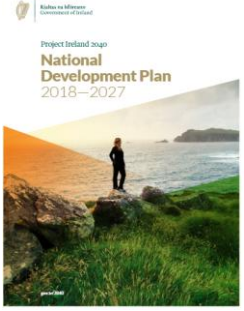
Local Authorities work closely with the DTTAS, the NTA and TII in the implementation of transport policy and in identifying and funding roads and transport related projects at a local level.

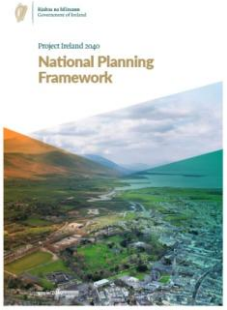
7.3 Policy Context

The Movement and Transport Strategy in this Plan has been informed by a broad range of national and regional policy documents and strategies. A brief summary of these documents is set out in this section.

7.3.1 National and Regional Strategies

Project Ireland 2040 – The National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP): The NPF recognises the importance of an integrated approach to land use and transport planning in achieving the goals of the Framework. These goals are set out in the document as National Strategic Outcomes.





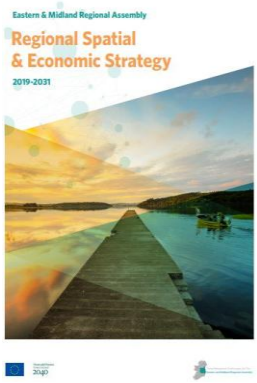
This integrated approach includes:

- Improvements to public transport to facilitate compact growth and achieving a reduction in carbon emissions;
- Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure to promote more active and healthy lifestyles; and
- Investment in road infrastructure to improve connectivity and accessibility.

The NDP sets out details of infrastructure investment up to 2027. It is closely aligned to the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF which will ensure there is a co-ordinated approach between policy and expenditure. The following transport related projects in Louth have been included in the NDP:

- N2 upgrade Ardee to Castleblayney;
- N52 Ardee Bypass; and
- DART Expansion Programme to Drogheda.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031: The RSES supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan by setting out a strategic planning and economic framework that is consistent with the National Policy Objectives and National Strategic Outcomes set out in the NPF.



As part of the integration of land use and transportation planning there is an emphasis on reducing the need to travel, by focusing development in identified centres of growth and ensuring there is a closer alignment between population and employment growth. Local Transport Plans are to be prepared for identified settlements in the region, which include Drogheda and Dundalk, to assist in the integration of land use and transportation planning.

There is also an emphasis on promoting a modal shift away from a dependence on the private car to more sustainable modes of transport, to facilitate greater efficiency in transport networks and address the impacts of climate change.

In addition to supporting the progression of infrastructure projects set out in the National Development Plan, the RSES also supports the delivery of enabling infrastructure that will facilitate population and economic growth in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and allow the settlements to develop into centres of scale. This includes the construction of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) in Drogheda.

Planning Land Use and Transport – Outlook 2040 (PLUTO 2040): This is a framework for investing in land transport that was under preparation by the Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport at the time of writing.

It is an update of the document 'Strategic Investment in Land Transport' published in 2015.

It will set out key priorities and principles for future investment that will ensure the delivery of a transport network that meets the needs of the country and delivers the National Strategic Outcomes in Project Ireland 2040.

Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021: This Capital Plan presents the Government's new €42 billion framework for infrastructure investment in Ireland over the period 2016 to 2021.

Smarter Travel: Is a transport policy published by the Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport in 2009. It sets out a vision of how a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved.

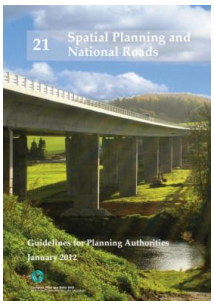
The document includes a series of goals and targets including:

- Improve accessibility to transport
- Maximise the efficiency of the transport network and alleviate congestion and bottlenecks;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with transport;
- Reduce travel demand and commuting distances travelled by the private car; and
- Reduce the dependency on fossil fuels.

The document acknowledges that the successful implementation of this policy will require future employment and population growth to be predominantly concentrated in compact urban areas.

7.3.2 Planning Guidance

Spatial Planning and National Roads: The 'Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' provides guidelines and planning considerations relating to development affecting motorways, national primary and national secondary roads.



The emphasis of the guidelines is to maintain the efficiency, capacity and safety of the national road network.

The Guidelines highlight:

- The interdependency between land use and transportation policies in minimising the need to travel; and
- The impact of new accesses on to national roads in terms of road safety, and the importance of development management in achieving high standards in relation to design quality and traffic management.

Plan led development that takes account of future development patterns including trip generation associated with land use zoning and how this will be catered for is promoted in the Guidelines.

National Cycle Policy Framework: The National Cycle Policy Framework was published in 2009 alongside the Smarter Travel policy document. The goal of this Framework is to create a strong cycling culture across the country. A range of objectives that will assist in achieving this goal are set out in the document.

These objectives focus on investment in cycling infrastructure that will make it safer and a viable alternative to motorised transport.

National Cycle Manual: The National Cycle Manual published by the National Transport Authority (NTA) is a guide used by planners and engineers to improve cycling provision and integrate the bike into the design of urban areas.

The manual embraces the principles of 'Sustainable Safety' which is a Dutch principle of design that seeks to make roads and streets easier to use, thus making them a safer environment for all road users including cyclists.

Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways: This Strategy seeks to assist in the development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways and to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways across the country.

It recognises the tourism potential of Greenways to act as economic drivers in local areas, particularly where associated infrastructure can be provided or is available. The Strategy promotes a close working relationship between key stakeholders including Local Authorities, landowners, local communities and other state bodies in delivering successful Greenways.

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS): Commonly referred to as 'DMURS', the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets was originally published in 2013 with an updated version published in 2019. DMURS seeks to put well-designed streets at the heart of sustainable communities and supports boarder government policies on the environment, planning and transportation.

It provides the practical measures to achieve:

- Highly connected streets which allow people to walk and cycle to key destinations in a direct and easy-to find manner;
- A safe and comfortable street environment for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages;
- Streets that contribute to the creation of attractive and lively communities; and
- Streets that calm traffic via a range of design measures that make drivers more aware of their environment.

Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities: This document makes reference to car parking standards for new apartments.

TII Publications: TII publications are a set of publications that provide standards, advice notes and other documents relating to the design, assessment and operation of National Roads, trunk roads, minor roads, including motorways in Ireland, generally outside the 60kph zones. TII Publications are categorised as Standards or Technical.

These Publications supersede the NRA Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), which have been subsumed into the TII Publications. In order to maintain continuity between TII Publications and the old NRA Standards system, pre-existing documents within the NRA DMRB and MCDRW have been assigned a 'historical reference' so that existing documents and drawings can be searched using the old document names.

Design Manual for Roads and Bridges: The NRA, Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) is a series of volumes that provide standards, advice notes and other documents relating to the design, assessment and operation of National Roads and trunk roads, including motorways in Ireland. These Standards have been subsumed into the TII publications.

Policy Objective	
MOV 1	To work with national transport agencies in supporting the delivery of a high quality, climate resilient and sustainable transport network in the County.

7.4 Transportation and Climate Change

In 2017 transport accounted for 19.8% of greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland. The *Climate Action Plan,* published by the Government in 2019, sets out a series of policy actions that will support a reduction of emissions from the transport sector by 2030. This includes a reduction in CO_2 emissions by 45-50% relative to 2030 pre-NDP projections, an increase in the number of Electric Vehicles, and investment in sustainable mobility projects that will assist in increasing the modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport. *Section 10(2)(n) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* requires development plans to include objectives relating to the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies including measures to reduce energy costs, greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation to climate change.

This Plan recognises the need to transition to a low carbon society and will support the implementation of any plans or programmes that will assist in meeting national targets on greenhouse gas reductions from transport related activities.

In achieving these targets consideration will be given to the 'Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework' which seeks to deliver sustainable transport systems by:

i) Improving the efficiency of the transport system e.g. through more integrated land use and transport planning;
ii) Improving trip efficiency by promoting a modal shift from private cars to non-motorised transport (i.e. walking and cycling) or public transport; and
iii) Improve vehicle and fuel efficiency and promote innovation in transport infrastructure.

The Council will work closely with government agencies and in particular the National Transport Authority (NTA) in improving public transport infrastructure and services and walking and cycling infrastructure in the County through a range of measures including:

i) The preparation of Local Transport Plans for the larger settlements of Drogheda (in conjunction with Meath County Council) and Dundalk, which will seek to improve the integration of land use and transportation;
ii) The implementation of the Rural Mobility Plan '*Connecting Ireland*' which is currently under preparation by the NTA, which seeks to improve mobility in rural areas and provide better connections between villages and towns by an linking the settlements through an enhanced regional network; and
iii) The progression and implementation of sustainable mobility projects funded by the NTA. It is anticipated that by taking a co-ordinated approach at a local and national level to invest in such transport infrastructure and services there will be a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport which will assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with national policy and targets.

Policy Objective	
MOV 2	To support the implementation of the 'National Climate Action Plan' 2019, and any subsequent plans, and in particular the measures included that will assist in achieving the target of CO_2 emissions reduction by 2030 in the transport sector as set out in Section 10.2 of the *'Climate Action Plan'.*

7.5 Integration of Land Use and Transport Planning

The relationship between land use and transportation revolves around where people live, where people work or go to school and the transport infrastructure available for people to bring them to their destinations.

Recognising this relationship is critical in creating an environment where there is a reduced reliance on the private car and where travel habits can be influenced to encourage more sustainable modes of transport.

National and Regional Policy recognises the benefits that integrated land use and transportation planning can offer, in improving accessibility and connectivity within neighbourhoods and urban areas, increasing economic productivity and facilitating balanced and healthy lifestyles.

These benefits are closely aligned to the compact growth and urban regeneration policies in the NPF and RSES and can be delivered by promoting higher density developments, particularly along public transport corridors; improving connectivity and prioritising walking and cycling within and between neighbourhoods; and supporting mixed use neighbourhoods where there are employment opportunities and community facilities close to where people live.

Chapter 8 of the RSES 'Connectivity' provides a set of Guiding Principles for the Integration of Land Use and Transport. The 'Guiding Principles' applicable to Louth have formed the basis of the Integrated Land Use and Transport Strategy for this Plan.

This Plan will support the continuation of a co-ordinated and integrated approach to land use and transport planning in the County that will provide people with an opportunity to alter their travel behaviour away from the private car to more sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and public transport.

7.5.1 Local Transport Plans

As part of its strategy for supporting the integration of land uses and transportation, the RSES includes policy objectives requiring the preparation of Local Transport Plans in selected settlements. Drogheda and Dundalk are included in the list of selected settlements.

These Local Transport Plans will include an analysis of transport flows, movements and investment priorities that will support more sustainable modes of transport.

The Local Transport Plans that will be prepared for Drogheda and Dundalk will inform the Urban Area Plan / Local Area Plan policy and growth strategy for both settlements.

Policy Objective	
MOV 3	To facilitate the integration of land use with sustainable transportation infrastructure in accordance with the requirements of RPO 8.1 in the RSES by supporting the creation of a critical mass of population and employment related development that would maximise investment in public transport infrastructure and create compact, sustainable settlements.

Policy Objective	
MOV 4	To promote sustainable higher density development along public transport corridors.

Policy Objective	
MOV 5	To prepare a Local Transport Plan in consultation with the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and other relevant stakeholders[1] for Drogheda and Dundalk as part of the preparation of the Urban Area Plans / Local Area Plans for these settlements. The preparation of these Plans will be based on the guidance note on Area Based Transport Assessments published by the NTA/TII in 2019 and these Plans will be subject to screening for SEA and AA and full assessments will be undertaken if appropriate.

[1] Including Meath County Council as part of the Joint Plan for Drogheda

7.6 SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

As people have become more mobile the carbon footprint of transport activities has grown, with the private car becoming the dominant mode of transport.

It is recognised that a greater emphasis will have to be placed on more sustainable modes of transport in order to mitigate against the potential impacts of climate change and to remove congestion from our towns and villages and make them more attractive places to explore. This will require stronger support and increased priority for cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure and a greater uptake in the use of cleaner, low emission vehicles.

The shift towards more sustainable modes of transport will only occur if people are provided with affordable, accessible and cleaner alternatives.

The following sections of this Chapter will set out the various sustainable modes of transport in Louth. Prior to reviewing these modes of transport an analysis of current travel patterns in the County will be carried out.

Policy Objective	
MOV 6	To promote and support the principles of universal design ensuring that all environments are inclusive and are accessible to and can be used to the fullest extent possible by all users regardless of age, ability or disability.

7.6.1 Current Travel Patterns in the County

A summary of the travel patterns by students and workers in the County in 2016 is as follows:

- The car is the dominant mode of transport with over 63% of workers driving to work and over 50% of students travelling to school or college by car (47% get a lift and 3.5% drive);
- Walking is the most popular sustainable mode of transport with almost 26% of students and 10.5% of workers travelling to work, school, or college on foot;
- There are a high proportion of students utilising available bus services at 21.5%;
- There are fewer workers travelling by bus (4.5%) than there are car sharing (6.1%);
- The number of students and workers travelling by train is low (0.5% for students and 1.9% for workers); and
- Only 1.4% of students and 2.2% of workers cycle to college or work. This data confirms and highlights the challenges facing the County with regard to promoting a modal shift away from the car.

This Plan will strive to reduce the reliance on the private car by promoting and facilitating more sustainable modes of transport and supporting development in locations that would reduce the need to travel.

At a settlement level the breakdown of the modal share follows a similar pattern to that at a County level. It is notable however that there is a higher dependence on the private car in the smaller settlements than the larger settlements.

In Drogheda and Dundalk there are higher levels of people walking to school and work, whilst in Dundalk the number of people cycling to work is higher than that of the other settlements and County. In Drogheda the number of workers travelling by train is over twice that in Dundalk.

This is all an indication that in larger urban areas where there are more opportunities to walk and cycle and there are more public transport services available, more people will choose to use these modes of transport.

Fig. 7.1: Modal Share for Students and Workers in Louth in 2016 (Source: Census 2016)

Chart A – Students at school or college

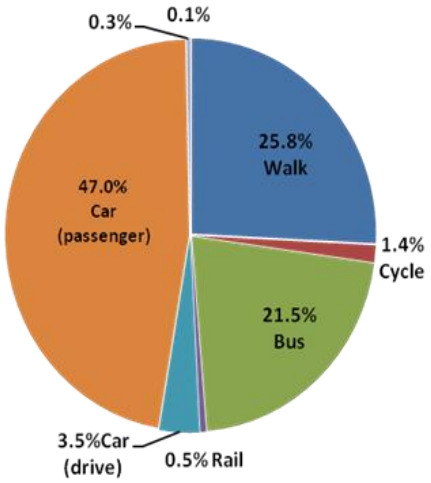


Chart B – Persons at work

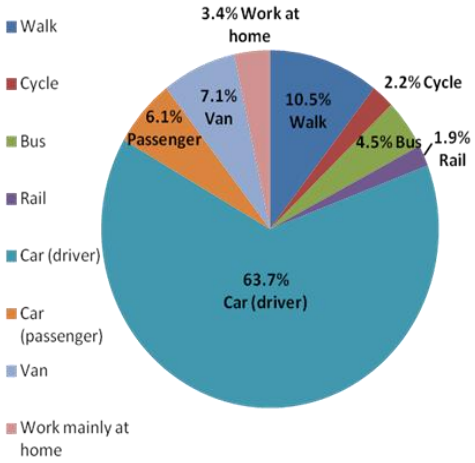


Table 7.1 Modal Share for Students and Workers in Higher Tier Settlements 2016

Mode of Transport	Work				School or College			
	Drogheda	Dundalk	Ardee	Dunleer	Drogheda	Dundalk	Ardee	Dunleer
Walk	16.1%	13.1%	11.5%	10.25%	34.7%	33.6%	33.3%	38.3%
Cycle	1.6%	5.2%	1.7%	0.3%	1.2%	2.6%	1.1%	0.5%
Bus	5.7%	5.9%	4.3%	4%	22%	16.2%	15.3%	12.9%
Rail	3.8%	1.4%	0.2%	0.7%	1.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0%
Car (Driver)	60.4%	60%	64.9%	69.4%	2.4%	3.2%	5.1%	5%
Car (Passenger)	6.2%	8.1%	5.2%	4.8%	38.2%	43.9%	44.1%	42.8%
Van	4.3%	4.3%	9.7%	6.9%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%
Work mainly at home	1.9%	2.1%	2.6%	3.7%	0.05%	0.1%	0.8%	0%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 7.2: Modal Share for Students and Workers in Self-Sustaining Towns 2016

Mode of transport	Work					School or College				
	C'ford	C'head	C'bgm	Tmfkn	Tulyn	C'ford	C'head	C'bgm	Tmfkn	Tulyn
Walk	19.7%	3.3%	6.8%	2%	1.7%	20%	34.3%	15.3%	16%	37%
Cycle	1.3%	0.5%	1%	1%	0%	1.3%	1.2%	5.6%	0%	0%
Bus	2.6%	4.5%	5%	2.3%	6.4%	13.2%	32.2%	36.2%	26.6%	26.1%
Rail	2.6%	3.5%	0.8%	3%	1.7%	0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	0%
Car (driver)	60.7%	69.4%	69%	76.4%	77.6%	1.5%	2.8%	2%	2.8%	2.2%
Car (passenger)	2.2%	4.5%	6.4%	3.9%	4.7%	63.8%	29%	39.8%	53%	33.8%
Van	4.9%	11.5%	8%	5.9%	5.8%	0.2%	0%	0.6%	0.8%	0.7%
Work mainly at home	6%	2.8%	3%	5.5%	2.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 7.3: Modal Share for Students and Workers in Small Towns and Villages 2016

Mode of transport	Work			School or College		
	Annagassan	Collon	Dromiskin	Annagassan	Collon	Dromiskin
Walk	2.5%	3.7%	4%	0%	36.3%	16.6%
Cycle	0%	0.9%	0.2%	0%	0.4%	1.4%
Bus	1.3%	7.1%	1.8%	17.9%	34.2%	31.1%
Rail	1.3%	1.2%	0.4%	0%	0%	0.4%
Car (driver)	73.4%	76.3%	72.9%	3.6%	3.3%	5%
Car (passenger)	8.3%	4.9%	6.8%	78.5%	25.8%	45.5%
Van	7.2%	5.2%	11.1%	0%	0%	0%
Work mainly at home	6%	0.7%	2.8%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 7.4: Modal Share for Students and Workers in Small Towns and Villages 2016

Mode of transport	Work				School of College			
	Knkbdge	Lth Vge	Omth	Tlnstn	Knkbdge	Lth Vge	Omth	Tlnstn
Walk	1%	5.9%	11.9%	3%	26.5%	26%	16%	27.7%
Cycle	0%	0%	0%	0.4%	0%	0.6%	0.8%	0%
Bus	2.1%	3%	1.6%	4.8%	26.5%	34.3%	27.5%	32.4%
Rail	1.7%	1.5%	0.5%	0%	0.6%	0.6%	0%	0%
Car (driver)	75.7%	70.3%	66.8%	70.4%	6.4%	1.7%	3.8%	0.7%
Car (passenger)	6.3%	4.8%	5.2%	9.2%	40%	37%	51.9%	38.5%
Van	10.1%	12.6%	9.8%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0.7%
Work mainly at home	3.1%	1.9%	4.2%	2.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

_____
No data available for Baltray

Policy Objective	
MOV 7	To support a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking and the attainment of any national targets relating to modal change published during the life of this Plan.

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

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

7.6.2 Electric Vehicles

Electric Vehicles (EV) include both Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV).

They are low emission vehicles (LEVs) which use low carbon technologies, emit low emissions and offer a more sustainable transport solution.

These clean and energy-efficient vehicles will have an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector and improving air quality and reducing noise pollution in towns and villages.

There are various charging units for EV's around the County. This Plan promotes the further installation and expansion of charging points for these vehicles.

Policy Objective	
MOV 10	To facilitate the switch to Electric Vehicles through the roll-out of additional electric charging points at appropriate locations within the County in association with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

Policy Objective	
MOV 11	To facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in the Development Management Guidelines in Chapter 13.

7.6.3 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)

CNG is natural gas that has been compressed to fit into a vehicle's tank and is particularly suitable for use in commercial vehicles.

The development of CNG Infrastructure will enable fuel switching from diesel to CNG for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and buses. CNG is an established technology that is used in many countries around the world. CNG produces less carbon emissions than diesel and leads to improved air quality with 95% less particulate matter, 70% less Nitrogen Oxide, and 80% less Sulphur Dioxide[2].CNG vehicles can be run on 100% renewable gas. This is a clean, renewable and carbon neutral fuel, produced using Anaerobic Digestion (AD) technology from existing waste streams and a variety of sustainable biomass sources, including grass, animal waste, crop residues and food waste.

Infrastructure development for CNG is already underway in Ireland, with 14 fast fill CNG stations being installed across the Core TEN-T road network via a project called the Causeway Study that is supported by the European Commission through the CEF Transport Fund and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU).

The Plan will support the use of gas in transport and will facilitate the provision of any refuelling infrastructure in appropriate locations in the County, subject to the requirements set out in Section 13.14.5 'Service Stations and Retailing' and any other relevant planning and environmental considerations.

[2] https://www.ngva.eu/policy-priorities/air-quality/

7.6.4 Car Sharing

Car sharing (also known as car clubs) is based on the principle of a car being available for use when needed. There are a number of companies providing this service across the country.

It is a useful option for people who don't want to own a car. There are a number of potential benefits to car sharing including reduced congestion, and if there is sufficient uptake/demand for the service, a reduction in car parking requirements.

This Plan recognises the potential role of car sharing in reducing the number of vehicles and associated congestion in the larger urban areas in the County.

Policy Objective	
MOV 12	To facilitate provision of car sharing infrastructure and facilities in appropriately located areas in the County.

7.6.5 Public Transport

Public transport provision in Louth consists of bus, rail and rural transport services in addition to taxi services. There are local services that provide connections between settlements within the County and regional services that provide connections to the wider region, in particular to Dublin.

The provision of public transport is the responsibility of the National Transport Authority (NTA).

The Council will continue to engage with the NTA in seeking to improve transport services and infrastructure in the County that will improve connectivity and assist in addressing issues of exclusion and isolation, particularly in the more rural areas in the County.

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

Policy Objective	
MOV 14	To encourage a modal shift from use of the private car towards more sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, and public transport.

7.6.6 Rail Services

The northern rail line travels through Louth, with two stations in the County located in Drogheda and Dundalk. Services operating from these stations include commuter services to Dublin and the Dublin-Belfast Enterprise (Inter-City) service.



At present there are constraints on this line due to the limitation on train paths travelling through the city centre section between Connolly Station and Grand Canal Dock. The City Centre Resignalling Project (CCRP) will provide additional capacity, with the number of train paths increasing from 12 to 20 per hour in each direction.

This project also involves the modernisation of signalling equipment with computer based interlocking to replace the existing relay based signalling systems. The CCRP is to be executed in 4 phases, with 2 phases due for completion in Q4 of 2020.

The DART Expansion Programme, which will include the provision of DART services between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda, will increase capacity and the frequency of services and create a more efficient transport system.

This is a major infrastructure project that will be delivered on a phased basis.

Works required on the northern line include signalling and telecommunications infrastructure, electrification and power supply, bridge reconstructions to facilitate corridor widening, the upgrade of maintenance depots, provision of higher capacity turnback at Drogheda and additional rolling stock.

This project has been included in the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

At the time of writing (Q2 of 2020) the procurement of consultants was ongoing. It is anticipated planning and design works will commence in Q1 of 2021.

Irish Rail, in association with the Northern Ireland public transport provider Translink, published a Strategic Plan in June 2018 outlining proposals for improvements to the Dublin-Belfast Enterprise Service.[3] This includes the introduction of an hourly service between the two cities, infrastructure enhancements to improve journey times and connections and electrification through investment in infrastructure and rolling stock. The NPF and RSES support improvements to this service.[4]

Whilst the Dublin-Belfast rail line passes through Dunleer there is no rail service in the town. It is recognised that Dunleer offers the potential for an improved rail service for the mid and south Louth areas.

[3] Better Connecting Dublin and Belfast Enterprise Strategic Development Plan June 2018

[4] Regional Policy Objective 8.12 supports the delivery of a higher speed rail service between Belfast, Dublin, and Cork

Policy Objective	
MOV 15	To support the completion of the City Centre Resignalling Project (CCRP) which will provide additional capacity in the rail network.

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

Policy Objective	
MOV 17	To support the provision of a higher speed rail service between Dublin and Belfast and any associated infrastructure investment and works required.

Policy Objective	
MOV 18	To secure, in co-operation with Iarnród Éireann and the National Transport Authority, improved rail services for the mid and south Louth areas and in particular to seek to examine the feasibility of re-opening the rail station in Dunleer and providing additional new rail stations for north Drogheda, south Dundalk and the mid-Louth area.

7.6.7 Rail based Park and Ride Facilities

There are existing Park and Ride facilities at Drogheda and Dundalk Rail Stations. Both facilities are well utilised. As part of the preparation of the Local Transport Plans for Drogheda and Dundalk the requirement for additional capacity will be reviewed.

Policy Objective	
MOV 19	To support the improvement of rail based park and ride facilities in Drogheda and Dundalk, including the provision of car charging facilities.

7.6.8 Bus Services

Bus services in Louth are operated by public and private operators and provide a range of services that provide connections to settlements within the County and the wider region.

There are frequent express coaches and stopping services from Drogheda and Dundalk to Dublin in addition to frequent services linking these towns.

There are also cross border services to Newry where there are opportunities for onward connections.

Ardee is also well served by public and private express bus services to Dublin with services originating in Monaghan, Donegal and Derry travelling through the town.

Within Drogheda and Dundalk there are local services that provide links between the town centre and surrounding area. In 2019 there were significant enhancements between Drogheda and Laytown with a high frequency service provided along the route.

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

Policy Objective	
MOV 21	To engage with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and other stakeholders and community groups in encouraging bus operators to provide improved services in and through the County.

7.6.9 Park and Ride and Park and Share Facilities

As part of the strategy of promoting more sustainable modes of transport and reducing emissions from the transport sector there are opportunities for the development of bus based Park and Ride and car based Park and Share facilities in the County.

The bus based facilities would make public transport more accessible whilst the car based facilities could be utilised by commuters who car pool. Such facilities would reduce traffic congestion and encourage more sustainable modes of transport.

Policy Objective	
MOV 22	To work with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and any other stakeholders in identifying suitable locations for and the development of bus based park and ride and car based park and share facilities in the County.

7.6.10 Rural Transport

The National Transport Authority has responsibility for the provision of rural transport services across the country. This is delivered through the 'Local Link' Programme and has two main funding streams from the Department of Transport and the Department of Social Protection (Free Travel Pass Scheme).

The objective of this scheme is to reduce rural isolation and social exclusion and integrate rural transport services with other public transport services i.e. scheduled bus and rail services.

The 'Local Link' Service for Louth, Meath, and Fingal is currently operated by Flexibus. This includes door to door and scheduled bus services in towns, villages and rural areas in the County. The service is community based with the services developed on a partnership approach between various community organisations, the Local Authority and Agencies responsible for accessible transport provision. Journey types provided by this service include work, shopping, social, education and health related journeys.

This Plan recognises the importance of rural transport in providing a social and economic connection between towns and villages, with the Local Link service having a pivotal role in revitalising rural towns and villages that will improve access to employment, public services and social networks that will support a high quality of life in rural areas.

Public transport in rural areas also has an important role in supporting and developing tourism in towns and villages through the provision of services that can enable and facilitate visitor accessibility.

As part of the national policy of enhancing connectivity and improving sustainable mobility, the National Transport Authority is preparing a Rural Mobility Plan 'Connecting Ireland', which will seek to increase connectivity and improve mobility in rural areas. The implementation of this Plan would have social and economic benefits to the rural areas of the County by bringing people closer together and making the rural towns and villages more attractive for economic investment. This Plan is due to be published towards the end of 2021. The Council is working closely with the NTA on the preparation of this Plan and improving connectivity and promoting the use of public transport in rural areas.

Policy Objective	
MOV 23	To continue to support the 'Local Link' rural transport service and to encourage operators to improve the service to meet the social and economic needs of the rural communities in the County.

Policy Objective	
MOV 24	To support and work with the National Transport Authority in finalising and implementing the Rural Mobility Plan 'Connecting Ireland' in order to improve public transport connectivity and sustainable mobility between towns and villages in the County.

7.6.11 Cycling and Walking

Cycling and walking are a healthy and environmentally friendly mode of transport that have individual and community benefits, which encourage an active lifestyle, improve fitness levels and facilitate greater social interaction between people.

They are also an efficient mode of transport, particularly in urban areas where there are congestion issues.

In addition, cycling and walking require less road space than the private car and the requirement to find a car parking space is also removed.

By implementing the principles of good urban design through the arrangement of land uses and the creation of well connected streets and neighbourhoods between residential areas, neighbourhood centres, schools, and places of work, people will be encouraged to walk and cycle more.

The Council has supported the development of walking and cycling infrastructure throughout the County to encourage a modal shift away from a dependence on the private car.

This Plan will continue to support and facilitate the provision of this infrastructure that would provide a more comfortable and attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy Objective	
MOV 25	To support the retrospective provision of walking and cycling infrastructure in existing settlements, where feasible, to achieve growth in sustainable mobility and strengthen and improve the walking and cycling network.

Policy Objective	
MOV 26	To improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to schools, third level colleges, major employment areas, bus and rail stations, and other public transport hubs.

Policy Objective	
MOV 27	To review the feasibility and implementation (where deemed necessary) of the 30km/h zones in Drogheda and Dundalk in creating attractive, low speed environments.

Policy Objective	
MOV 28	To promote walking and cycling as a safe, convenient, healthy, efficient, and environmentally friendly mode of transport for all age groups.

Policy Objective	
MOV 29	To continue to work and engage with the National Transport Authority, the Department of Transport, any other agencies in developing a modern network of walking and cycling infrastructure in the County.

Policy Objective	
MOV 30	To provide, where possible traffic free pedestrian and cyclist routes particularly where such routes would provide a more direct, safer, and more attractive alternative to the car.

Policy Objective	
MOV 31	To encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities in town and villages in the County.

Policy Objective	
MOV 32	To plan and develop a Louth Coastal Way along the east coast subject to appropriate environmental considerations.

7.6.12 Greenways

Greenways are off-road trails dedicated to non-motorised transport including walking and cycling. They are a valuable recreational amenity that promote an active and healthy lifestyle and are also an important tourism asset.

The Council will support improvements in the links between greenways, town centres and existing walking and cycling infrastructure and is committed to continuing to develop and invest in the network of Greenways in the County as follows:

Great Eastern Greenway: The Great Eastern Greenway currently runs from Carlingford to Omeath along the shore of Carlingford Lough.



It was constructed largely along the former railway line. It is proposed to extend this greenway firstly to Newry and then to Dundalk incorporating Greenore and Templetown which would increase the length of the trail to approx. 55km and significantly improve the recreational infrastructure and cross border links along this unique coastline.

Louth Coastal Way: As part of the Louth Coastal defence project, it is envisaged that elements of the Dundalk to Blackrock Greenway and Baltray to Drogheda Greenway will be incorporated into these defence schemes. These sections of Greenway will form part of the National Cycle Network (Corridor 5, Dundalk to Wexford).

Dundalk – Sligo Greenway: The Dundalk – Sligo Greenway will form part of the National Cycle Network (Corridor 1). The route will run westwards linking Dundalk to Sligo town, extending some 176km through five counties.

The Council will work in cooperation with Monaghan County Council to progress the Dundalk to Castleblayney section of the Greenway.

Boyne Greenway: Phase 1 of the Boyne Greenway runs from Dominic's Park on the south bank of the River Boyne to the Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre at Oldbridge via the existing ramparts. The greenway is a valuable amenity in the southern part of the County. Future phases of this Greenway include an extension from Drogheda to Mornington. It is anticipated that the extended route will pass through Drogheda and follow the southern edge of the Boyne east of the town and out to Mornington.

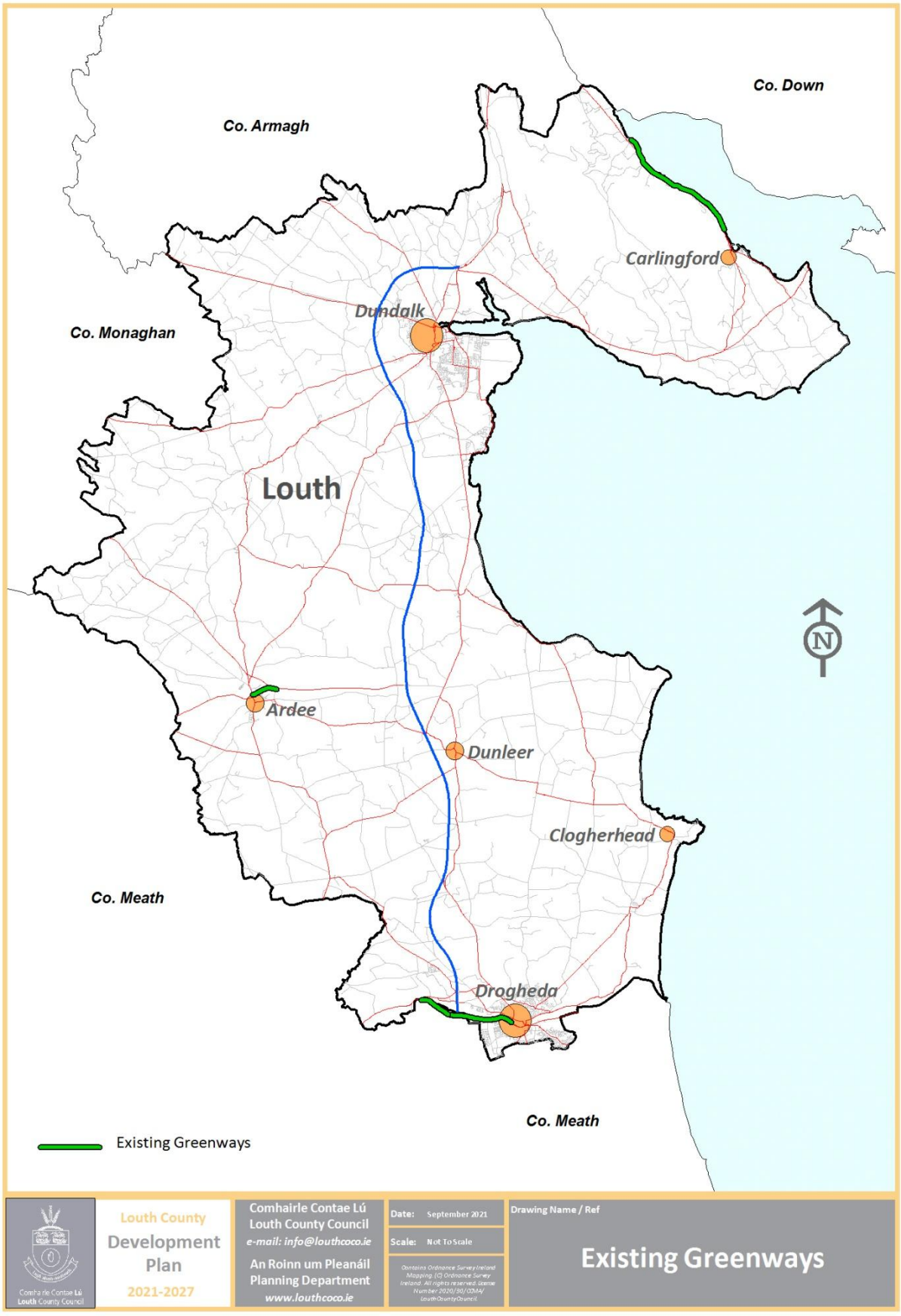
This Greenway will form part of the National Cycle Network (Corridor 5 and 15) linking from the East Coast Trail at Drogheda to the cross country EuroVelo Route 2 from Galway to Dublin south-west of Trim.

The Council will continue to work in conjunction with Meath County Council in progressing the Drogheda to Mornington section of the Boyne Greenway.

Further information on Greenways can be found in Section 6.3.1 of Chapter 6.



Map 7.1: Existing Greenways



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

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

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

Policy Objective	
MOV 36	To continue to engage and work closely with the OPW and other stakeholders in the development of the Coastal Greenway from Dundalk to Blackrock including the delivery of such infrastructure on both sides of the Castletown River, and Baltray to Drogheda through the Louth Coastal Defence Projects.

Policy Objective	
MOV 37	To continue to engage and work closely with Monaghan County Council and other stakeholders in the development of the Dundalk to Castleblayney section of the Dundalk - Sligo Greenway.

Policy Objective	
MOV 38	To engage in the Compulsory Purchase Order process when required in order to facilitate the timely delivery of the Greenway and Cycleway Projects in the County.

7.6.13 Green Schools Travel Programme

The Green Schools Programme is an environmental education programme that provides opportunities for schools to take environmental issues and apply them to the day to day operations of the school. The Programme is operated by An Taisce in partnership with Local Authorities with support also provided by Government Departments.

The Green School Travel Programme aims to increase the number of students walking, cycling, carpooling or using public transport to school. It highlights to students the benefits of sustainable transport to the environment whilst also increasing physical activity levels.

Policy Objective	
MOV 39	To support the Green School Programme and any other sustainable transport initiative developed by schools across the County through the provision of dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure in close proximity to schools, subject to the availability of funding.

7.7 PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

The Council is committed to improving public spaces in the towns and villages throughout the County in order to make the urban environment a more attractive place to live, work and do business.



A quality and attractive public realm can also make settlements more attractive locations and venues for hosting and facilitating festivals and events.

These public realm improvements form part of the integrated approach to land use and transport planning in the County.

Examples of recently completed projects include the Clanbrassil Street and St. Nicholas Quarter Public Realm Rejuvenation Scheme in the centre of Dundalk.

These projects will give greater priority to walking and cycling and support the regeneration of town centre areas. Table 7.5 provides details of the public realm projects to be progressed during the life of the Plan.

7.7.1 Accessibility for All

This Plan recognises the importance of creating an external environment that is inclusive and accessible to all that can be used to the fullest extent possible by all users regardless of age, ability or disability. In this regard the design and construction of external areas shall incorporate best practice principles of universal design as far as is practicable to ensure appropriate access is provided for all users.

Table 7.5: Public Realm Projects to be progressed during this Plan

Location	Project
Drogheda	West Gate Vision Urban Regeneration Scheme
	St. Peter's Hill
	St. Laurence's Gate
Dundalk	St. Nicholas Quarter Regeneration Scheme
	Long Walk Urban Regeneration Scheme
	Navvy Bank Open Space
	Dundalk Library Quarter
Ardee	Ardee 2040 Rural Regeneration Project
Dunleer	Town Centre Regeneration Project
Carlingford	Carlingford Village Rural Regeneration Project
Omeath	Omeath Village Rural Regeneration Project
Annagassan	Main Street Regeneration
Collon	Village Hall Project

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

7.8 ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

There is a well-developed network of roads in Louth that are a fundamental part of the economic competiveness of the County facilitating the efficient movement of goods and people. The strategic location of the County along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor means the County benefits from access to the motorway network in addition to national primary and secondary routes, which provide connectivity with Dublin, Belfast and key service centres in the region and the border area. Below the national roads there is a hierarchy of regional and local roads that connect the towns and villages. These roads have an important role in supporting local economic activity and social and community development.

7.8.1 Motorway

The M1 Motorway, which travels through Louth is a strategically important road link that connects Dublin and Belfast. The M1 intersects with the M50 orbital motorway, which connects the national primary routes which radiate from the M50 to all parts of the country. The M1 forms part of the EU TEN-T Core Network and is an important strategic link within and through the county and region, including providing critical international connectivity and regional accessibility.

There are two online motorway service stations in Louth serving northbound and southbound traffic.

The 'Castlebellingham Services' are located between Junctions 15 and 16 off the M1. The service areas provide a range of amenities and services including fuel, food, retail, picnic areas, rest areas, rest rooms and showers and provide an important service and function for the travelling public.

7.8.2 Development at Motorway Interchanges

The M1 has the potential to act as a major stimulant of economic development and activity by providing high quality road infrastructure and connectivity to air and sea ports and thereby to domestic and international markets. Motorway interchanges are strategic locations much sought after by developers due to the desirability and benefits of having immediate access to the primary road network. However, uncontrolled and poorly regulated development at interchanges can often be problematic. This can be due to such development being solely dependent on road transport, the possibility of traffic congestion on national routes, the impact on rural landscapes and environments and the costs involved in the provision of other infrastructure such as piped services, electricity and gas. Such development can also detract investment from existing towns and settlements that are much in need of renewal and development. In order to maximise the benefits accruing to the County from the motorway and to regulate development in a sustainable and appropriate manner along its route, the following policies will be applied.

Policy Objective	
MOV 41	To promote and facilitate development at urban–related* interchanges in accordance with the zoning provisions for Drogheda and Dundalk as set out on the zoning maps for Drogheda and Dundalk in the Louth County Development Plan and any subsequent Local Area Plans adopted for these settlements.[5] Any large scale development proposal in proximity to these interchanges will be required to prepare a Traffic and Transport Assessment in accordance with the requirements of the '*2014 Transport and Traffic Assessment Guidelines'*.

Policy Objective	
MOV 42	To resist development at rural-related**motorway interchanges.[6]

7.8.3 National Roads

The National Primary Roads that travel through Louth are the N2 Dublin-Derry road, N1/A1 Dundalk-Belfast road, and the N33, which runs from the Charleville Interchange (Junction 14 of the M1) to Ardee. These roads are critical in supporting more balanced regional development as they provide a vital connection to the north-west of the country.

The National Secondary Roads in the County are the N51 Drogheda-Slane, the N52 Dundalk-Nenagh (via Ardee and Kells) and the N53 Dundalk-Castleblayney. These roads provide an important level of connectivity between the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and key service centres in the wider region and beyond.

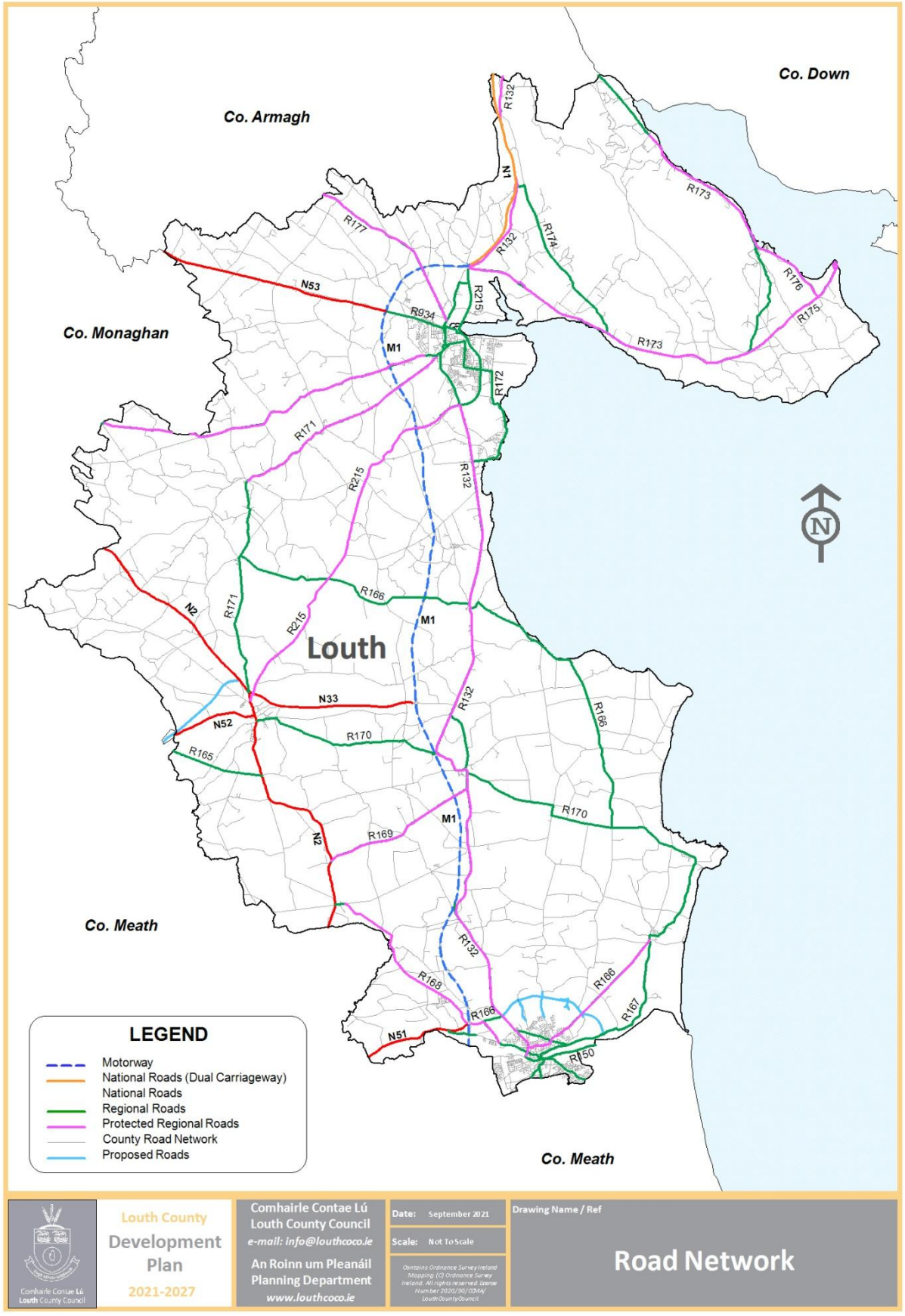
Policy Objective	
MOV 43	To protect the strategic transport function of national roads, including motorways through the implementation of the *'Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* and any subsequent guidelines.

Policy Objective	
MOV 44	Support the improvement, and protection, of the EU TEN-T network and the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road network.

[5] *Urban–related interchanges are Ballymascanlon (Junction 18), Castleblayney Road (Junction 17), Dundalk South interchange (Junction 16) and Drogheda North (Junction 10).

[6] ** Rural- related interchanges are Carrickarnon (Junction 20), Drumleck (Junction 15), Charleville (Junction 14), Mooremount (Junction 13) and Woodlands (Junction 12).

Map 7.2: Road Network



7.8.4 Regional and Local Roads

Regional and local roads provide access and links to the smaller towns, villages and dispersed rural communities in the County. These roads provide an important function in supporting local jobs and services. They are a vital social and economic link to communities, services and jobs in towns and villages within the County and to neighbouring counties in the wider region including Cavan, Monaghan and Meath.

A high quality and well maintained regional and local road network is critical in ensuring settlements in the County are accessible and well connected in order to maintain economic competitiveness and facilitate opportunities for economic investment in settlements identified for growth.

7.8.5 Local Road - Sustainable Transport and Environmental Improvement Projects

Details of road improvement and maintenance projects for consideration during the lifetime of the plan, including environmental improvements and walking and cycling infrastructures are set out in Table 7.6 below. This list of projects will be periodically reviewed during the plan period and is subject to change.

Table 7.6: Local Road, Sustainable Transport and Environmental Improvement Projects

Location	Proposed Works
St. Laurence's Gate, Drogheda	Environmental Improvement Works
Rathmullan Road /Bridge of Peace	Junction Upgrade
Newtown Road, Drogheda	Upgrading
St. Dominic's Bridge, Drogheda	Bridge Refurbishment
The Obelisk Bridge, Drogheda	Bridge Refurbishment
Leonard's Cross / Collon Road, Drogheda	New Junction
Rathmullan Road Drogheda	Road widening to Meath boundary
Drogheda Cycleways	Implementation of elements of the Drogheda Cycle Strategy
Mornington to Drogheda Greenway along the R150	New Greenway Project, Meath Co. Council
Leonards Cross, Drogheda	Road realignment
Old Slane Road, Drogheda	Widening to facilitate footpaths
L2307 Greenhills to Newfoundwell, Drogheda	Widening to provide general improvements and footpaths to facilitate development
Smarter Travel Projects, Dundalk	Refurbishment
Carrick Road / McEntee Avenue, Dundalk	Junction Upgrade Works
Great Eastern Greenway, Cooley Peninsula	Extensions to Existing Greenway

Location	Proposed Works
Dundalk to Blackrock Greenway	Greenways incorporated as part of Louth Coast Defence Project
Mount Avenue Road upgrade	Combination of upgrade works and new road
Connector road from Hoey's Lane to Tom Bellew Avenue, Dundalk	New Local Street Construction
Removal of Hill Street Bridge and new Junction layout with the Millennium Road, Dundalk	Demolition of existing rail bridge and reconstruction of existing carriageway and new junction works
Sean O'Carroll Street, Ardee	Road Widening and footpaths

Policy Objective	
MOV 45	To support investment and improvements to the public road infrastructure in the County including bridges and other ancillary structures, taking into account both car and non-car modes of transport and road safety requirements.

Policy Objective	
MOV 46	To support improvements and upgrades to the road network in the County in accordance with the projects set out in Table 7.6 and any other project identified by the Council or included in any future updated Road Works Programme, subject to the availability of funding.

Policy Objective	
MOV 47	To require the preparation of Transport and Traffic Assessments for new developments in accordance with the requirements set out in the TII Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines.

7.9 STRATEGIC ROAD PROJECTS

Whilst this Plan promotes and supports a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport it also recognises that improvements to the existing road infrastructure in the County are required in order to improve connectivity and support more balanced economic development. This will allow settlements to fulfil their economic potential. The progression of the projects detailed in Tables 7.7 and 7.8, will be supported in the Plan.

Table 7.7: National Road Projects

National Road Projects
N2 Ardee to Castleblayney
N52 Ardee Bypass
N53 Hacksballscross to Rassan
General improvements to the N2, N51, N52 and N53

Table 7.8: Key Road and Bridge Projects

Key Road and Bridge Projects	
Location	**Project**
Drogheda	Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR)
	Bridge at Greenhills to link the Southern Environs of Drogheda with the PANCR
	Bridge Crossing east of South Quay to east of Merchant's Quay
	Bridge Crossing from the PANCR to tie in with the southern M1 link in Meath
Dundalk	East-West Link Cavan to Dundalk
	R215 (Old N52) Realignment Mapastown Bridge
	Link Road from L-3161 Marlbog Roundabout to L-7163 Chapel Road Roundabout
	Link Road from R177 Armagh Rd to R215 old Dublin Road
	Link Road from R934 Castleblayney Road to R178 Carrickmacross Road
	Link Road from R178 Carrickmacross Rd to R171 Old Ardee Road
	Local Road linking R132 through Belfield Estate to the Marlbog Roundabout
	Link Road from upgraded Mount Avenue Road to the proposed Road linking the Castleblayney Road to the Carrickmacross Road
	Marlbog Road roundabout link to Old Golf Links Road, Blackrock
Ardee	Link from N2 Rathgory to Clanmore
Omeath	Narrow Water Bridge

Policy Objective	
MOV 48	To support major road and bridge improvement projects set out in Tables 7.7 and 7.8 and any other project identified by the Council or included in the Roads Programme by reserving the corridors, as and when they are identified, of any such proposed routes, free of development, which would interfere with the provision of such proposals.

7.9.1 N2 Upgrade Ardee to Castleblayney

This project is part of a long term upgrade of the N2 which will improve links between Dublin and the north-west of the country. This scheme will upgrade approximately 32 kilometres of road between Ardee and Castleblayney. In addition to improving the N2/A5 route this scheme will also provide more efficient access to additional strategic routes including the N33/M1, N52 and N53. This project is being progressed in conjunction with Monaghan County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland. The scheme has been included in the National Development Plan 2018-2027. The RSES also recognises the benefits of the project and includes support for its progression and delivery in Regional Policy Objective 8.10. At the time of writing the project was at the stage of identifying route options.

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

Policy Objective	
MOV 50	To seek to examine, in consultation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the feasibility of progressing and delivering the N2 bypass of Ardee Town.

7.9.2 N52 Ardee Bypass

The need for a bypass of Ardee has been identified and included in national, regional and local policy for a number of years. However, due to funding constraints the project was not progressed.

The scheme was reactivated in 2018 with a detailed review ongoing at the time of writing. The scheme has been included in the NDP. The RSES also recognises the benefits of the project and includes support for its progression and delivery in Regional Policy Objective 8.10.

Policy Objective	
MOV 51	To support the progression of the N52 Ardee Bypass and to continue to work closely with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Meath County Council and other stakeholders in the delivery of this project.

7.9.3 The Drogheda Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR)

The Drogheda PANCR is a critical piece of enabling infrastructure that would provide a direct link from the M1 Motorway to Drogheda Port, thus removing heavy port related traffic from the town centre. It would also release strategically located employment and residential lands in the northern part of the town. The provision of this link road is a fundamental part of the long term growth strategy of the town. Regional Policy Objective 4.12 in the RSES supports the development of this road.

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

7.9.4 Dundalk Link Roads

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

The design of these roads shall be informed through detailed modelling and analysis of existing and projected traffic flows/volumes, trip generations associated with the development of the lands in the vicinity of the proposed roads and the impacts of these developments on the existing road networks in the context of the general growth and development of the town.

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

7.9.5 The Narrow Water Bridge Project

The Narrow Water Bridge Project is a cross border project that would provide a new connection across the Newry River north of Carlingford Lough. It is identified as a project of historic and symbolic significance that would support local economic and tourism development on both sides of the border. The *National Development Plan 2018-2027* includes support for this project.

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

7.9.6 The Dundalk – Sligo Road

This road project is considered a key component of inter-regional accessibility and will result in the incremental upgrade of a specified route linking the regional growth centres of Dundalk and Sligo. The improvement of this route over the short and medium term will provide an important strategic cross border transport corridor between the north eastern and north western regions where rail infrastructure is absent. The road project is supported by RPO 6.10 of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly RSES.

Policy Objective	
MOV 55	To support the progression of the Dundalk-Sligo Road and to continue to work closely with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and other stakeholders in the delivery of this project.

7.10 Protected National and Regional Routes

In order to maintain the efficiency and functionality of the national and regional road network it is important that the number of new accesses and the intensification of existing accesses are restricted. Such restrictions protect investments in the road network and ensure these roads continue to provide an important function in maintaining economic competitiveness. These restrictions also minimise further risks to road safety as new entrances can result in additional stopping and turning movements, which give rise to the potential for additional traffic accidents. Table 7.9 provides details of the restrictions to accesses on National Roads and Table 7.10 provides details of the restrictions to accesses on Regional Roads in the County. Map 7.2 provides details of the location of these roads in the County.

Table 7.9: Restrictions and Exemptions to Access on National Roads

Road Category	Restrictions	Exemptions
Motorways	No direct access	No exemptions
Dual Carriageways	No direct access	No exemptions
Single Carriageways (National Primary and National Secondary Roads	No new access or intensification of existing access	1. Where the new access would eliminate a traffic hazard. 2. Where a new access is required for any major employment generating activity including tourism or a development of national or regional importance. 3. Extensions to an authorised use where the additional traffic would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard. 4. Where a new access is to a fixed natural resource of national or regional importance where no other suitable vehicular access can be provided.

Table 7.10: Restrictions and Exemptions on Protected Regional Roads

Route	Restrictions	Exemptions
R173/R175 Dundalk-Greenore R173/R176 Greenore-Carlingford-Omeath (Cornamucklagh) R178 Dundalk-Carrickmacross (Essexford) R171 Dundalk-Louth Village R169 Dunleer-Collon R168 Drogheda-Collon R166 Drogheda-Termonfeckin R132 Dundalk-Drogheda R132 Dundalk-Feede R132 Carrickarnon-Border R177 Dundalk-Border Port Access Northern Cross Road [7] R215 Jun 16 to Ardee (Former N52) R215 from R132 Junction to Junction 16	No new access or intensification of existing access	1. Where the new access would eliminate a traffic hazard. 2. Where a new access is required for any major development, including tourism developments, of national, regional, or local importance where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard. 3. Extensions to an authorised use where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard. 4. Where a new access is to a fixed natural resource of national or regional importance where no other suitable vehicular access can be provided. 5. Dwellings required to satisfy the housing needs of persons who have lived for not less than 18 years in the area, where no other site is available off a minor road, and where the existing entrance servicing the family home is used. Where the entrance to the existing family home cannot be used, consideration will be given for one new entrance only onto the adjoining protected regional route. A condition confining occupancy to a family member for a minimum of 7 years will be attached to any permission granted under this exemption.

[7] Sections of this road may be constructed during the life of this Plan subject to the availability of funding.

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

Policy Objective	
MOV 57	To restrict development proposals for residential or other use within 100 metres of either the M1 Motorway or N1/A1 National route in all but exceptional circumstances. The exceptional circumstances are where the development is an infill development and located along an established building line. Any development shall be required to comply with the requirements of the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012)* and Policy Objectives ENV 6 and ENV 7 and the costs of implementing any mitigation measures concerned shall be borne by the developer.

7.11 ROADSIDE SIGNAGE

The primary purpose of signage along roads (other than road traffic and directional signs erected by the Road Authority) is to advertise a business or product or provide directions to a particular location.

Directional signs provide the public with directions to a particular location and can be associated with a business, service, tourist facility or sports club.

These signs are intended to complement, but not replace, pre-planning of a journey and the use of verbal instructions, maps and road atlases.

Advertising signs are designed to market a particular business, product or service.

Whilst it is acknowledged that advertising is a necessary part of operating a business, the Council has a responsibility in protecting visual amenities and avoiding the creation of any traffic hazards associated with signage.

Depending on the location, there are 2 consent processes for advertising and signage as follows:

- Planning permission is required for any signage or advertisement located on private property. It should be noted certain advertisements are exempted under Schedule 2 Part 2 of the *Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)*; and
- The erection of advertising signs on, over or along a public road is licensable under section 254 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*. These licences are granted on a temporary basis.

The nature and extent of signage allowable will be determined by its scale, requirement, location and the classification of the road on which it would be located. Signage on National Roads will be strictly controlled and will generally be only permitted in accordance with the provisions set out in section 3.8 of the *'Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines' (2012)* and the TII Policy on the *'Provision of Tourism and Leisure Signage on National Roads' (2011).*

Further details in relation to Road Signage can be found on the Louth Policy on Non-Regulatory Road Signage, which can be accessed by clicking on this link.

Policy Objective	
MOV 58	Signage on National Roads will be strictly controlled and will generally only be permitted in accordance with the provisions set out in the *'Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines'* (2012) and the TII Policy on the *'Provision of Tourism and Leisure Signage on National Roads' (2011).*

Policy Objective	
MOV 59	To strictly control advertising along or adjacent to public roads in accordance with the Louth Local Authorities Policy on Non-Regulatory Road Signage in order to ensure traffic safety, avoid clutter, and preserve visual amenity.

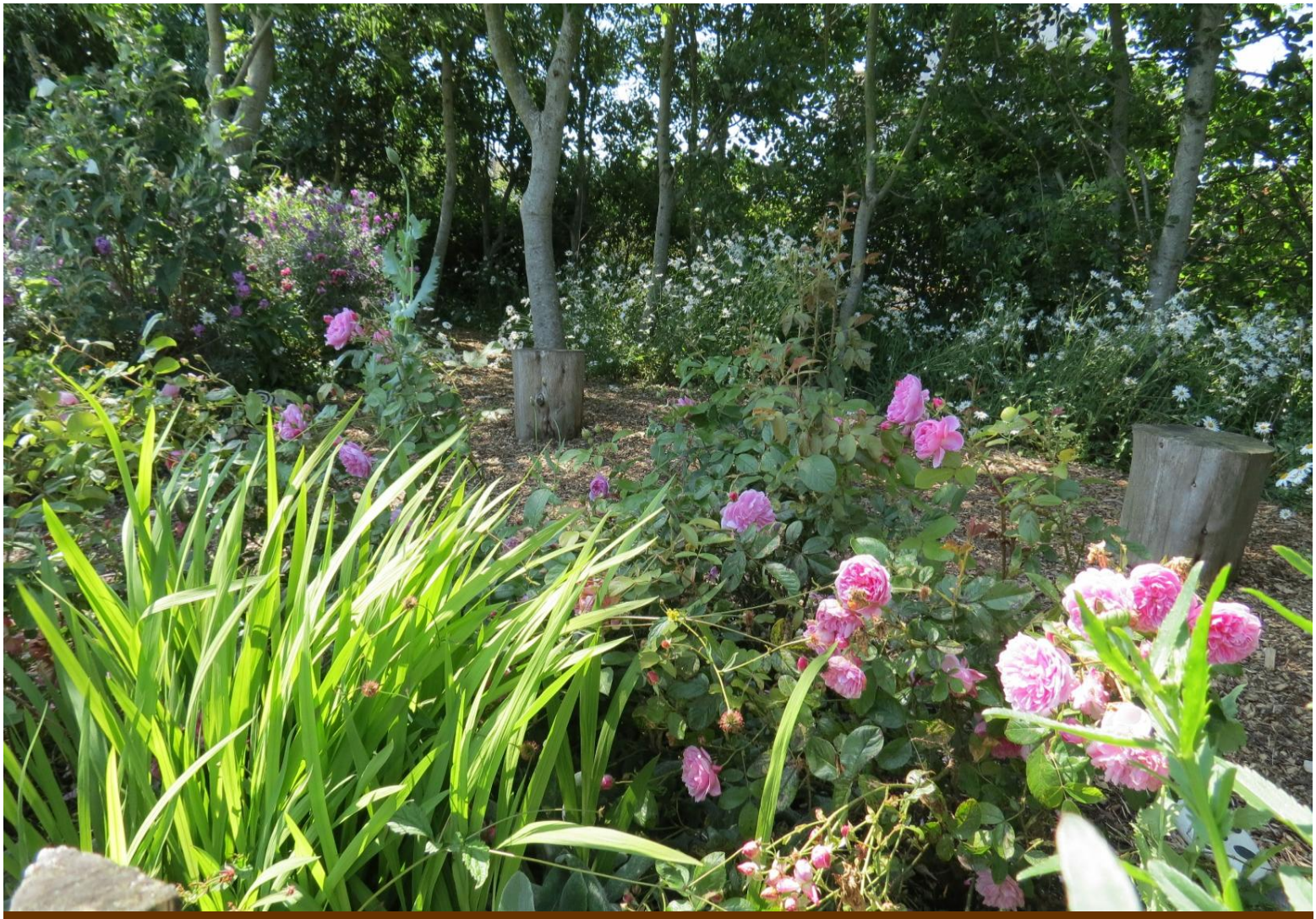
7.12 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

A Public Right of Way is a person's right of passage along a road or path, even if the road or path isn't in public ownership. They facilitate enjoyment of the landscape and are important for tourism and recreation.

Section 10(2)(o) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires development plans to include an objective for the preservation of public rights of way that provide access to the seashore, mountains, lakeshores, river banks or other places of natural beauty or recreational utility. The Council is not aware of any existing Public Rights of Way but will review this during the course of the Plan and it will be an objective to prepare a map identifying the Public Rights of Way in the County where they exist.

Policy Objective	
MOV 60	To identify and preserve existing accesses and public rights of way to recreational areas including the coast, mountains, riverbanks and other places of natural beauty and recreational utility.

Policy Objective	
MOV 61	To commence the process of mapping and listing public rights of way in the County during the lifetime of this Plan under the provisions of Section 14 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*.



Chapter 8

Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

"Protect and enhance the County's unique heritage and biodiversity including sites designated at national and EU level, protected species and habitats outside of designated sites while recognising the potential for sustainable green infrastructure development within the County. Protection, management and enhancement of the landscape of the County is promoted to ensure the proper planning and sustainable development of the County."

8 - Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

8.1 Introduction

County Louth boasts a rich natural heritage, which contributes substantially to the County's character, identity and sense of place, in addition to the well-being and the quality of life of those living in and visiting the County. Our heritage includes all that we have inherited from our ancestors and comprises valuable resources that can be used wisely to develop our society, environment, economy and people and to create a better future. In preparing the Plan and developing policy objectives the Council followed the principles of the Ecosystem Services Approach, to deliver sustainable and ecologically sound outcomes. Details of this approach are provided in Section 1.7.5.1 of the Plan and supported in Strategic Objective SO 6. These seek to conserve and enhance the County's Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services, supporting the sustainable management of natural assets and the biodiversity of the County's protected habitats and species, to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.

8.2 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

Natural heritage comprises the biological and geological underpinnings of our existence, our biodiversity and geodiversity, expressed through various mediums including farming, wildlife and landscapes. Biodiversity refers to the whole variety of life on earth including habitats and ecosystems, covering all plants, animals and micro-organisms both on land and in water.



County Louth is rich in biodiversity, due to its extensive coastline (stretching from Carlingford Lough to the Boyne Estuary), marine environments, wetlands, woodlands, rivers and upland habitats. Together, these habitats support a rich variety of plant and animal species.



The County of Louth is an internationally important destination for migratory wildlife, with Dundalk Bay being Ireland's top location for wintering wading birds.



An area equivalent to more than one seventh of the County is designated under Irish and European legislation for wildlife protection, (including marine and inter-tidal areas). Some of the upland areas in the Cooley Peninsula are recognised as being amongst the most unspoilt in the country.

Much of Louth's biodiversity and natural heritage exists outside these formally designated areas and may be at risk of erosion or diminution.

Louth County Council is committed to conserving and enhancing our natural heritage and recognising the role it plays along with green infrastructure and biodiversity, in enhancing the quality of life for citizens by creating a sense of identity and well-being and promoting active and healthy living for those living in and visiting the County.

8.2.1 Heritage Plan

The National Heritage Plan 2002, was the first integrated plan that sought to conserve and protect all aspects of our national heritage, a key objective of which was for local authorities to prepare and adopt local heritage plans in consultation with the public. The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media is currently in the process of finalising *'Heritage Ireland 2030'* which will replace the current National Heritage Plan. It is anticipated that it will *inter alia*; increase the value afforded to and the protection of heritage, raise awareness of its vital role in all aspects of society, provide guidance and enshrine shared responsibility.

The first *Louth Heritage Plan 2007-2011* was a strategic framework plan with the aim of co-ordinating the conservation, management and sympathetic development of the County's heritage.

This has been reviewed and it is anticipated that the *draft Louth Heritage Plan 2021-2026* will be endorsed in the near future. It comprises a five year joint work plan devised by many individuals and organisations with an involvement and interest in Louth's heritage.

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

8.2.2 International, EU and Irish Policy on Biodiversity

The European Union's (EU) first wildlife conservation legislation was the *Birds Directive (79/409/EEC),* supplemented by the *Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)*, both of which have been updated periodically. Since then, the EU has built up a network of protected areas including marine sites, across all Member States. This vast array of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), known as the Natura 2000 Network of European Sites, - the largest coherent network of protected areas in the world, is a testament to the importance that the EU attaches to biodiversity. The Convention on Biological Diversity, which Ireland signed and ratified and the National Biodiversity Plan, aims to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2020.

The *National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021* is the third such plan for Ireland, whose objectives, targets and actions seek to achieve Ireland's vision for biodiversity through the implementation of specified strategic objectives.

All local authorities are required to prepare Biodiversity Plans. Louth adopted its first Biodiversity Action plan in 2008. This was reviewed and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026 was endorsed in January 2021.

It provides a framework for the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level and aims to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of County Louth.

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

8.3 European Sites in County Louth

In total, there are 11 designated European Sites, located wholly or partly in County Louth, which form part of the Natura 2000 Network of European Sites. This network includes both Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), representing the prime wildlife conservation areas in the County which are considered to be of significant importance at both European and Irish levels. The boundaries of the protected areas may alter during the lifetime of the Plan and additional areas may be designated.



"*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland; Guidance for Planning Authorities*" (Department Environment Heritage and Local Government 2010), is intended to assist and guide local and planning authorities in the functions of undertaking Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects.

These guidelines highlight the responsibilities of all the agencies of the State including planning authorities, to act diligently, to ensure that their decisions in the exercise of their functions, as well as their actions, comply fully with the objectives of the *Habitats Directive (1992).*



County Louth's 6 SACs and 5 SPAs are listed in Tables 8.1 and 8.2 and illustrated on Map 8.1 and Map 8.2 respectively.

All projects and plans arising from this Plan[i] will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

[i] Such projects include but are not limited to those relating to: agriculture; amenity and recreation; contaminated sites; electricity transmission; flood alleviation and prevention; forestry; mineral extraction; renewable energy projects; roads; telecommunications; tourism; wastewater and discharges; and water supply and abstraction.

A plan or project will only be authorised after the competent authority has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, screening for Appropriate Assessment, and subsequent Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:

- The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European Site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or
- The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European Site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must, nevertheless, be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or
- The plan or project will have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European Site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

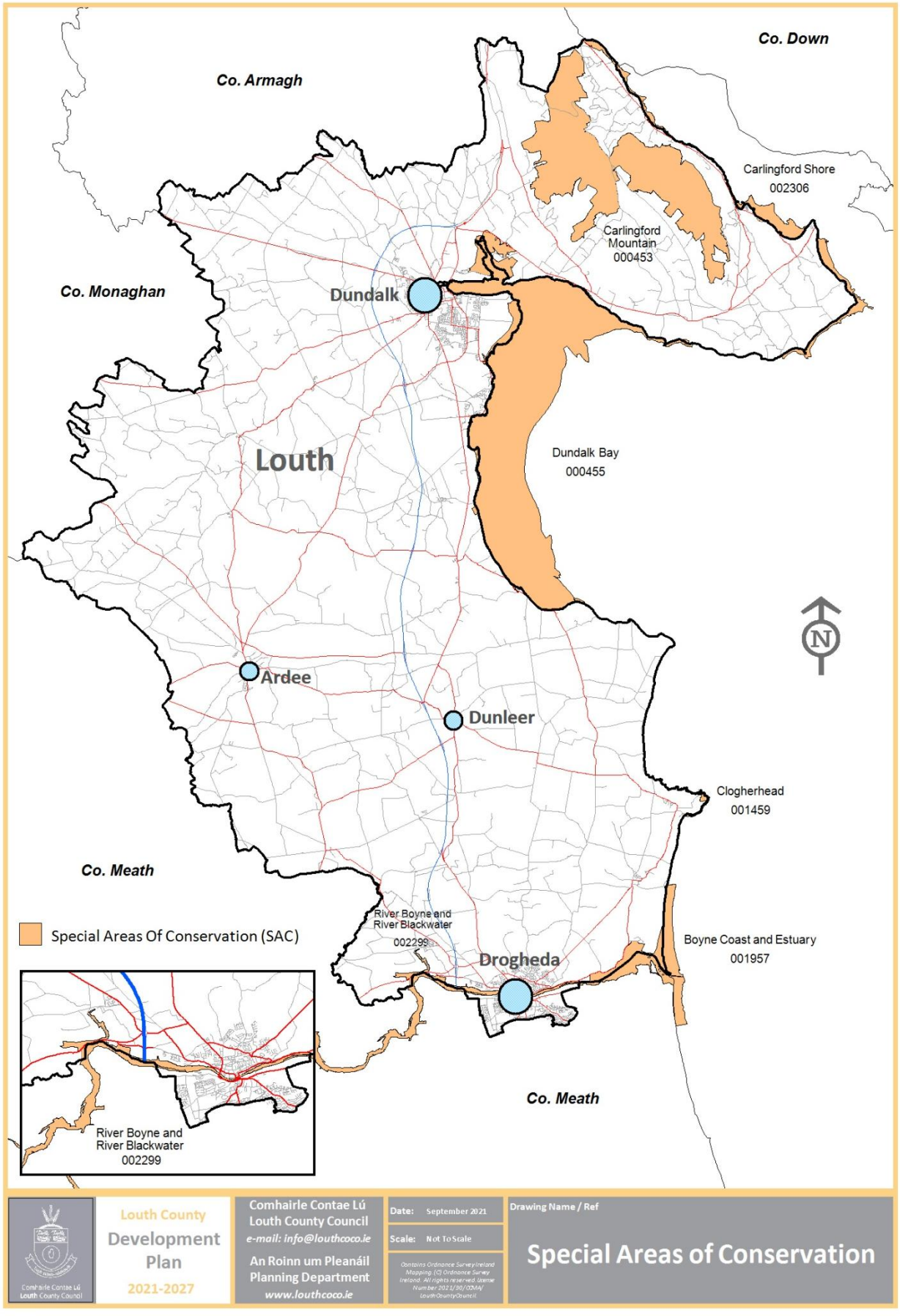
Table 8.1: Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Co. Louth

Reference Number	Name / Location
002306	Carlingford Shore
000453	Carlingford Mountain
000455	Dundalk Bay
001459	Clogherhead
001957	Boyne Coast and Estuary – Shared with County Meath
002299	River Boyne and Blackwater – Shared with County Meath

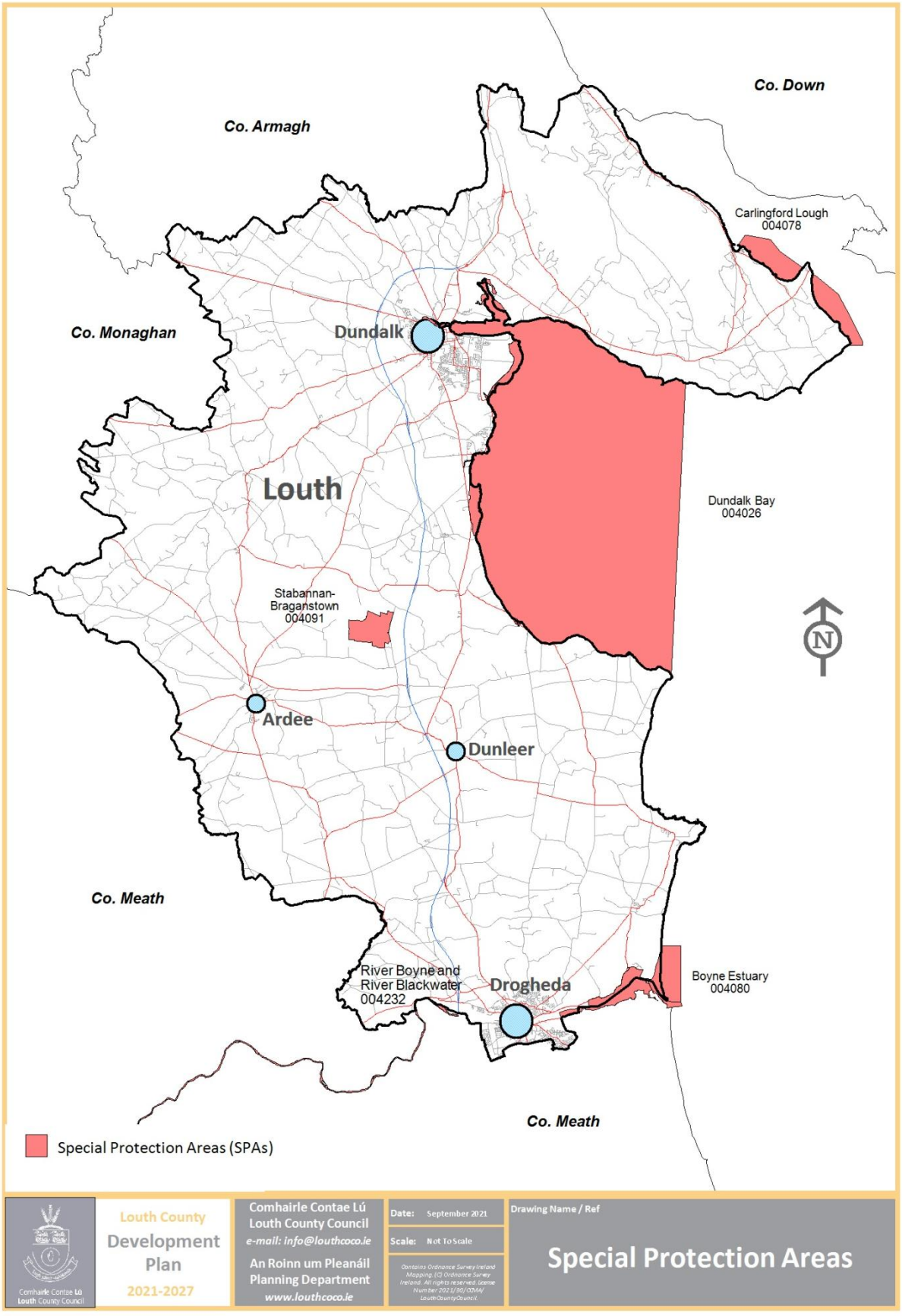
Table 8.2: Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Co. Louth

Reference Number	Name / Location
004078	Carlingford Lough
004026	Dundalk Bay
004091	Stabannon and Braganstown
004080	Boyne Estuary - Shared with County Meath
004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater – Shared with County Meath

Map 8.1: Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)



Map 8.2: Special Protection Areas (SPAs)



Policy Objective	
NBG 3	To protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives.

Policy Objective	
NBG 4	To ensure that all proposed developments comply with the requirements set out in the DECLG '*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010*'.

Policy Objective	
NBG 5	To ensure that no plan, programme, or project giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan, either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes or projects[2].

Policy Objective	
NBG 6	To ensure a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) on all plans and/or projects and/or Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Report/ Natura Impact Assessment) where appropriate, is undertaken to make a determination. European Sites located outside of the County but within 15km of the proposed development site shall be included in such screenings as should those to which there are pathways, for example, hydrological links for potential effects.

Policy Objective	
NBG 7	To co-operate with the Regional Planning Assembly and adjoining local authorities, public agencies and community interests to protect regionally significant heritage assets, environmental quality, and to identify threats to existing environmental quality in a transboundary context throughout the region including Northern Ireland.

[2] To ensure that no plan, programme or project giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan, either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes etc. or projects except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, where there must be no alternatives, imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed and adequate compensatory measures are in place.

8.4 Protected Plant and Animal Species

Louth is home to and supports many plants, animal and bird species, some of which are special to the County.



Certain species that are deemed to be rare and threatened and which are known to exist outside of designated sites such as European Sites or Natural Heritage Areas are protected by law, as they require special measures to ensure their continued survival. These include plants listed in the Red Data Lists of Irish Plants, Flora (Protection) Order 2015 (or other such Orders) and their habitats, birds listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, and birds and other animals listed in the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2012 and subsequent statutory instruments.

Many of these species are protected by law. In addition, strict protection under the Habitats Directive applies to the species listed in Annex IV of that Directive. Where Annex IV species are present, all possible measures to avoid damage and disturbance to them must be taken in the formulation of proposals for development.

Where the risk of damage or disturbance is unavoidable, an application for a derogation licence may be made to the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under Regulation 54 or 55 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).



The derogation licence should be obtained in advance of seeking planning permission for a proposed development. (Listings of specially protected species is available in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021 – 2026. The planning process will seek to protect rare and threatened species, including species protected by law and their habitats. Proposals for development must demonstrate they will not have a significant adverse impact on such species and their habitats and ensure suitable avoidance and/or mitigation measures are implemented accordingly.

Policy Objective	
NBG 8	To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, taking account of their views and any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development, which is likely to affect plant, bird or other animal species protected by law.

8.5 Protecting Biodiversity Value in Non-Designated Sites

There are numerous biodiversity sites dispersed throughout County Louth. These occur in our ordinary landscapes where their ecological value is of immense importance in the County, as they help to serve as stepping stones in a wider ecological network.



These include hedgerows, small wooded areas, ponds, streams and river banks all of which are vital links and essential to the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.

These corridors and links are a critical component of a functioning ecological network and their protection is advocated in *Article 10 of the Habitats Directive* and in the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).*

To this end, the Council has commissioned and will continue to commission surveys to further identify such sites, to ensure their value and conservation as they are critical to the overall ecological network and biodiversity value of the County. Identification of important elements undertaken to date include Wetland Surveys, 2011 to 2014, and a sample study of hedgerows. Other such studies may be carried out during the lifetime of this Plan.

Policy Objective	
NBG 9	To ensure that proposals for development, where appropriate, protect and conserve biodiversity sites outside designated sites and require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professionals to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such sites.

Policy Objective	
NBG 10	To ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 Network of European Sites and encourage the retention and management of landscape features as per *Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.*

Policy Objective	
NBG 11	Where feasible, ensure that no ecological networks, or parts thereof, which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity, are lost without remediation as a result of implementation of this Plan.

8.6 Invasive Species

Invasive, non-native plant and animal species are species which can negatively impact on native species, transform habitats and threaten whole ecosystems, resulting in serious problems for both the environment and the economy.

After habitat loss, invasive species are the second biggest threat to biodiversity worldwide. Prohibitions are in place in relation to the introduction or dispersal of certain invasive species as set out in the *Third Schedule of the EU (Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).*

Whilst there is a long list of freshwater, marine and terrestrial invasive species now present in Ireland, some plant species in particular pose a serious threat to the built environment. An example of this is the Japanese Knotweed, which has the ability to grow through concrete and tarmac.



It can take several years to ensure that a contaminated site is completely cleared of an invasive species, thus ensuring its non-return.

Policy Objective	
NBG 12	Prevent and control the spread of invasive plant and animal species within the County.
NBG 13	Development sites must be investigated for the presence of invasive species, which if present must be treated and/or eradicated in accordance with best practice. Where appropriate, Invasive Species Management Plans will be prepared for such sites.

8.7 Natural Heritage Areas

The term 'Natural Heritage' covers wildlife (plants, animals and their habitats) in addition to geological and geomorphological sites. Wildlife sites of national importance including both ecological and geological sites are designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) under the *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.* Sites identified but not yet designated as NHAs are known as 'proposed Natural Heritage Areas' (pNHAs) and these are protected from development only by inclusion in a development plan.

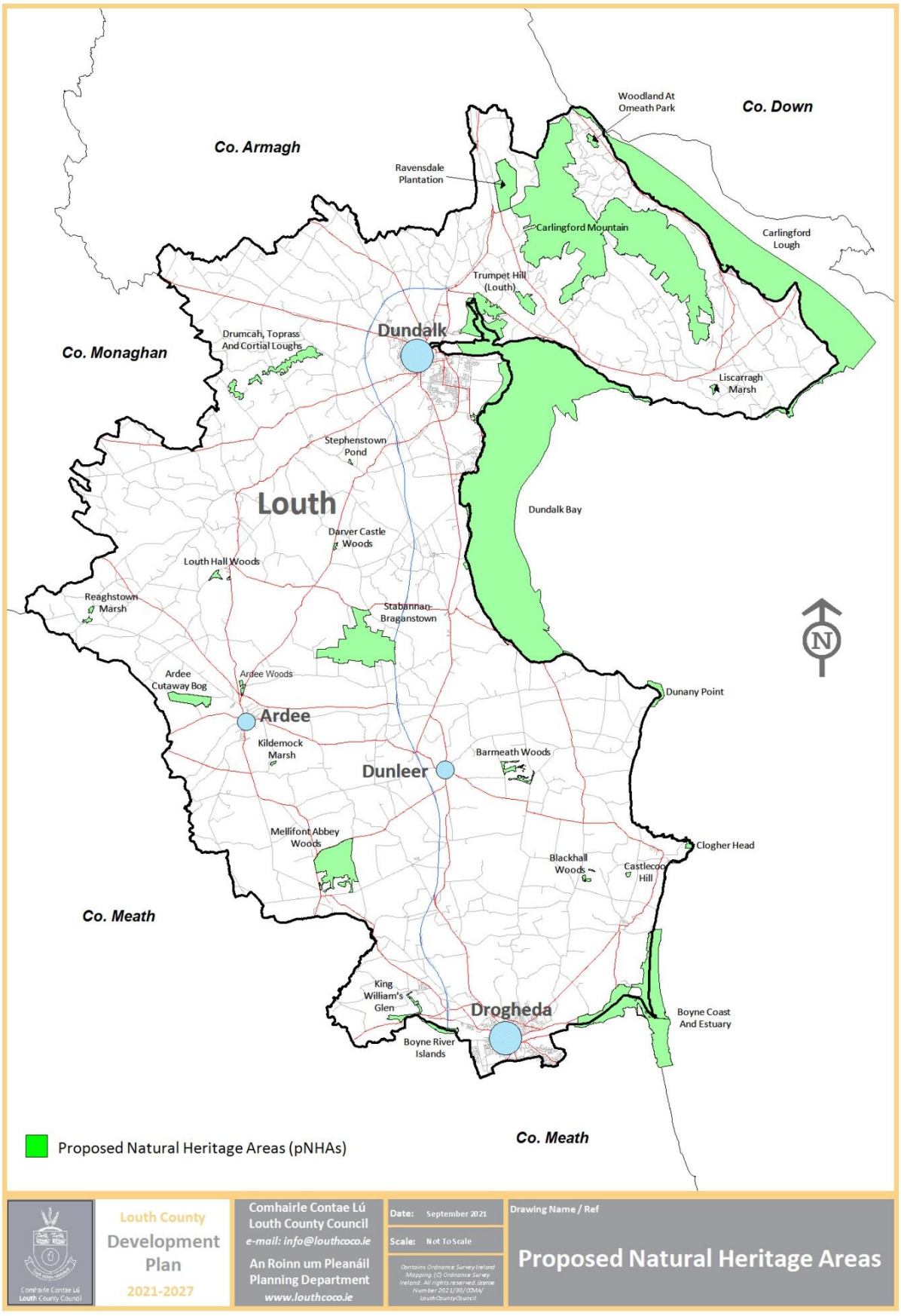
The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) proposed 24 Natural Heritage Areas in Louth, which are listed in Table 8.3 and identified on Map 8.3.

The process of designation of these sites is ongoing and it is anticipated that one or more of these pNHAs will be fully designated during the course of this Plan.

Table 8.3: Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)

Ref. No.	Name/Location
NH1454	Ardee Cutaway Bog
NH1801	Barmeath Woods
NH1293	Blackhall Woods
NH1957	Boyne Coast and Estuary
NH1862	Boyne River Islands
NH452	Carlingford Lough
NH453	Carlingford Mountain
NH1458	Castlecoo Hill
NH1459	Clogherhead
NH1461	Darver Castle Woods
NH1462	Drumcah, Toprass and Cortial Loughs
NH1856	Dunany Point
NH 455	Dundalk Bay
NH1806	Kildemock Marsh
NH1804	King Williams Glen
NH1451	Liscarragh Marsh
NH1616	Louth Hall and Ardee Woods
NH1464	Mellifont Abbey Woods
NH1805	Ravensdale Plantation
NH1828	Reaghstown Marsh
NH456	Stabannan- Braganstown
NH1803	Stephenstown Pond
NH1468	Trumpet Hill
NH1465	Woodland at Omeath Park

Map 8.3 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)



Policy Objective	
NBG 14	To protect from inappropriate development and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of ecological interest listed as pNHA or that may be designated as NHA, during the lifetime of this Plan.

Policy Objective	
NBG 15	To ensure that any development within or adjacent to a NHA or pNHA is designed and sited to minimise its impact on the ecological value of the site and to resist development that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats or a disturbance of species.

8.8 Sites of Geological Interest

Louth has a tremendously rich and interesting geological heritage, which the Council is committed to protecting. In 2013, Louth County Council commissioned, with funding from the Heritage Council, a study to identify and assess the most important geological sites in the County. This study was conducted in collaboration with a Geological Heritage Project being carried out by the Geological Survey of Ireland, which is currently compiling a list of nationally important geological sites.



Those worthy of designation as NHA but not yet designated, are referred to as proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs). Sites of more local value that were not selected for NHA designation are classified as County Geological Sites (CGS), which, although of lesser importance, nonetheless should be protected.



In the interim, the Council will, through inclusion of these sites in the Plan, protect and maintain the geological heritage of the County. These sites are listed in Table 8.4 and illustrated on Map 8.4. It is the intention of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, in conjunction with the Geological Survey of Ireland to designate geological sites of national importance as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).

Note:
Site numbers are as given in the report of the Geological Heritage of Louth Survey of 2013.

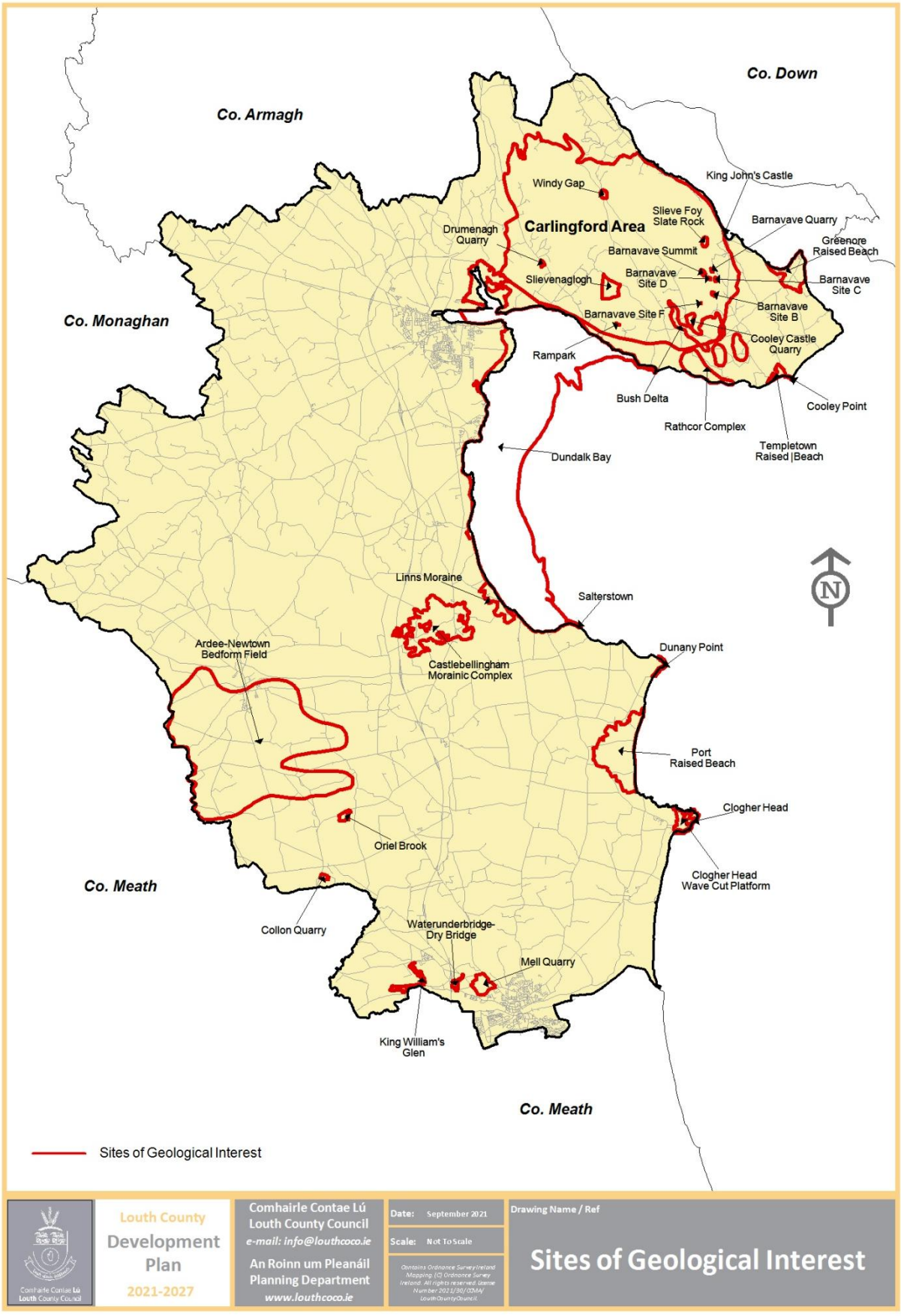
NHA sites are those considered to be worthy of designation as Natural Heritage Areas by the NPWS.

CGS refers to sites of lesser importance which should still be protected as County Geological Sites

Table 8.4: Sites of Geological Interest

Site No.	Site Name	Site Importance (proposed designation)
LH01	Ardee-Newtown Bedform Field	CGS
LH02	Barnavave Quarry	NHA
LH03	Barnavave Site B	NHA
LH04	Barnavave Site C	CGS
LH05	Barnavave Site D	CGS
LH06	Barnavave Site F	CGS
LH07	Barnavave Summit	CGS
LH08	Bush Delta	CGS
LH09	Carlingford Area	NHA
LH10	Castlebellingham Morainic Complex	CGS
LH11	Clogher Head	NHA
LH12	Clogher Head Wave Cut Platform	CGS
LH13	Collon Quarry	CGS
LH14	Cooley Castle Quarry	CGS
LH15	Cooley Point	CGS
LH16	Drumenagh Quarry	NHA
LH17	Dunany Point	CGS
LH18	Dundalk Bay	CGS
LH19	Greenore Raised Beach	CGS
LH20	King John's Castle	CGS
LH21	King William's Glen	CGS
LH22	Linns Moraine	CGS
LH23	Mell Quarry	CGS
LH24	Oriel Brook	CGS
LH25	Port Raised Beach	CGS
LH26	Rampark	CGS
LH27	Rathcor Complex	CGS
LH28	Salterstown	NHA
LH29	Slieve Foye Slate Rock	NHA
LH30	Slievenaglogh	CGS
LH31	Templetown Raised Beach	CGS
LH32	Waterunderbridge-Dry Bridge	CGS
LH33	Windy Gap	NHA

Map 8.4: Sites of Geological Interest



Policy Objective	
NBG 16	Support the designation of qualifying sites of geological interest listed in Table 8.4 as Natural Heritage Areas.

Policy Objective	
NBG 17	In consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, protect from inappropriate development and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of geological interest listed in Table 8.4 of the Plan.

Policy Objective	
NBG 18	To promote awareness, where appropriate, of areas of geological interest, including the provision of access and interpretation where desirable and feasible.

8.9 WETLANDS

Wetlands include watercourses and water bodies as well as other habitat types including marshes, fens, heathland, cutaway bog in addition to areas influenced by the marine – including coastal and estuarine salt marshes, dune slacks etc. They tend to have high biodiversity value supporting a variety of habitats and species and function in the protection of water quality and/or flood control, serve as important carbon stores contributing to climate resilience, filter pollutants and provide potential recreational opportunities.



While many protected areas include wetlands, most wetland areas occur outside protected sites. Globally, wetlands are protected by the Ramsar Convention. Within Louth, only Dundalk Bay is listed as a Ramsar site.

However, it should be noted that in County Down, the northern section of Carlingford Lough, which is a shared site, is also listed under the Ramsar Convention.

Many of the SACs and SPAs in County Louth, referenced previously and above, are wetlands.

Louth County Council, with funding from the Heritage Council, commissioned a survey of all known and potential wetlands in the County. This Louth Wetland Survey was a three year project (2011, 2012 and 2014), which determined the wetland status of in excess of 300 sites, considered likely to support wetland habitats on the basis of underlying soils, topography, historical mapping and aerial photography. The survey documented the location, extent, and threats facing and conservation ranking of virtually all the wetland sites in the County, in addition to presenting recommendations for their maintenance, management and conservation.

Planning legislation requires that work or development, which involves the drainage or reclamation of a wetland requires planning permission where the wetland is greater than 0.1ha.

For drainage or reclamation of wetlands greater than 2ha, an Environmental Impact Assessment is necessary.

The Council will require that an ecological assessment (including where necessary an Environmental Impact Assessment) is carried out at the appropriate level in relation to proposals for drainage or reclamation of wetlands.

Policy Objective	
NBG 19	To ensure that an appropriate level of ecological assessment is carried out for proposals involving drainage, infill or reclamation of wetland habitats.

Policy Objective	
NBG 20	To protect and enhance wetland sites that have been rated A (International), B (National), C+ (County), C and D importance in the Louth Wetland Surveys and any subsequent versions thereof.

Policy Objective	
NBG 21	To support the implementation of recommendations included in the Louth Wetland Survey and any subsequent versions thereof.

Policy Objective	
NBG 22	To support the implementation of recommendations contained in the *National Peatlands Strategy 2015* and any subsequent strategies.

8.10 LANDSCAPE

The National Landscape Strategy (NLS) 2015-2025 will ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention, which Ireland ratified in 2002. It provides a high level policy framework and recognises the importance of landscape protection and its interconnectivity with biodiversity and climate change. One of its core objectives is to develop a National Landscape Character Assessment, providing consistency on how to characterise and connect with the landscape, and provide a framework for regional and local landscape character assessments. It is fully supported in both the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (EMRSES).

8.10.1 Landscape Character Assessment

A Landscape Character Assessment essentially describes, maps, and classifies landscapes providing an understanding of the value and sensitivity of the County's landscapes and its future management needs. It facilitates the identification of features, which endow a specific area with its sense of place whilst aiding the provision of policy recommendations.

In 2002 the Council, in accordance with the Government's *Draft Guidelines for Landscape and Landscape Assessment (2000)* prepared a Landscape Character Assessment for the County involving a 2 stage approach.

Stage 1 identified and classified nine Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) in County Louth, which represent specific geographical areas of a particular landscape type or types.

Stage 2 appraised the landscape character sensitivity and values, assigning key landscape values and corresponding objectives in addition to categorising each LCA as being of international, national, regional or local importance.

Criteria used in the evaluation was based on the following:

- Landscape Quality – interactions of the landscape and the condition of features and elements;
- Scenic Quality – landscapes which appeal primarily to the visual senses;
- Rarity – the presence of rare features and elements in the landscape;
- Conservation Interests – presence of features and particular wildlife, earth science, archaeological, historical and cultural interest which can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right;
- Wildness – presence of wild character within the landscape which makes a particular contribution to a sense of place;
- Recreational Opportunity – degree of open-air recreation within the landscape in proximity to centres of population;
- Cultural Association – with particular people, artists, writers, historical events, legends;
- Tranquillity – low levels of built environment, traffic, noise and where artificial lighting is at a minimum; and
- Stakeholder Representative – whether the landscape contains a particular character worthy of representation by stakeholders.

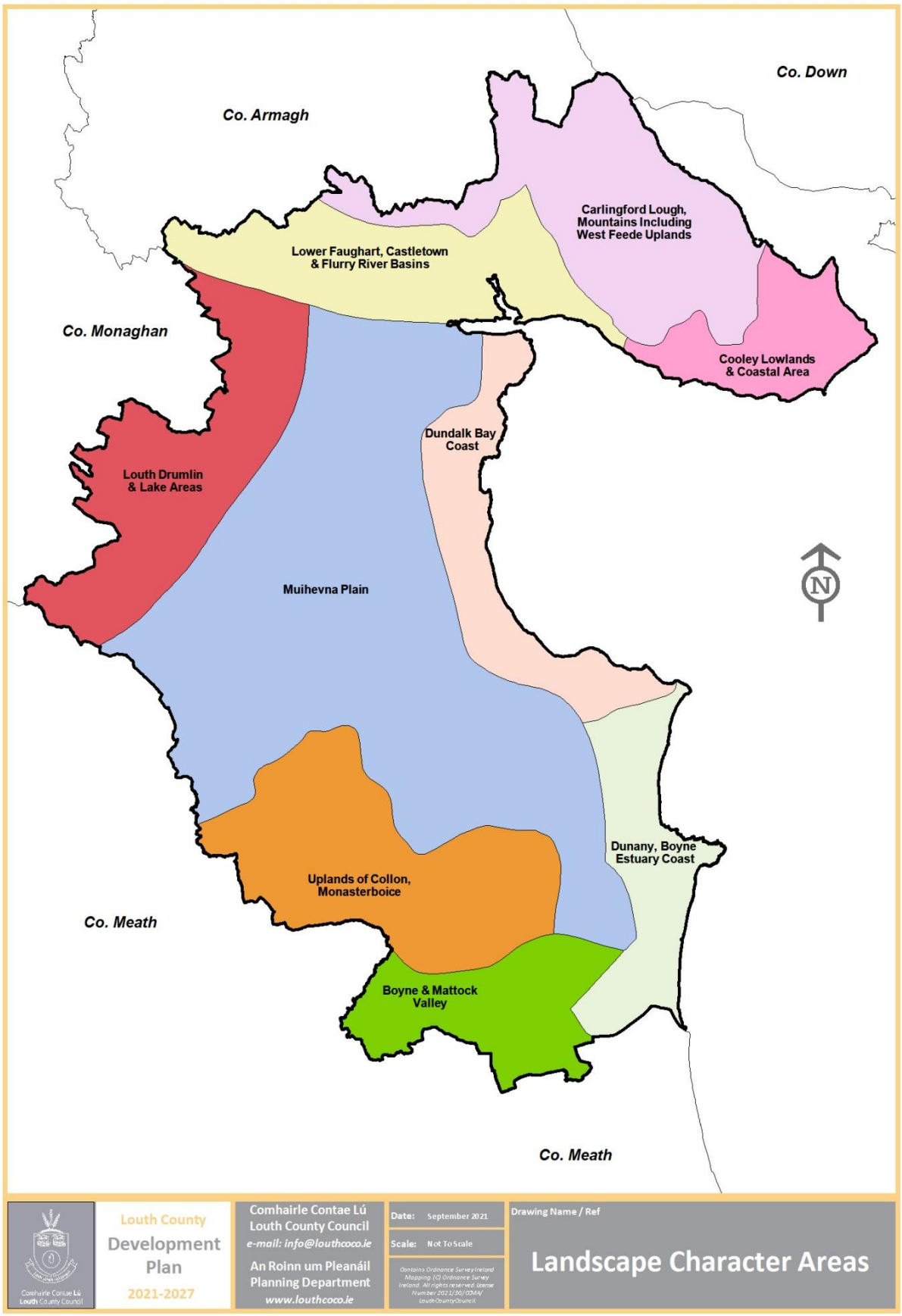
Louth's nine Landscape Character Areas are identified in Table 8. 5 and Map 8.5.

The potential landscape capacity of each LCA is based on indicative types of development that are likely to occur within the study area. The Louth *Landscape Character Assessment 2002* identified a range of forces for landscape change in the rural landscape and these included *inter alia*: agriculture, rural housing, wind farms, commercial development, quarrying etc. The *Louth Landscape Character Assessment 2002* is available at the following link.

Table 8.5: Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Areas	Importance
• Carlingford Lough and Mountains incl. West Feede Uplands	International
• Boyne & Mattock Valley	National
• Dundalk Bay Coast • Dunany to Boyne Estuary Coast • Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice	Regional
• Cooley Lowlands and Coastal Area • Lower Faughart, Castletown and Flurry River basin • Louth Drumlin and Lake Areas • Muirhevna Plain	Local

Map 8.5: Landscape Character Areas



8.10.2 Landscape Conservation Area

Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) enables a Planning Authority, for the purposes of the preservation of a landscape, designate an area or place within its functional area as a Landscape Conservation Area. In so doing, the planning authority can prescribe certain developments which would normally be exempt but would not be exempt in a designated conservation area.

The *Louth Landscape Character Assessment 2002* recommended that consideration be given to the designation of Carlingford Mountain SAC as a Landscape Conservation Area.



The Council, during the lifetime of the Plan will, in consultation with the relevant department and stakeholders, explore the possibility of designating Carlingford SAC as a Landscape Conservation Area.

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

Policy Objective	
NBG 24	To ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements, which contribute to their distinctiveness such as scenic quality, habitats, settlement pattern, historic heritage and land use.

Policy Objective	
NBG 25	Where appropriate, require that landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals be submitted with development applications, which may have significant impact on landscape character areas, especially in highly sensitive areas.

Policy Objective	
NBG 26	To explore the designation of Landscape Conservation Areas as appropriate, in conjunction with the relevant Government Department and stakeholders to protect specific important landscapes and particularly in respect of Carlingford Mountain SAC.

Policy Objective	
NBG 27	To review and update, if necessary the *Louth Landscape Character Assessment 2002* on foot of a framework for regional and local landscape character assessments as outlined in the *National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025.*

Policy Objective	
NBG 28	To co-operate with adjoining local authorities, both north and south of the border, to ensure that the environment is maintained in a sustainable manner and to support the coordinated designation of sensitive landscapes and policy approaches with adjoining areas and on all aspects of environmental protection, particularly where transboundary environmental vulnerabilities are identified.

8.11 TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows contribute greatly to Louth's natural landscape character and biodiversity. They provide visual amenity in rural and urban environments, shelter and clean air, important habitats for many species of wildlife and as high biodiversity habitats they are key for both climate mitigation and adaptation measures, playing a significant role in carbon storage.



Ireland is the least wooded country in the EU. Louth's percentage forest area is one of the lowest in the country and in this context, the conservation of existing woodlands is increasingly important.

Many of Louth's surviving woodlands are located within large estates, where they were often planted as part of landscaping projects and contributed to designed landscapes.

Trees and in particular groups of trees can represent an important component of the local landscape and townscape, the setting of buildings and the means of providing successful integration of new development into the landscape. Development can, if not sensitively designed, sited and constructed, result in the loss or damage of trees. Thus, it is desirable that existing trees be considered in the formulation and assessment of development proposals. Where trees or groups of trees of particular value may be at risk from development or other activities, consideration may be given to the making of a Tree Preservation Order.

New planting should be encouraged and promoted to ensure the continued regeneration of tree cover generally and avoid key groupings of trees becoming increasingly aged and unhealthy.

Hedgerows make an important contribution to the County, serving as important habitat and wildlife corridors for the movement and distribution of flora and fauna through the landscape (habitat for insects, nesting sites for birds, assist small mammals and bat species). They simultaneously contribute to the natural heritage and visual amenity of the area, in addition to preserving the rural character of an area and in screening development. A sample survey of Louth's hedgerows in 2014 found that Louth had the highest density of hedgerows in Ireland, slightly ahead of neighbouring County Monaghan. Other than in exceptional circumstances, there will be a presumption against the removal of trees and hedgerows.

Where the removal of trees and hedgerows is unavoidable, the Council will require their replacement or adequate substitution.

8.11.1 Tree Preservation Orders

Section 205 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* allows planning authorities to make provision for the preservation of any tree, trees, groups of trees or woodlands by way of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) where it is carried out in the interest of expediency, amenity or the environment. Tree Preservation Orders made to date by the Council are listed in Table 8.6 and illustrated in Maps 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 8.10.

Table 8.6: Tree Preservation Orders, County Louth

DROGHEDA		COUNTY	
Ref. No	**Location**	**Ref. No.**	**Location**
TPO 1	Bayview House	**TPO 2**	Fox Covert, Ardee
		TPO 3	Ardee Golf Club (TPO 2 falls entirely within this area)
		TPO 4	Red House, Ardee
		TPO 5	Mell, Drogheda
		TPO 6	One Mile Wood, Newtownstalaban

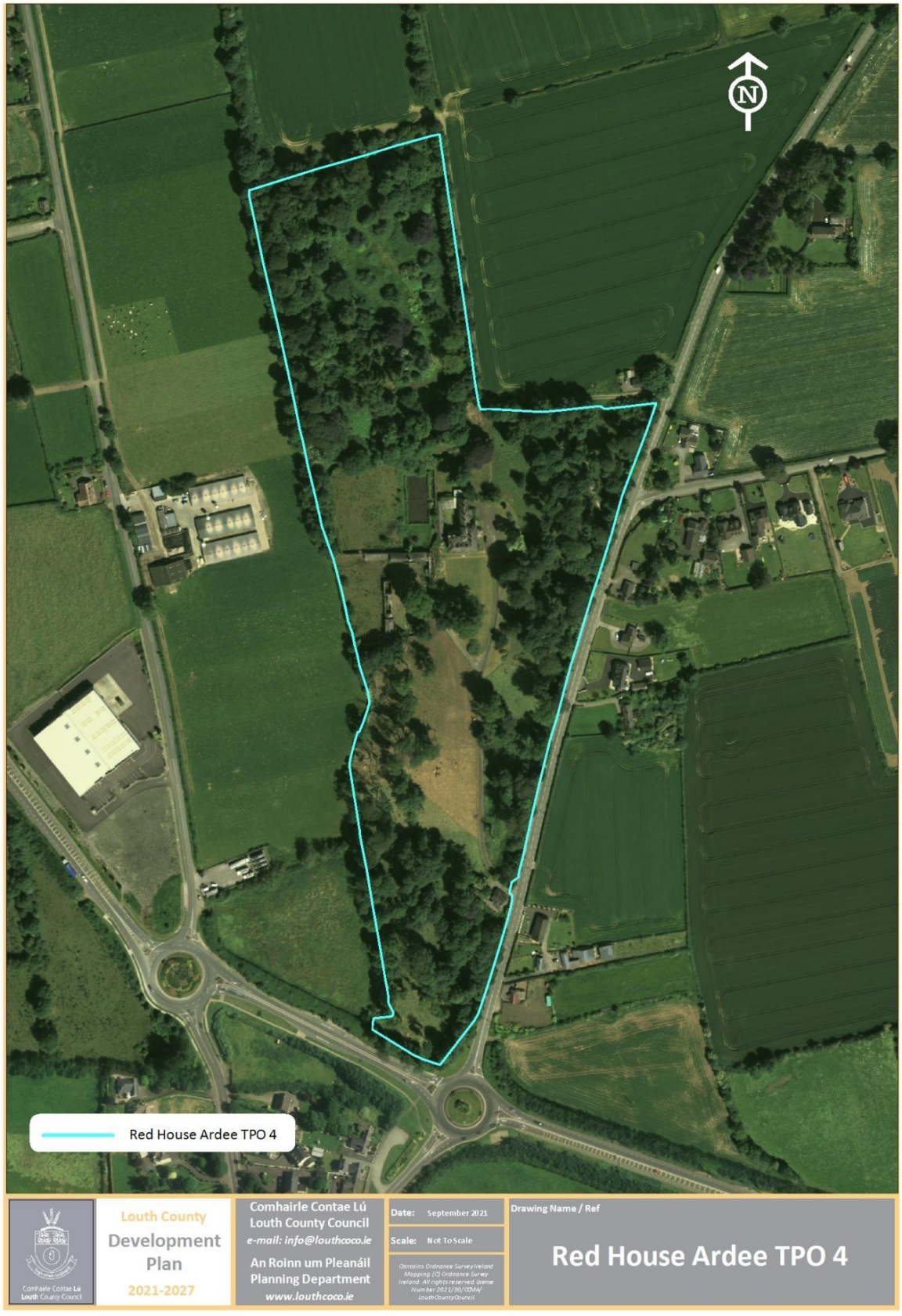
Map 8.6: TPO1 (Bayview House Drogheda)



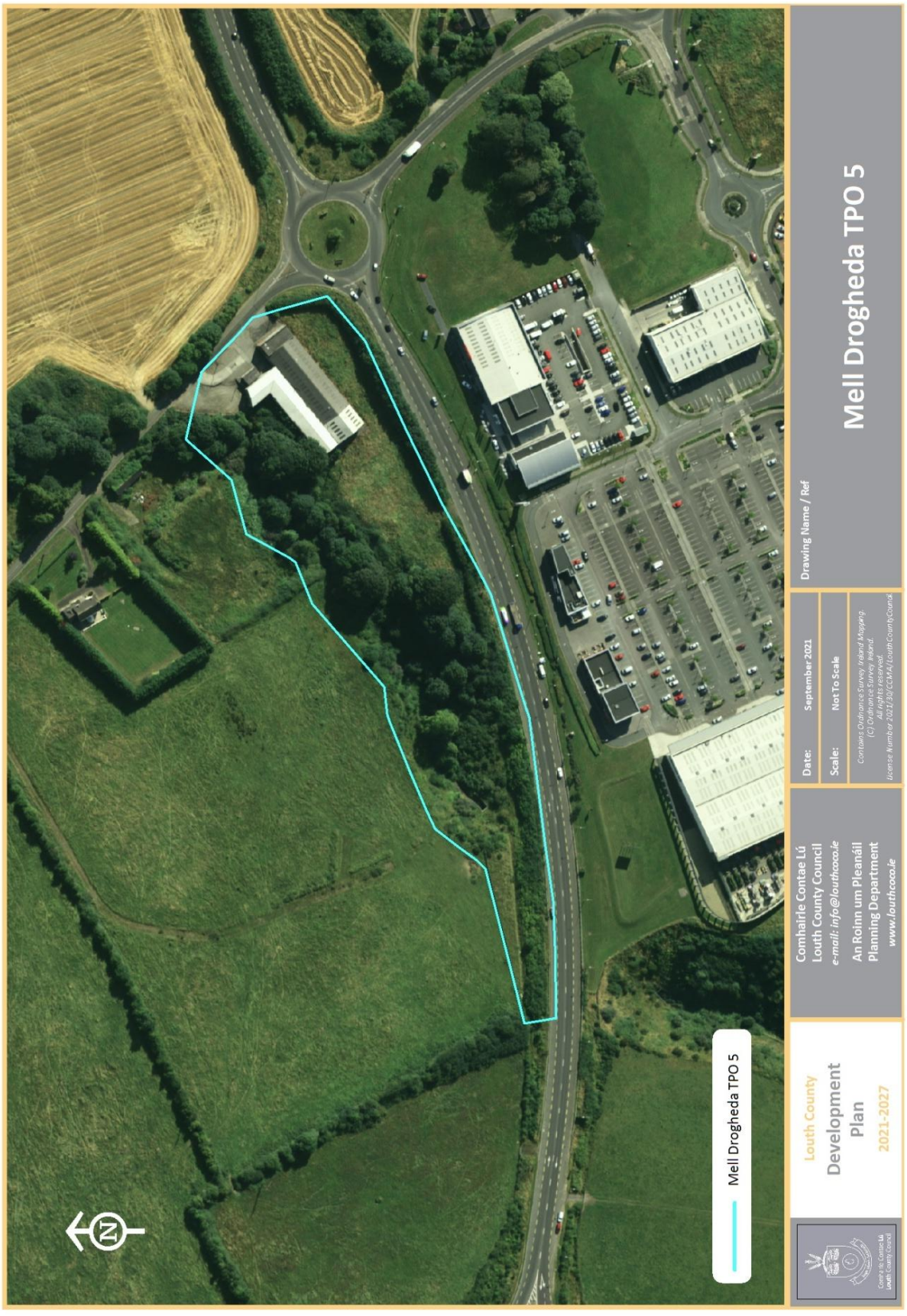
Map 8.7: TPO 2 (Fox Covert, Ardee) and TPO 3 (Ardee Golf Club)



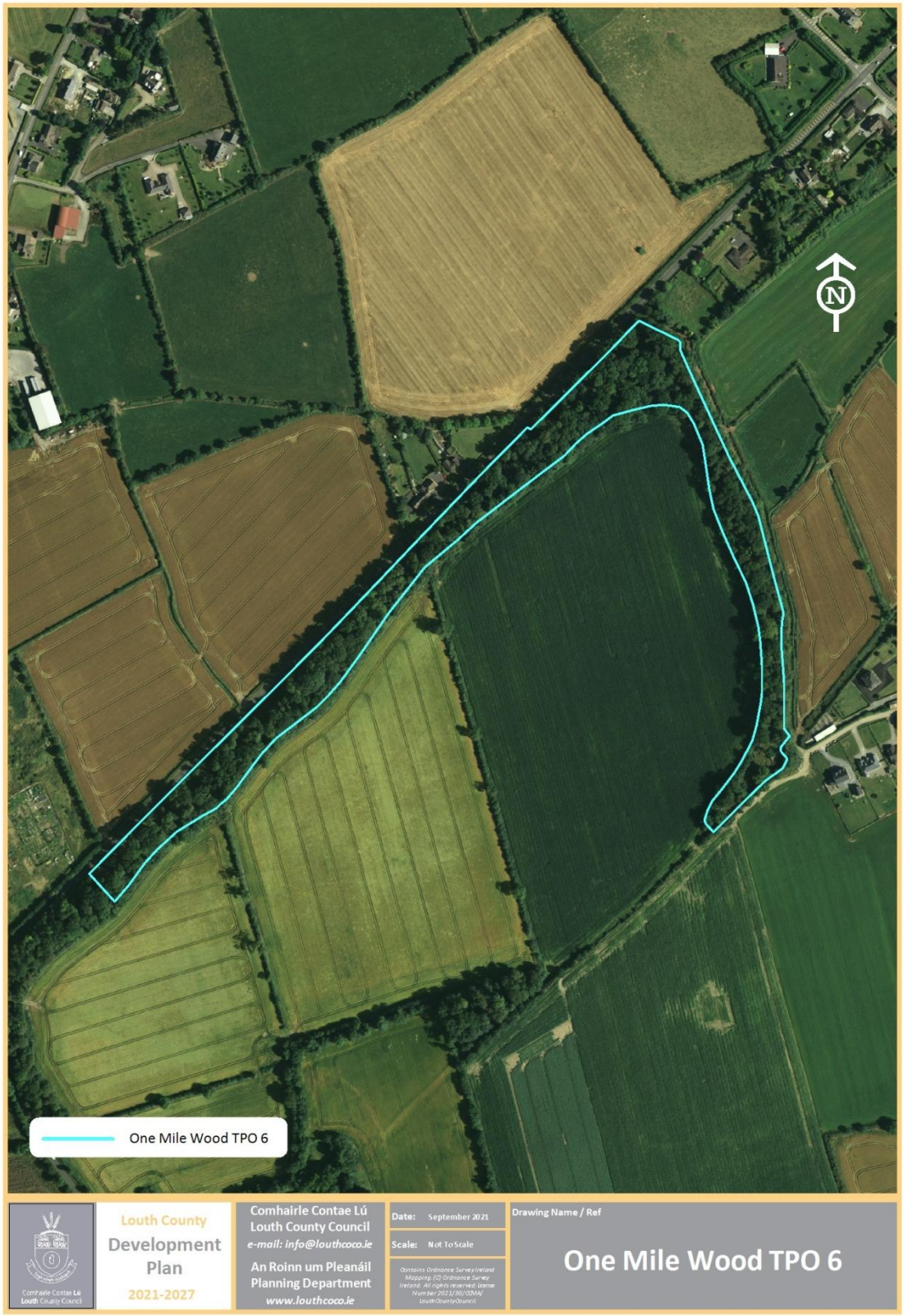
Map 8.8: TPO 4 (Red House, Ardee)



Map 8.9: TPO 5 (Mell, Drogheda)



Map 8.10: TPO 6 (One Mile Wood)



8.11.2 Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value

Having regard to the important role that trees and woodlands fulfil, the Council has identified and recorded trees and groups of trees considered to be of Special Amenity Value within the County. As such, and in recognition of the value of the trees, their conservation as part of any grant of planning permission will be required.

Any development permitted by the local authority which, in exceptional circumstances, permits the removal of trees or groups of trees shall contain a planning condition requiring the planting of replacement native, semi-mature trees at a ratio of ten new trees per single tree removed in the County and at a ratio of five new trees per single tree removed in Drogheda and Dundalk.

The Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value within Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee and the County have been identified in Tables 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 8.10 and illustrated on Maps 8.11, 8.12, 8.13 and 8.14 below. Tree surveys, for both Drogheda and Dundalk along with Guidelines for Tree Protection are detailed in Appendix 5 and Appendix 6 respectively, Volume 3.

Table 8.7: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in Drogheda

Reference No.	Location	Reference No.	Location
TWSAV1	Anneville Crescent	**TWSAV23**	Moneymore
TWSAV2	Ashfield	**TWSAV24**	Mill Lane
TWSAV3	Ballsgrove Hill	**TWSAV25**	Mount Sandford
TWSAV4	Broadmeadows	**TWSAV26**	North of Quarry
TWSAV5	Brookville	**TWSAV27**	Newfoundwell Road
TWSAV6	Bullys Acre	**TWSAV28**	Northstrand
TWSAV7	Boyne Valley Hotel	**TWSAV29**	Oaklawns
TWSAV8	Boyne View House	**TWSAV30**	Peters Hill
TWSAV9	Church Lane	**TWSAV31**	Poor House Lane 1
TWSAV10	College Rise	**TWSAV32**	Presbytery Poor House Lane
TWSAV11	Cromwell's Lane 1	**TWSAV33**	Ramparts Walk
TWSAV12	Dublin Road Railway Bridge	**TWSAV34**	Rugby Club
TWSAV13	Fisherman's Warf	**TWSAV35**	Sienna Convent
TWSAV14	Fountain Hill	**TWSAV36**	Stameen
TWSAV15	Glenmore Drive	**TWSAV37**	Stameen Roadside 1
TWSAV16	Greenhills College	**TWSAV38**	St. Dominick's Park
TWSAV17	Harmony Heights	**TWSAV39**	Mary Street –Gerrard's Church
TWSAV18	Hospital Dublin Road	**TWSAV40**	Waterunder Cottage
TWSAV19	Leonard's Cross	**TWSAV41**	Weirhope
TWSAV20	Marley's Lane	**TWSAV42**	Watery Hill
TWSAV21	Matsons Lodge	**TWSAV43**	Westcourt
TWSAV22	Marsh House Pub (former)	**TWSAV44**	Wheaton Hall

Map 8.11 Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in Drogheda

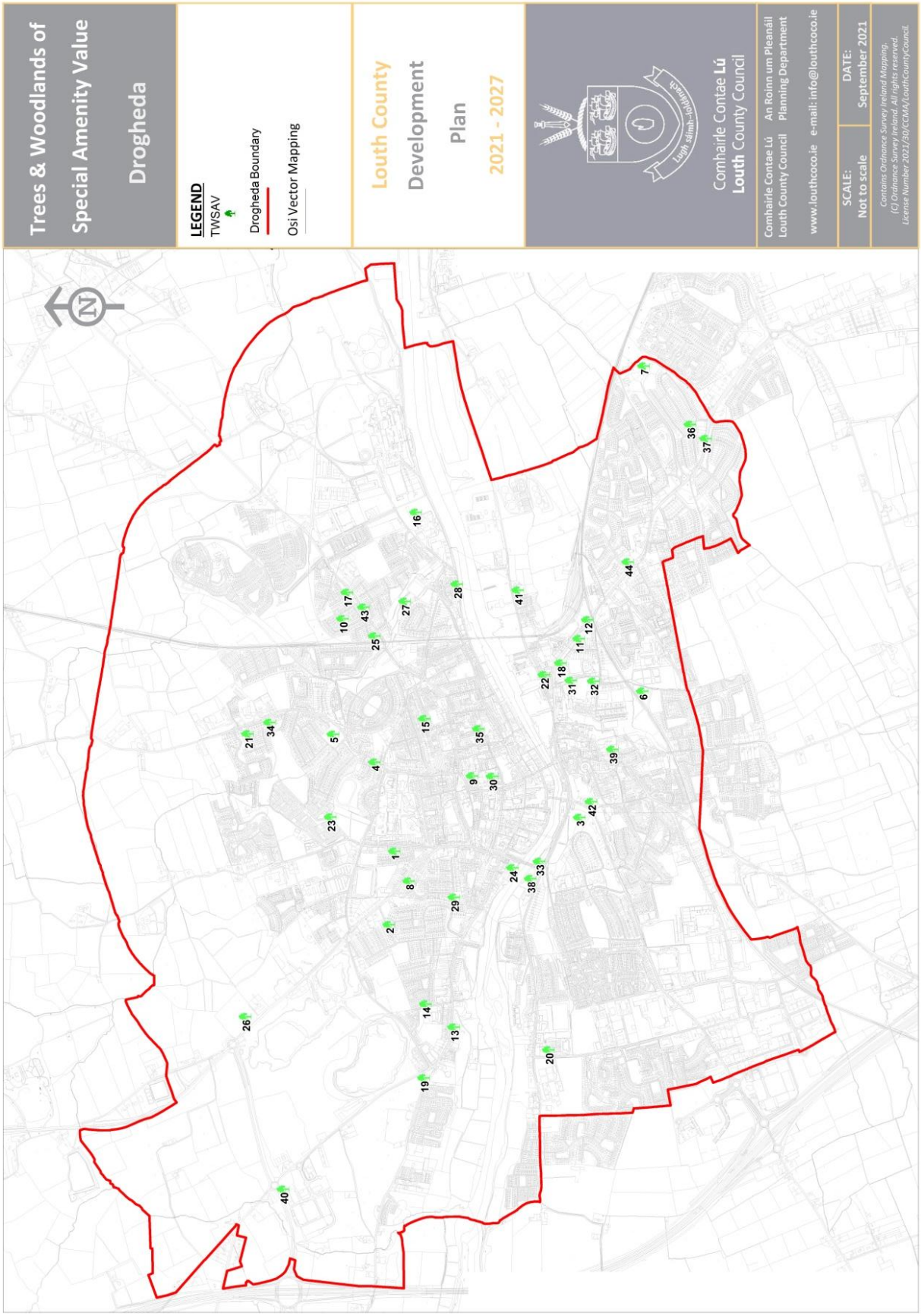


Table 8.8: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in Dundalk

Reference No.	Location	Reference No.	Location
TWSAV45	St. Helena's Park	**TWSAV67**	Dunmore/ESB , Avenue Road
TWSAV46	Marist Grounds, St. Mary's Road	**TWSAV68**	Ladywell Shrine, Dublin Road
TWSAV47	Derryhale Hotel, Carrick Road	**TWSAV69**	Opposite Ladywell Tce, Dublin Road
TWSAV48	Fairhill, Ardee Road	**TWSAV70**	Bayview House, Dublin Road
TWSAV49	Rath - Knockbridge Rd./ Ardee Road	**TWSAV71**	Muirhevna
TWSAV50	Lisnawully House, Carrick Road	**TWSAV72**	Grounds of DKIT, Dublin Road
TWSAV51	Brookfield, Ardee Road	**TWSAV73**	The Laurels
TWSAV52	Hilltop - Former St. Oliver's Hospital, Ardee Road	**TWSAV74**	Church of Ireland (Green Church) Church St.
TWSAV53	Mount Oliver Shrine, Ardee Road	**TWSAV75**	Carroll Village - Old De La Salle Field
TWSAV54	Carrick Road: Rucky Hill	**TWSAV76**	Long Walk
TWSAV55	Lisnawully, Mount Avenue	**TWSAV77**	Demesne
TWSAV56	Entrance to McArdles Brewery	**TWSAV78**	Park View
TWSAV57	The Crescent / Crescent Park	**TWSAV79**	Trees on Mount Avenue
TWSAV58	Grammar School, The Crescent	**TWSAV80**	De La Salle, Mill Road
TWSAV59	P.J. Carroll's, Dublin Road	**TWSAV81**	Fatima Church – Toberona – Rugby Club
TWSAV60	Hoey's Lane and District Park	**TWSAV82**	Grey Acre, Castleblaney Road
TWSAV61	Blackrock Road	**TWSAV83**	Castletown Cemetery
TWSAV62	St. Malachy's School, Anne St.	**TWSAV84**	St. Louis Convent / Castletown Castle
TWSAV63	Ice House Hill and surrounds	**TWSAV85**	The Paddock, Mount Avenue
TWSAV64	Brook Street/Ardee Terrace	**TWSAV86**	Farndreg Estate
TWSAV65	Mounthamilton House, Carrick Road	**TWSAV87**	Castle Park
TWSAV66	New Forest/Clarkes Forest	**TWSAV88**	Newry Road: Red Cow

Reference No.	Location	Reference No.	Location
TWSAV89	Dowdallshill, Newry Road	**TWSAV99**	Catholic Church, Blackrock
TWSAV90	Motte and Bailey Doylesfort Road / Brickfields / Newry Rd.	**TWSAV100**	Haggardstown House / Bellfield, Dublin Road
TWSAV91	Riverside Crescent	**TWSAV101**	Church Road, Haggardstown
TWSAV92	Fairgreen	**TWSAV102**	Marl House, Church Road, Haggardstown
TWSAV93	Point Road	**TWSAV103**	Seafield House, Seafield Road
TWSAV94	The junction of Bothar Maol and the Blackrock Road	**TWSAV104**	East Side of Seafield Road
TWSAV95	Northern Boundary of Bunker Lodge, Sandymount	**TWSAV105**	Fairy Mount, Seafield Road
TWSAV96	Field House, Sandymount	**TWSAV106**	Cockle Hill Road
TWSAV97	Sandymount /Rockmount	**TWSAV107**	Cú Chulainn Castle (Castletown Mount)
TWSAV98	The Crescent		

Map 8.12: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in Dundalk

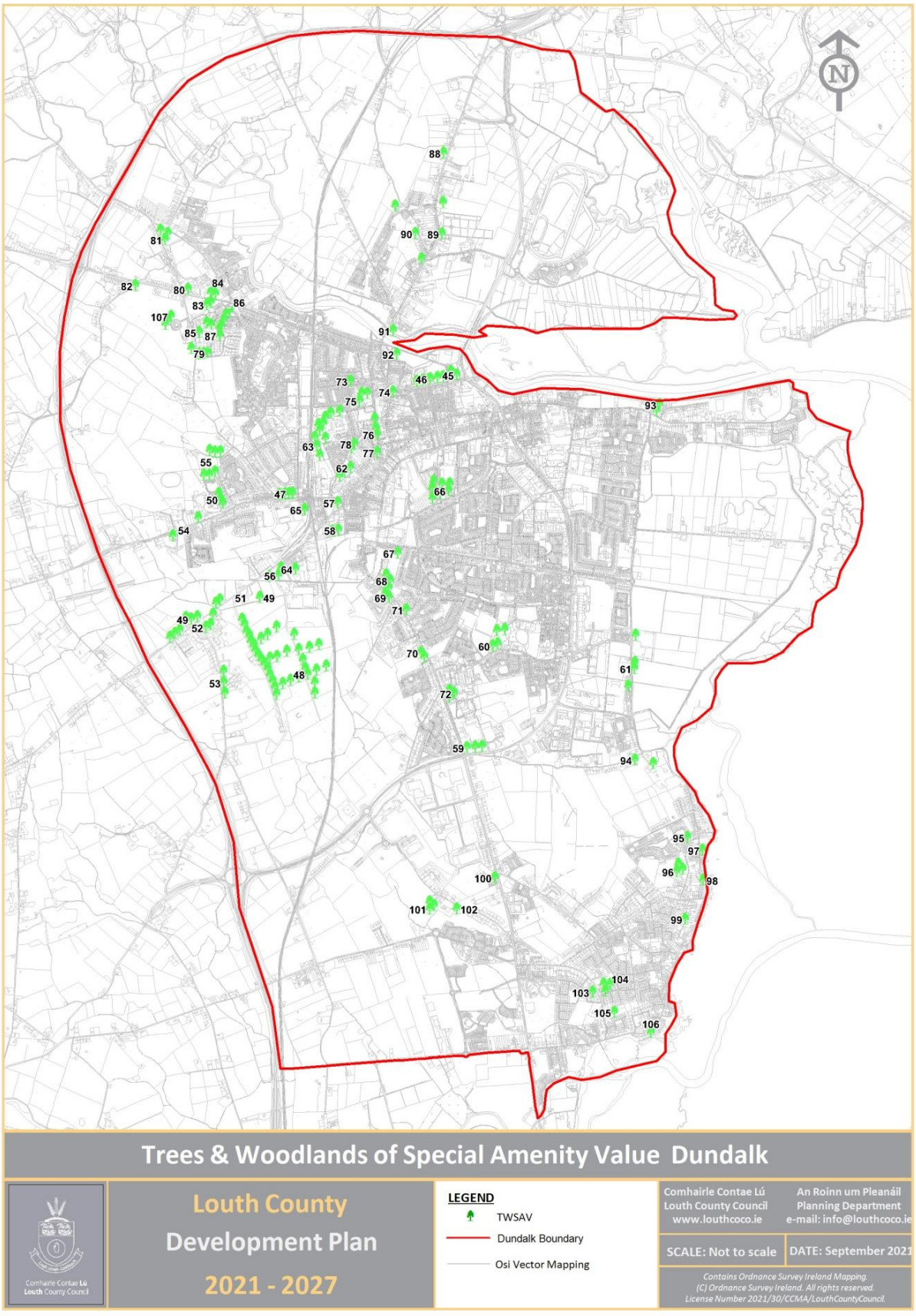


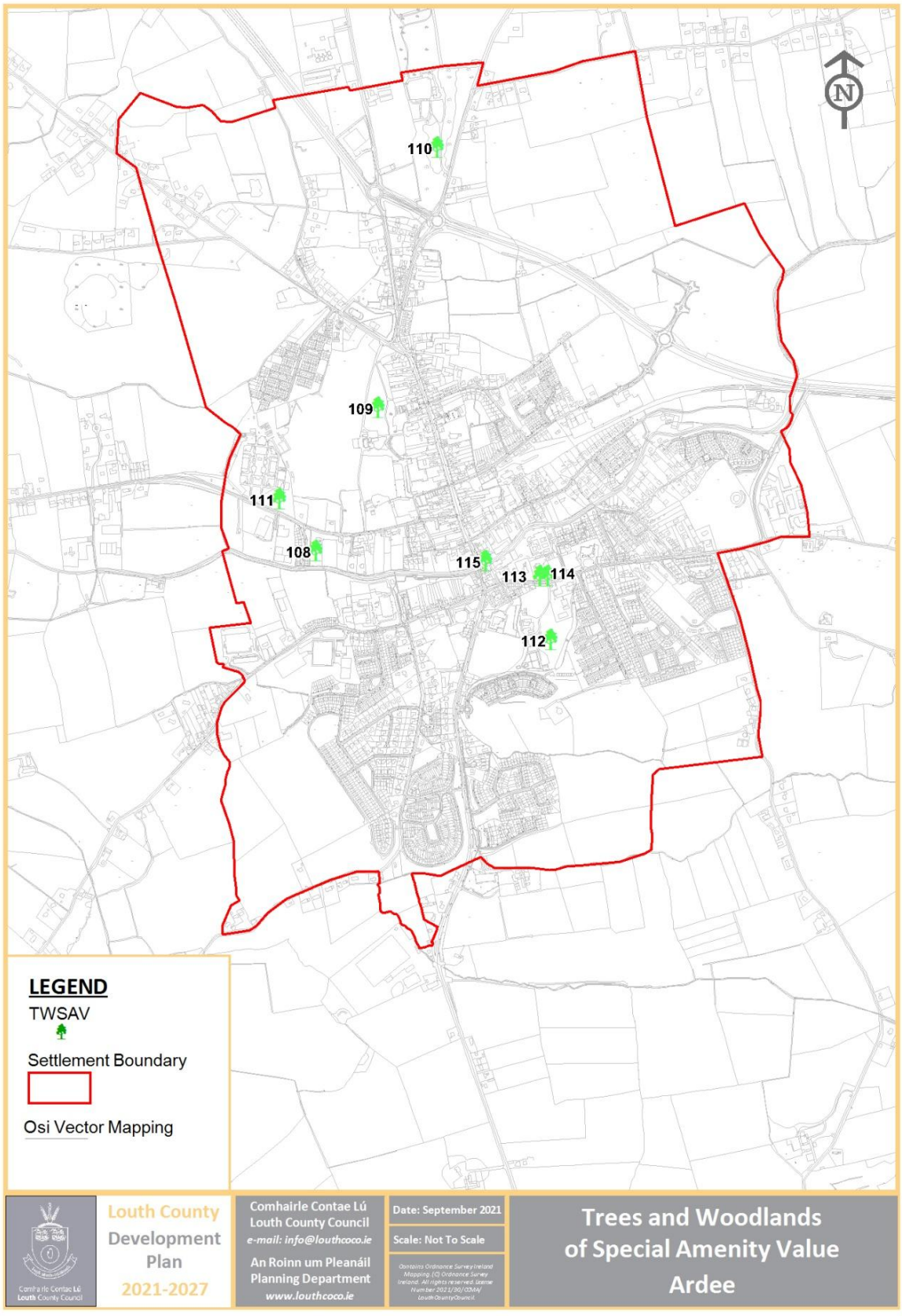
Table 8.9: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in Ardee

Reference No.	Location	Reference No.	Location
TWSAV108	The Rectory, Ardee	**TWSAV112**	Convent of Mercy, Hale Street
TWSAV109	St. Joseph's, Ardee	**TWSAV113**	Moorehall (De la Salle Monastery, Hale St.)
TWSAV110	Red House Ardee	**TWSAV114**	Parochial House (Hale St.)
TWSAV111	St. Bridget's, Kells Road	**TWSAV115**	The Island, Bridge Street

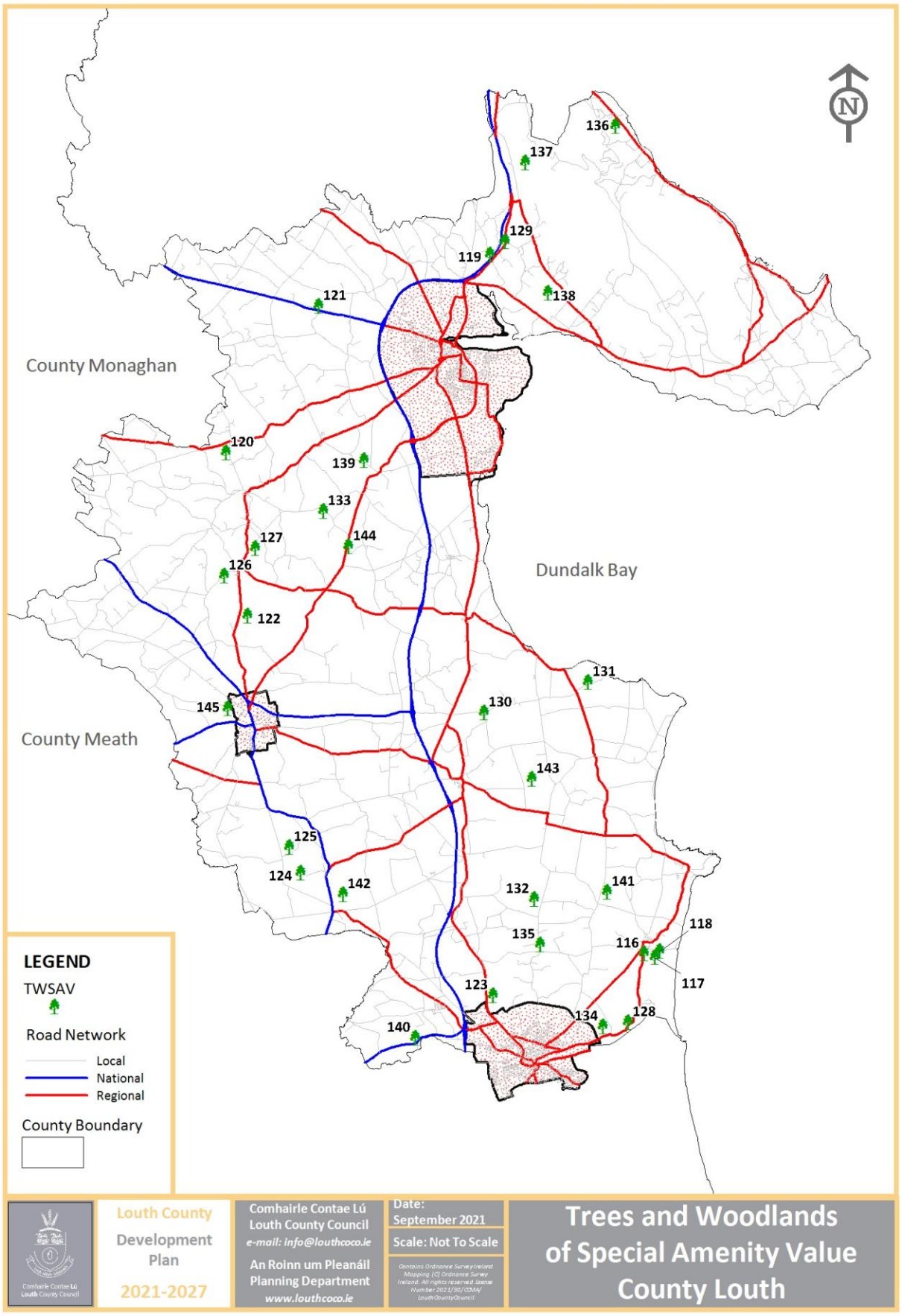
Table 8.10: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in County Louth

Reference No.	Location	Reference No.	Location
TWSAV116	Termonfeckin Village	**TWSAV131**	Salterstown
TWSAV117	Newtown House (An Grianán)	**TWSAV132**	Piperstown House
TWSAV118	Trees East Of Termonfeckin	**TWSAV133**	Corderry House, Readypenny
TWSAV119	N1 North of Greenore Junction (Junction 18)	**TWSAV134**	Beaulieu
TWSAV120	Monvallet East of ESB station	**TWSAV135**	Ballymakenny Church
TWSAV121	Church at Milltown	**TWSAV136**	Woodlands at Omeath Park
TWSAV122	Lisrenny House, Tallanstown	**TWSAV137**	Ravensdale Plantation
TWSAV123	South of Killineer	**TWSAV138**	Trumpet Hill
TWSAV124	North of Mount Oriel	**TWSAV139**	Stephenstown Pond
TWSAV125	Mullaghesh, Collon	**TWSAV140**	Townley Hall / King Williams Glen
TWSAV126	Louth Hall	**TWSAV141**	Blackhall Woods
TWSAV127	Rathbrist House	**TWSAV142**	Mellifont Abbey Woods
TWSAV128	Drogheda - Baltray Road	**TWSAV143**	Barmeath Woods
TWSAV129	N1 at Aghnaskeagh	**TWSAV144**	Darver Castle Woods
TWSAV130	Drumcar	**TWSAV145**	Fox Covert, Ardee

Map 8.13: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in Ardee



Map 8.14: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in County Louth



8.11.3 Champion Trees of Louth

The Tree Council of Ireland in conjunction with the Irish Tree Society initiated the Tree Register of Ireland (TROI) project with the aim of compiling a database of trees in Ireland. The publication of *'Champion Trees – A Selection of Irelands Great Trees'* identified twenty one Champion Trees in Louth.

A 'champion tree' is the tallest, oldest or enormous example of its species or kind in a given region. These trees are of significant environmental value to the County and should be protected from development where necessary. Champion Trees located in County Louth are as identified in Table 8.11.

Table 8.11: Champion Trees, County Louth

Champion Trees – County Louth		
Species	**Location**	**Dimensions**
Cedrus libani (Cedar of Lebanon)	Red House, Ardee	7.41 @ 1.5 m × 36 m
Fagus sylvatica *- Atropurpurea* (Copper Beech)	Red House, Ardee	4.91 @ 1.3 m × 29.5 m
Juglans regia (Walnut)	Red House, Ardee	4.50 @ 0.6 m × 22 m
Abies procera Glauca *Group* (Noble Fir)	Red House, Ardee	4.48 @ 1.5 m × 39 m
Liriodendron tulipifera (Tulip Tree)	Red House, Ardee	4.46 @ 1.5 m × 23 m
Cedrus deodara (Deodar Cedar)	Red House, Ardee	.81 @ 1.5 m × 31.3 m
Ilex aquifolium (Holly)	Red House, Ardee	31 @ 1.5 m × 21.3 m
Ulmus minorvar.minor *(Elm)*	The Rectory Ardee	3.53x15.7m – 2nd tallest of its kind in Ireland
Ulmus minor var.minor	The Rectory Ardee	2.98 x 22m
Cryptomeria japonica *Elegans Group* (Japanese Red Cedar)	Castlebellingham	3.17 @ 0.8 m × 17.7 m
Quercus Robur 'Pendula'	Beaulieu, Drogheda	3.35 x 42.5m
Ilex aquifolium *(Holly)*	Kilineer House, Drogheda	1.94 x 16.5m
Juglans regia *(Walnut)*	Clermont Park, Dundalk	3.49 @1.4 x 17.5m
Ilex aquifolium 'Albomarginata' *(Holly)*	Clermount Park, Dundalk	2.17@ 1 x 15.5m
Castanea Sativa *(Sweet/Spanish Chestnut)*	Barmeath Castle, Dunleer	5.63 x 21m

Champion Trees – County Louth		
Species	**Location**	**Dimensions**
***Abies alba* (Silver Fir)**	Barmeath Castle, Dunleer	3.38x42.5m
***Acer Pseudoplatanus* (Sycamore)**	Knockabbey	6.43x24m
***Liriodendron tulipfera* (Tulip Tree)**	Knockabbey	6.25x18m
***Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Wellingtonia Giant Sequoia)**	Knockabbey	6.05 x19.5m
***Taxus baccata* (Yew)**	Knockabbey	5.42x13.5m
***Robinia pseudoacacia* (Locust Tree/False Acacia)**	Knockabbey	2.96x17m

Policy Objective	
NBG 29	To protect trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and seek to designate additional Tree Preservations Orders (TPO), where appropriate.

Policy Objective	
NBG 30	To protect trees and woodlands of special amenity value. Review and where appropriate make Tree Preservation Order(s) in relation to trees of special amenity value.

Policy Objective	
NBG 31	Where in exceptional circumstances, trees and or hedgerows are required to be removed in order to facilitate development, this shall be done outside nesting season and there shall be a requirement that each tree felled is replaced at a ratio of 10:1 with native species and each hedgerow removed is to be replaced with a native species. In Drogheda and Dundalk, replacement trees will be required at a ratio of 5:1 where the removal of trees is required in order to facilitate development.

Policy Objective	
NBG 32	To investigate the identification and addition of suitable trees and woodlands of special amenity value for inclusion in Tables 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 8.10 where appropriate, during the lifetime of the Plan.

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

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

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

8.12 ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES

County Louth has a number of important areas of outstanding beauty and high amenity value in addition to views and prospects that require protection.



8.12.1 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Within County Louth, two distinct areas were identified as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) by reason of their unspoiled natural landscape, special character and spectacular scenic quality. As both of these areas are extremely sensitive environments, they have been afforded a high degree of protection in the Plan to preserve their uniqueness and amenity value for the benefit and enjoyment of existing and future generations. The two areas identified as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are listed in Table 8.12 and illustrated on Map 8.15.

Table 8.12: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Reference No.	Location
AONB 1	Carlingford and Feede Mountains
AONB 2	Clogherhead and Port Oriel

The larger of the two areas is found in the north of the County and encompasses the Carlingford and Feede Mountains. Slieve Foye at 588m O.D and Black Mountain at 508m O.D are the highest points in the range. Much of the area remains in a semi-natural condition, used for low intensity sheep and horse grazing and covered in gorse, bracken and heather.

Parts of this area are designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) under European and Irish legislation.

Spectacular views are available from a number of vantage points over Carlingford Lough to the Mourne Mountains AONB in County Down and the Ring of Gullion AONB in County Armagh and over Dundalk Bay to central and south County Louth.

The second AONB is located at Clogherhead and encompasses Port Oriel and the surrounding headland. Although less rugged and remote than the Carlingford and Feede Mountains, this area nevertheless, contains equally spectacular views eastwards to the Irish Sea, southwards towards the Boyne Estuary and County Meath and northwards over Dundalk Bay to the Carlingford and Mourne Mountains. Most of the headland is also designated as a SAC, much of which, is in the ownership of Louth County Council, and which is managed as a de facto Nature Reserve, while also allowing recreational access by the public.

8.12.2 Areas of High Scenic Quality

The Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ), whilst not quite possessing the exceptional natural beauty and landscape quality of the AONB, nevertheless add significantly to the stock of natural scenic landscapes within the County. They are listed in Table 8.13 and illustrated on Map 8.15.

All of the AHSQ are currently farmed, although the quality of the land for farming purposes varies considerably from area to area. The Council considers it important that AHSQ are protected from excessive development, particularly from inappropriate, one-off, urban-generated housing, in order to preserve their unspoiled rural landscapes.

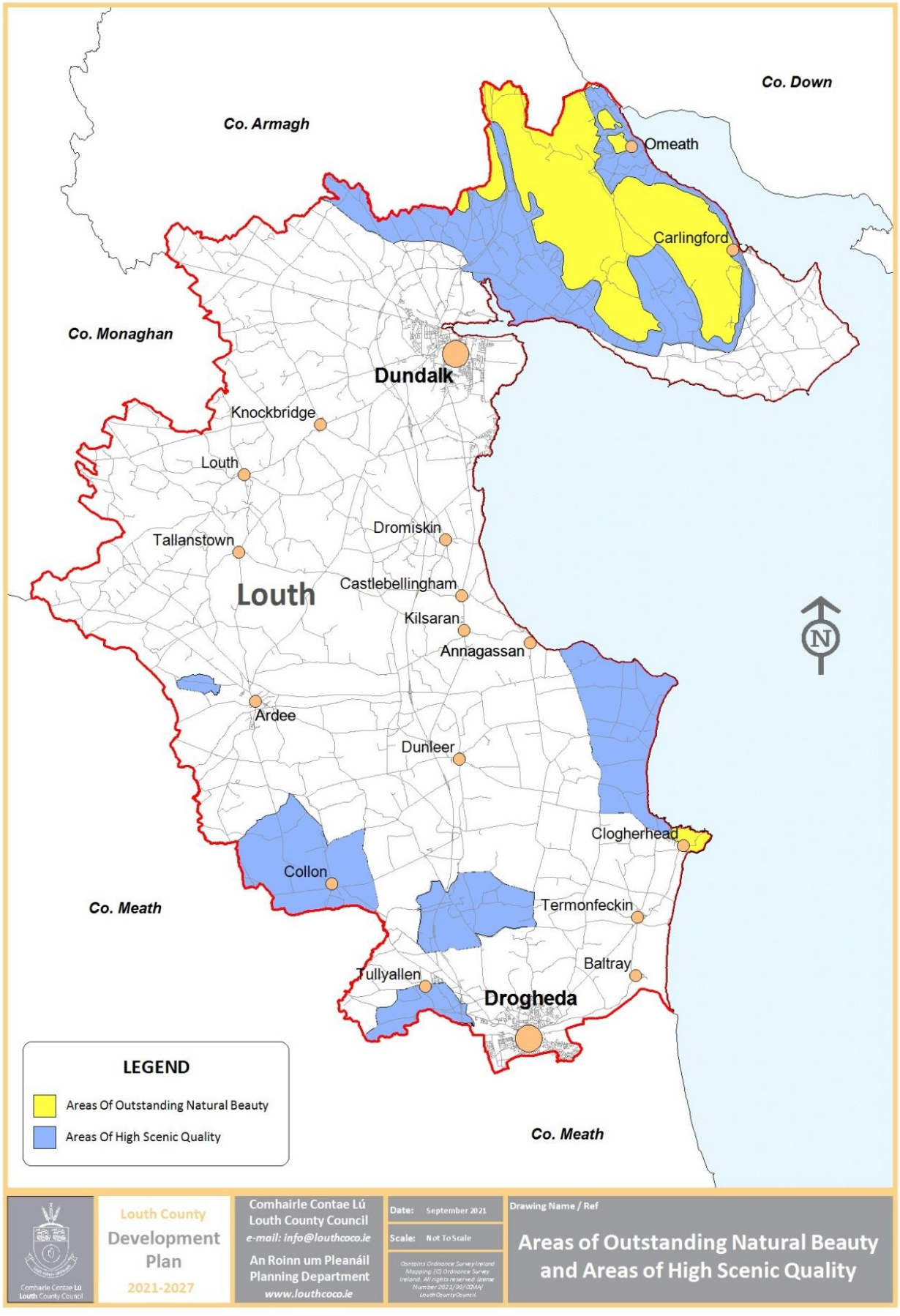
Table 8.13: Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ)

Reference No.	Location
AHSQ 1	Feede Mountains and Cooley Area
AHSQ 2	Monasterboice
AHSQ 3	Boyne Valley / King Williams Glen
AHSQ 4	Collon Uplands
AHSQ 5	Dunany
AHSQ 6	Ardee bog





Map 8.15 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Scenic Quality



8.12.3 Views and Prospects of Special Amenity Value

Louth has many areas of high quality landscape particularly along the coast, the river valleys and its upland areas. As a result, the County boasts many vantage points from which views and prospects of great natural beauty are available. The scenery and landscapes of the County are of enormous amenity value to tourists and residents alike, contributing to quality of life and constituting a valuable economic asset. The protection of this asset is therefore of importance in developing the potential of the County.

The challenge is to manage the landscape so any change is positive in its effects thereby ensuring that the landscape is protected.

There is a need therefore to preserve views and prospects for the enjoyment of future generations.

It is not proposed that this should prohibit development, but rather, where development is permitted that it should not hinder or obstruct these views and prospects and be designed and located to minimise impact. A list of the protected Views and Prospects in County Louth, Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee, in addition to those included in Carlingford, Clogherhead and Tullyallen are listed in Tables 8.14, 8.15, 8.16 , 8.17 and 8.18 and illustrated on Maps 8.16, 8.17, 8.18 and 8.19. Mapped Views and Prospects for Carlingford, Clogherhead and Tullyallen are available on their respective Composite Maps in Volume 2. Comprehensive details of the protected Views and Prospects in the County including Level 3 Settlements are listed in Appendix 7, Volume 3.

Table 8.14: Views and Prospects, County Louth

Reference No.	Location
VP 1	Drummullagh – view towards Narrow Water
VP 2	Clermontpass Bridge
VP 3	Clermont Cairn RTE Mast
VP 4	Windy gap
VP 5	Carlingford Lough
VP 6	Slieve Foye
VP 7	Spelickanee
VP 8	Glenmore – Mountains and Valley
VP 9	Barnavave and Carlingford Mountain
VP 10	Jenkinstown Hill
VP 11	Jenkinstown
VP 12	Ballymakellett
VP 13	Faughart Hill
VP 14	Dungooly Crossroads
VP 15	Views of Castle Roche
VP 16	Hackballscross – views of mountains towards Forkhill
VP 17	Killin Golf Course - views of mountains towards Forkhill

Reference No.	Location
VP 18	Dromiskin - sea views across to Dundalk, Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 19	North of Annagassan - sea views across to Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 20	Salterstown - sea views across to Dundalk Bay towards Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 21	Corstown - sea views across to Dundalk Bay towards Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 22	Lurganboy - sea views across to Dundalk Bay towards Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 23	Callystown to Clogherhead
VP 24	Dardisrath towards coast and Clogherhead
VP 25	Brownstown southwards over AHSQ towards Drogheda
VP 26	Newtown Monasterboice towards Monasterboice Tower
VP 27	Townley Hall Nature Walk view of Battle of the Boyne site
VP 28	Drybridge Escarpment view of Battle of the Boyne Site
VP 29	Waterunder Plateau overview of Battle of the Boyne Site (Williamite Army)
VP 30	Mount Oriel
VP 31	N2 Funshog
VP 32	Millockstown
VP 33	Townparks
VP 34	Anaglog

Table 8.15: Views and Prospects, Dundalk

View	Location
VP 35	Views of the town, Dundalk Bay and towards Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 36	Views northward on the Point Road between the Coe's Road and Soldiers Point
VP 37	Views from Castletown Mount
VP 38	Views of the town from the Ardee Road
VP 39	Views of the town from Bothar Blinne, Ard Easmuinn
VP 40	Views north to the Cooley Mountains and south over the town from the former Dundalk-Greenore railway line
VP 41	Views north east and south from Soldier's Point and views of the Cooley Mountains
VP 42	Views of the town, Dundalk Bay and Cooley Mountains from the Navvy Bank – Shore Road
VP 43	Views from lands east of the racecourse
VP 44	Views of Dundalk Bay and the Cooley Mountains from the Coast Road between McGuigan's Rock and Dundalk Town Council's Boundary
VP 45	Views of Dundalk Bay and Cooley Mountains from the Crescent to Main Street
VP 46	Views out to sea from the Cockle Hill Road
VP 47	Views of the Cooley Mountains from the car park at St. Fursey's Church, Haggardstown
VP 48	Views of the Cooley Mountains from St. Mary's Road and junction with Inner Relief Road

Table 8.16: Views and Prospects Drogheda

View	Location
VP 49	Views of the town from Millmount
VP 50	Views of the town from Ballsgrove
VP 51	Views of Millmount from the West
VP 52	Views of Millmount looking southward from the Town Centre
VP 53	Views of the Boyne and the Loughboy Callows from Loughboy
VP 54	Views of the Boyne East and West from vehicular and pedestrian bridges
VP 55	Views of the town from the Rathmullen Road
VP 56	Views of Millmount and the Presbytery from Donor's Green
VP 57	Views of the railway viaduct from the town centre, the bridges along the Boyne and the Termonfeckin Road from the west

Note: VP29 on map – refer to Table 8.14

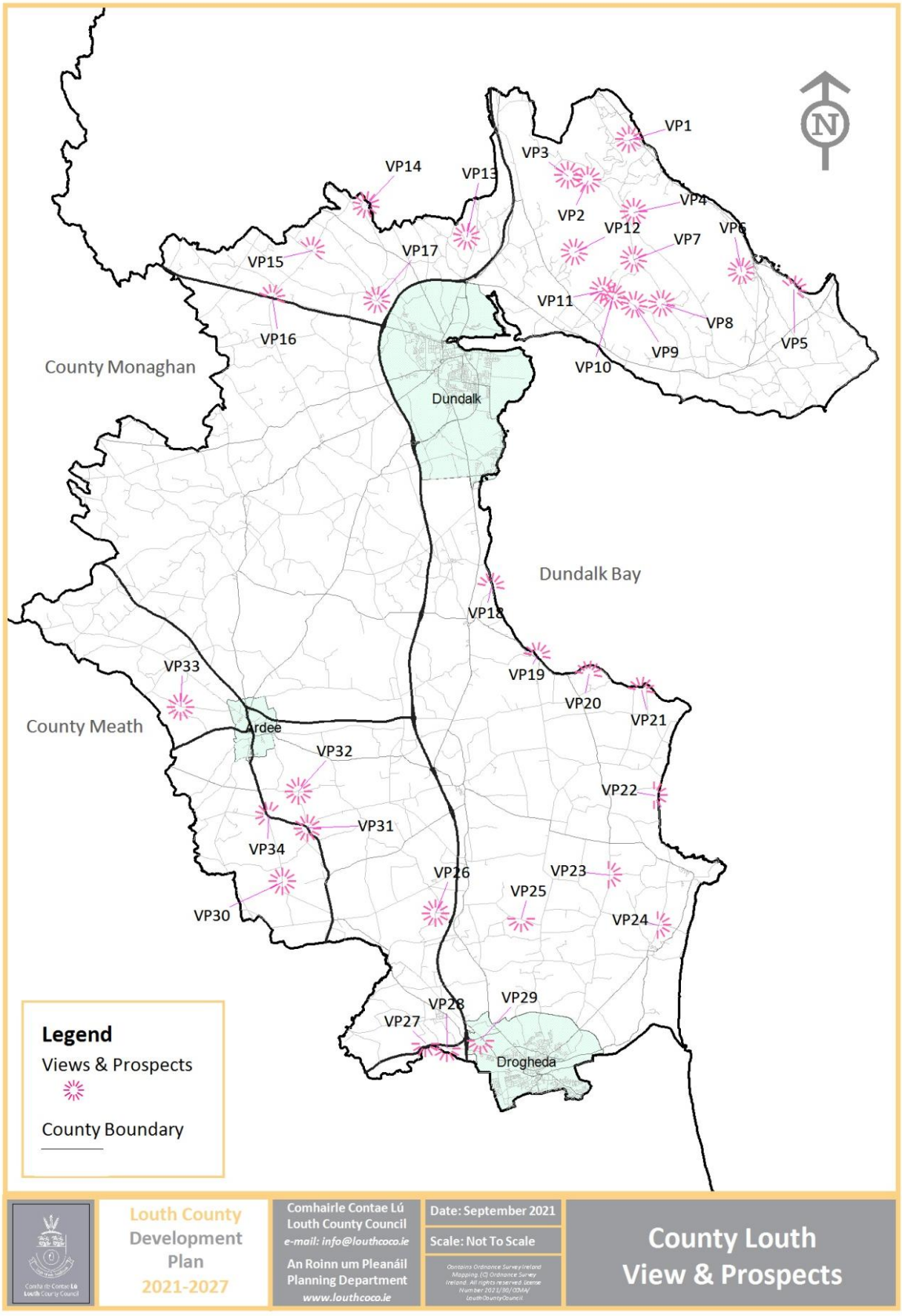
Table 8.17: Views and Prospects in Ardee

Reference No.	Location
VP 58	Mulladrillen Hill and Mullaghash from the Town Centre
VP 59	Ardee Castle
VP 60	Castleguard Motte

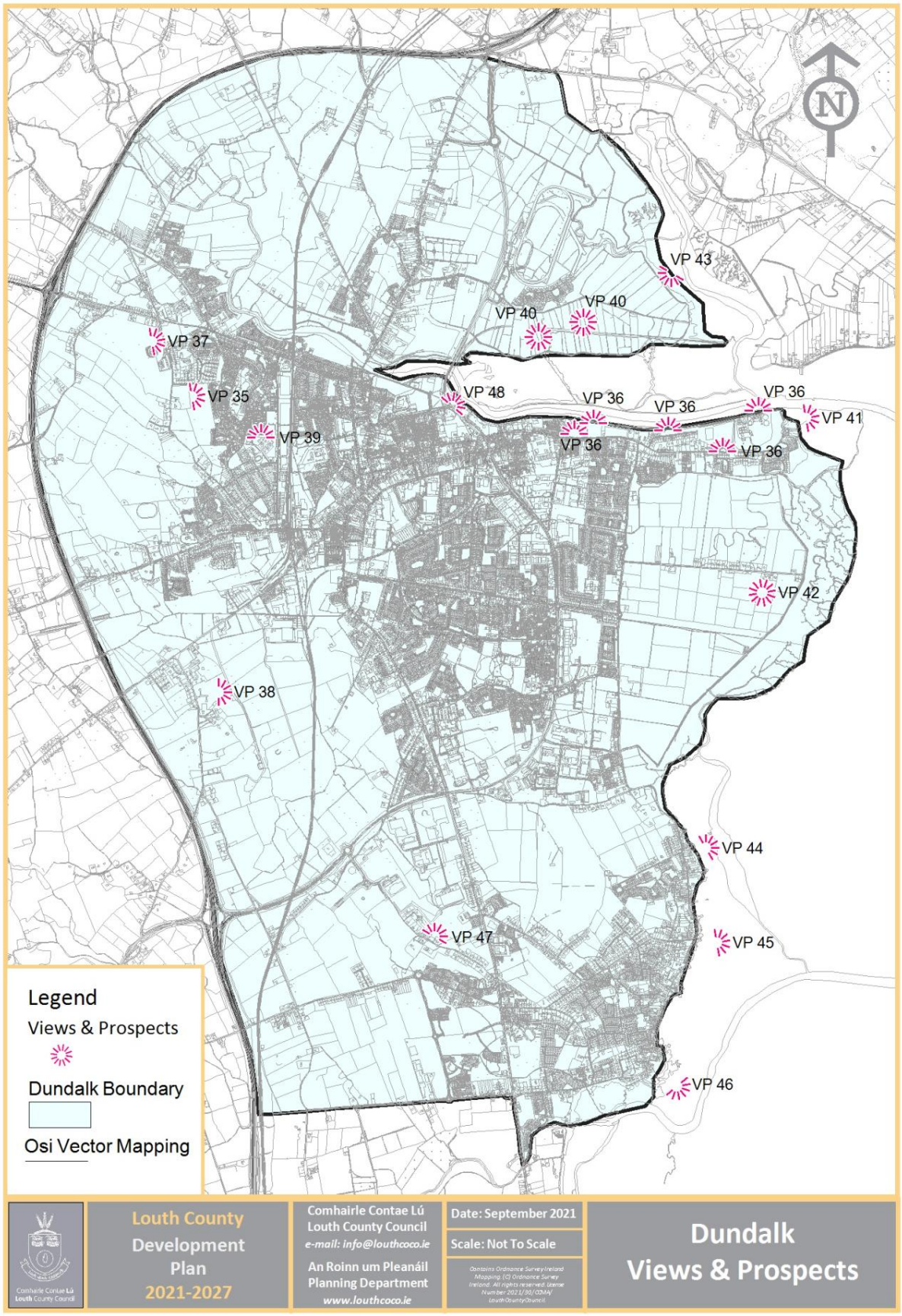
Table 8.18: Views and Prospects in Level 3 Settlements

Reference No.	Location
VP 61	King John's Castle, Carlingford
VP 62	Taaffe's Castle, Carlingford
VP 63	Holy Trinity Church, Carlingford Heritage Centre
VP 64	Dominican Friary, Carlingford
VP 65	Coast and Harbour, Carlingford
VP 66	Clogherhead Harbour
VP67	Old Church Lane, In front of Tullyallen Graveyard
VP68	Between 2 houses along the east of Old Church Lane, Tullyallen

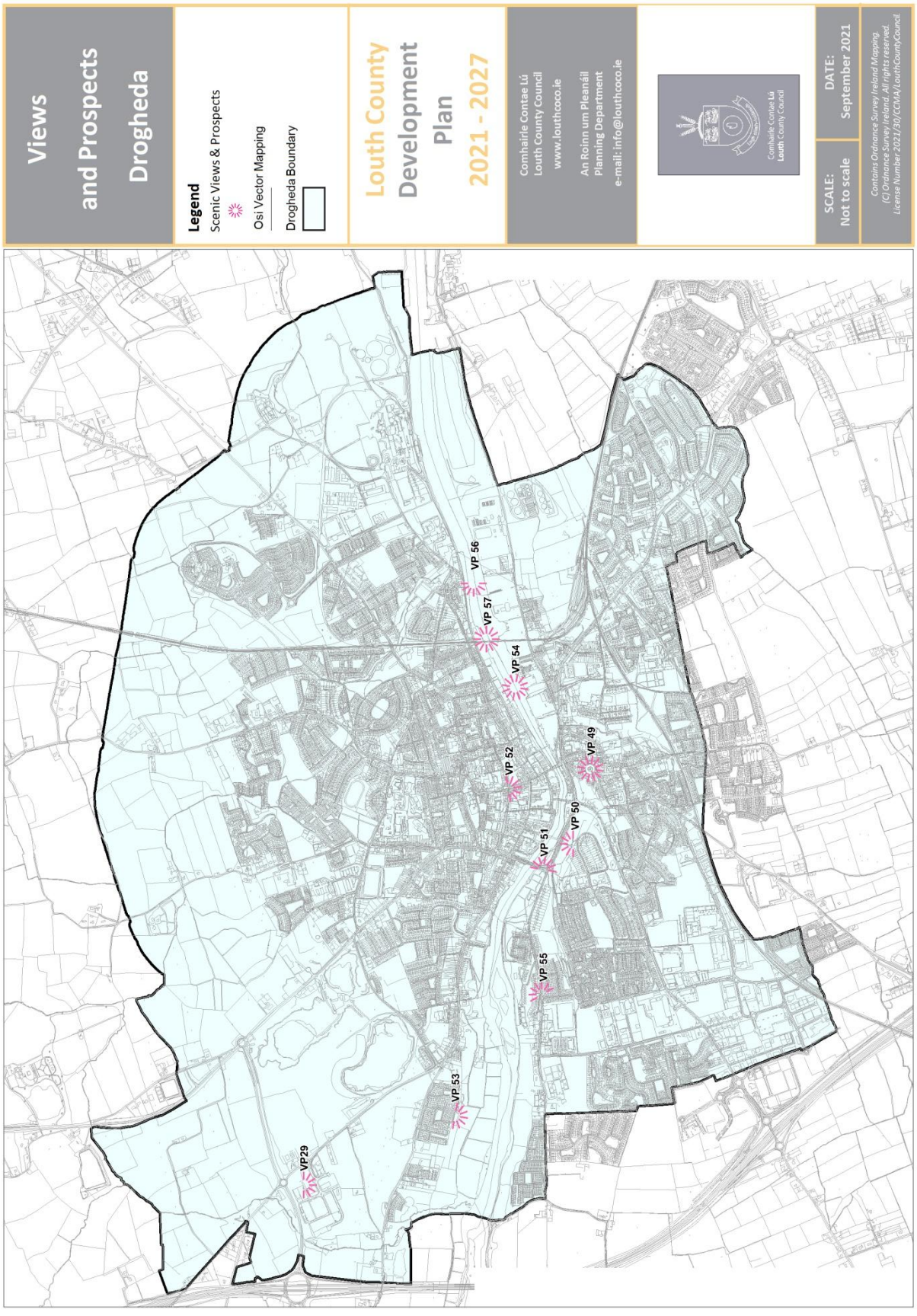
Map 8.16: Views and Prospects, County Louth



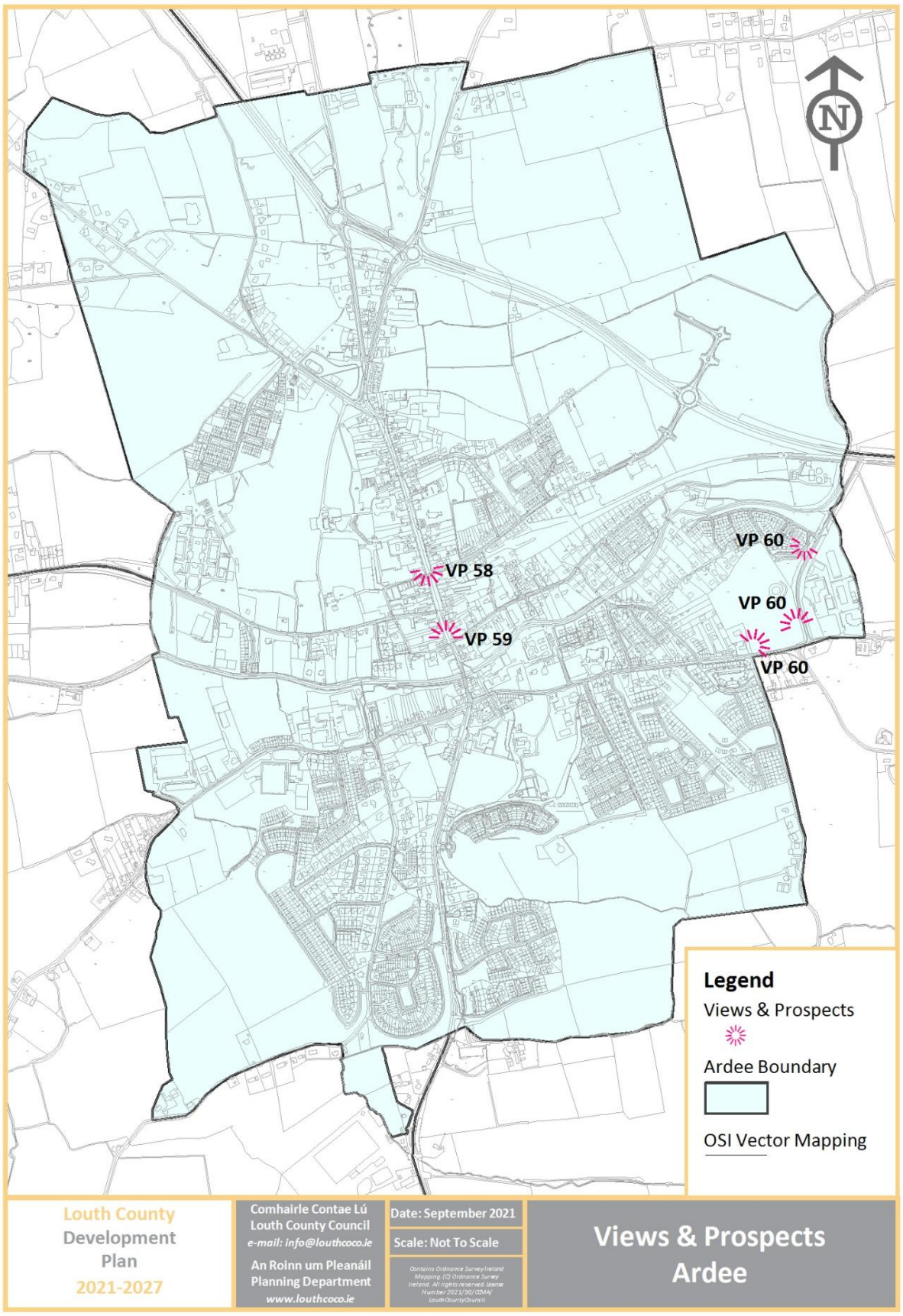
Map 8.17: Views and Prospects, Dundalk



Map 8.18: Views and Prospects, Drogheda



Map 8.19: Views and Prospects, Ardee



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

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

Policy Objective	
NBG 38	Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views and prospects listed in Tables 8.14 – 8.18 of this Plan that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape, from inappropriate development.

Policy Objective	
NBG 39	To improve, where necessary, public access to viewing points, subject to availability of resources.

8.13 SCENIC ROUTES

Louth is fortunate to have many areas of high quality landscape especially along the coast, upland areas and river valleys reflected in the aforementioned Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Areas of High Scenic Quality and Views and Prospects. In association with these high quality, natural landscapes a series of important Scenic Routes have been identified which are of an amenity and tourism value, and which require protection.

Applications for development must carefully consider the siting, design and landscaping of the proposed development to ensure that there are no significant alterations to the character of the area. Any development proposals, which would interfere with or adversely affect these Scenic Routes, will not be permitted.

The Scenic Routes within County Louth are identified in Table 8.19 and illustrated on Map 8.20.

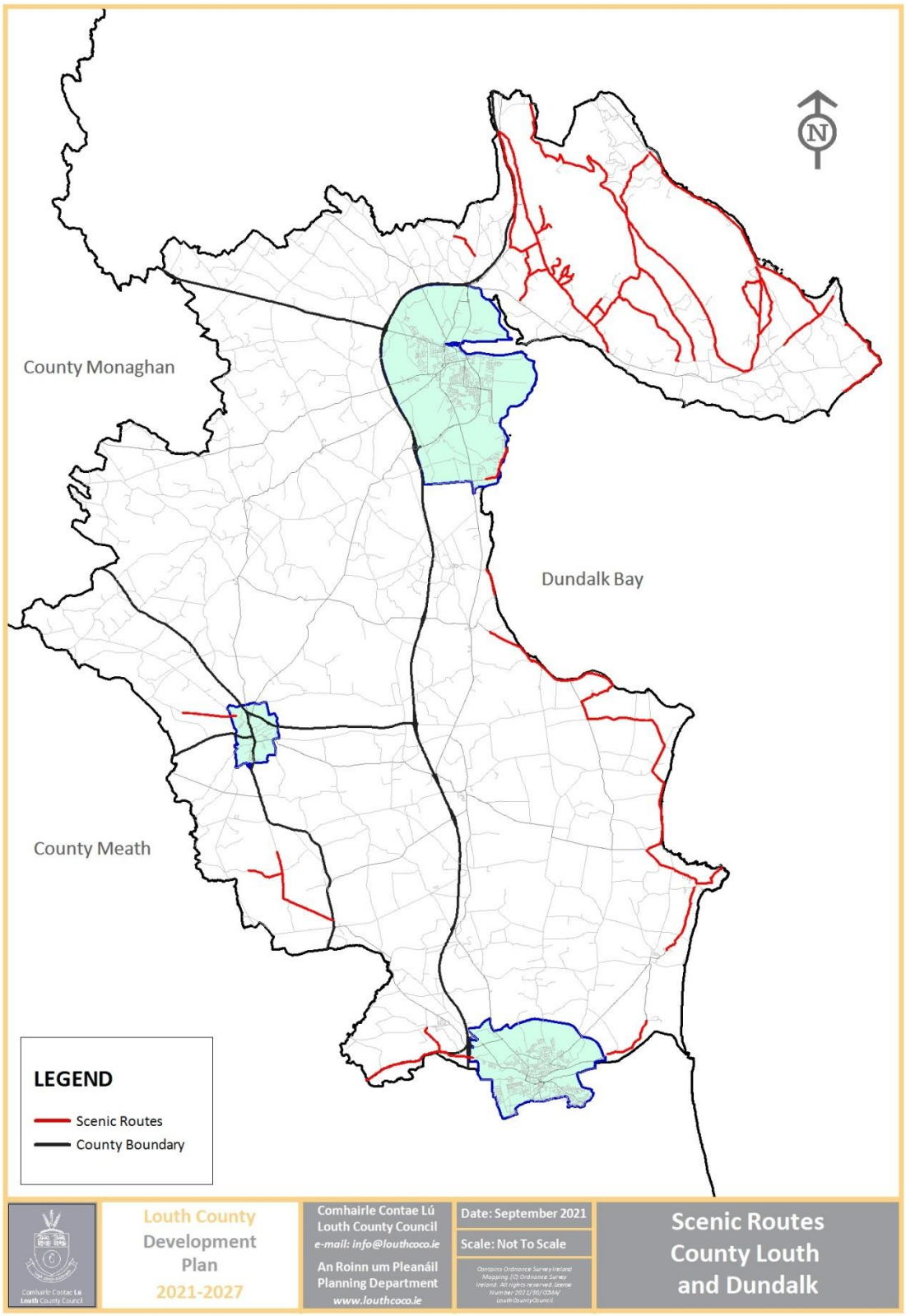
Table 8.19: Scenic Routes, County Louth and Dundalk

Reference No.	Route
SR 1	Faughart Hill, Faughart Upper
SR 2	Ravensdale Road (Rockmarshall to Drumad)
SR 3	Deerpark Road
SR 4	Dromad via N1, Broughattin to Doolargy
SR 5	Annaverna
SR 6	Doolargy
SR 7	Jenkinstown (Minor and Hill)
SR 8	Ballymakellett
SR 9	Jenkinstown to Piedmont
SR 10	Jenkinstown to Omeath via Windy Gap

Reference No.	Route
SR 11	Piedmont-Benagh-Spellickanee
SR 12	Bush-Windy Gap-Edentober
SR 13	Bush-Carlingford incl. Commons
SR 14	Greenore-Carlingford- Omeath
SR 15	Coast Road-Whitestown-Ballagan-Ballytrasna
SR 16	Coast Road, Dromiskin
SR 17	Townparks, Ardee
SR 18	Castlebellingham-Annagassan-Clogherhead-Termonfeckin
SR 19	Baltray-Queensborough-Beaulieu
SR 20	Slane Road, Townley Hall
SR 21	King William's Glen
SR 22	Mount Oriel (Collon-Belpatrick)
SR 23	Coastal Road, Blackrock Village

Policy Objective	
NBG 40	To prohibit inappropriate development which would interfere with or adversely affect the Scenic Routes as identified in Table 8.19 and illustrated on Map 8.20.

Map 8.20: Scenic Routes, County Louth and Dundalk



8.14 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

8.14.1 Introduction

Green infrastructure is an interconnected network of green spaces that help conserve natural ecosystems, in both urban and rural locations, and provide benefits to human populations through water purification, flood control, carbon capture, food production and recreation. Such spaces include woodlands, coastlines, flood plains, hedgerows, urban parks and street trees. Green Infrastructure incorporates green spaces (or blue if aquatic ecosystems are concerned) and other physical features in terrestrial (including coastal) and marine areas.



Green infrastructure provision is an essential element in delivering a high quality of life for both existing and new communities and creating a high quality environment with a distinct sense of place. The protection, enhancement, creation and connection of green infrastructure is crucial to the sustainable development of the County. Green infrastructure by its nature is multi-functional in terms of uses. These include but are not limited to wildlife, recreational, cultural and heritage experiences in addition to delivering environmental services such as sustainable water drainage and flood protection.

It can include uplands, wetlands, woodlands, rivers, lakes, and coastal areas. Green Infrastructure can also refer to landscape elements at all spatial scales including parks, open spaces, farmland, private gardens, hedgerows, green corridors, and the open countryside. It is capable of delivering a wide range of economic, environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities including:

- Supports habitats for wildlife, biodiversity and fragile ecosystems allowing them to flourish;
- Promotes recreation, tourism and culture;
- Increases outdoor physical activity, social interaction and access to nature, improving health and well-being;
- Attracts business and inward investment by creating an attractive environment;
- Creates a sense of place and local distinctiveness;
- Assists in climate change adaptation including flood alleviation;
- Increases environmental education and awareness; and
- Provides places for local food production through agriculture, allotments and gardens.



The European Union's Biodiversity Strategy 2011, seeks to halt biodiversity loss in Europe by 2020 including a target to ensure that by 2020, 'ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing Green Infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems'.

In 2013 the EU published *Building a Green Infrastructure for Europe* alongside *Green Infrastructure: Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital,* to provide a framework and strategy to promote and facilitate green infrastructure projects in policy promotion, support of projects, access to finance and promotion of information and innovation. The multiple benefits of Green Infrastructure are recognised in a range of national policy documents including, but not limited to, the *National Biodiversity Plan (2017-2021)*, the *Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways (2019-2021)*, *Creating Green Infrastructure for Ireland (2010)* and *Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009).*

The NPF and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) identify and support key Guiding Principles for Green Infrastructure Strategies to be incorporated by Local Authorities in the preparation of their strategies.

This includes support for the provision of green and blue infrastructure, the development of Strategic Green Infrastructure and an associated network of walking and cycling routes, which will aid in mitigating climate change impacts through carbon sequestration and the delivery of alternative energy supply.

8.14.2 Planning for Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure planning is a proactive approach to the sustainable development of natural resources and biodiversity and recognises that connectivity and multi-functionality are key concepts therein. Protected natural areas cannot thrive in isolation. Maintaining and re-establishing connectivity between these natural areas is needed to restore the health of ecosystems and allow species to thrive across their entire natural habitat. Connected green spaces provide greater benefits to both people and wildlife rather than isolated green spaces.



The Council recognises that Green Infrastructure planning involves a holistic approach, as an integral part of sustainable development, alongside other infrastructure such as utilities and transport networks in order to maximise the benefits of our natural assets, while performing key functions for our communities.

The conservation of ecological infrastructure such as hedgerows and riparian corridors facilitates and promotes the development of a 'network of sites' which strengthen and enhance our green infrastructure and facilitate the migration and exchange of species between conservations areas.

To this end, and with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 Network, the Council will encourage the management of features of the landscape, which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna. In addition, the Council will identify sites of local biodiversity value through implementation of the Draft *Louth Heritage Plan 2021-2026* and the *Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026*.

8.14.3 Louth's Green Infrastructure Strategy

A Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) has been incorporated into the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. The principles of a green infrastructure approach to land use planning have been embedded as a cross cutting theme in the policies and objectives of this Plan.

The Strategic Objectives of Louth's Green Infrastructure Strategy are outlined below:

- Flood Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation;
- An Ecological Framework;
- A Sustainable Movement Network;
- A Sense of Place;
- River Corridor and Coastal Management;
- Support for Urban Regeneration; and
- Community, Health and Enjoyment.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy and associated development management guidance is included in Appendix 8, Volume 3. Louth's Green Infrastructure Network is illustrated on Map 8.21.

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

Policy Objective	
NBG 42	To require the use of and develop the green infrastructure network, and support re-establishing connectivity to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and as a supplementary guide for the protection and conservation of the European Sites in County Louth.

Policy Objective	
NBG 43	To utilise all information available on the Louth Baseline Assessment as evidence based decision making in the Louth Core Strategy.

Policy Objective	
NBG 44	To protect, maintain, and enhance the natural and organic character of the watercourses in the County, including opening up to daylight where safe and feasible. The creation and/or enhancement of riparian buffer zones will be required where possible. All proposed coastal walkways will be required to comply with the Habitats, EIA and SEA Directives

Policy Objective	
NBG 45	To prepare specific Green Infrastructure Strategies for the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and integrate into the local area plan for each settlement.

Policy Objective	
NBG 46	To develop linear parks, particularly along waterways, and to link existing parks and open spaces in order to provide green chains that promote permeability for pedestrians and cyclists in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

Policy Objective	
NBG 47	To support the existing features of interest in the Level 3 and 4 Settlements of County Louth and promote and facilitate any areas identified for green infrastructure enhancement.

Policy Objective	
NBG 48	All future development proposals shall require within the overall design scheme the integration of environmental assets and existing biodiversity features including those identified in Table 9 of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Appendix 8, Volume 3, to enhance the quality, character and design of the proposal.

Policy Objective	
NBG 49	To require the integration of green infrastructure and inclusion of native planting schemes in all development proposals in landscaped areas, open spaces and areas of public space.

Policy Objective	
NBG 50	To incorporate all identified stone walls into development proposals. Where retention of the stone wall is not feasible there shall be a requirement to rebuild the stone wall at an alternative, suitable location.

Policy Objective	
NBG 51	To require the integration of climate change mitigation measures in any future spatial plans and climate change adaptation measures in proposed developments.

Policy Objective	
NBG 52	To develop and support the implementation of a Regional Green Infrastructure approach by working collaboratively and in partnership with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, adjoining local authorities and other key stakeholders to identify, protect, enhance and manage existing green infrastructure within the County and to provide additional GI where possible.

Policy Objective	
NBG 53	To support and increase investment in the on-going maintenance of existing, and provision of additional green infrastructure by accessing relevant EU funding mechanisms and national funding opportunities, including tourism related funding.

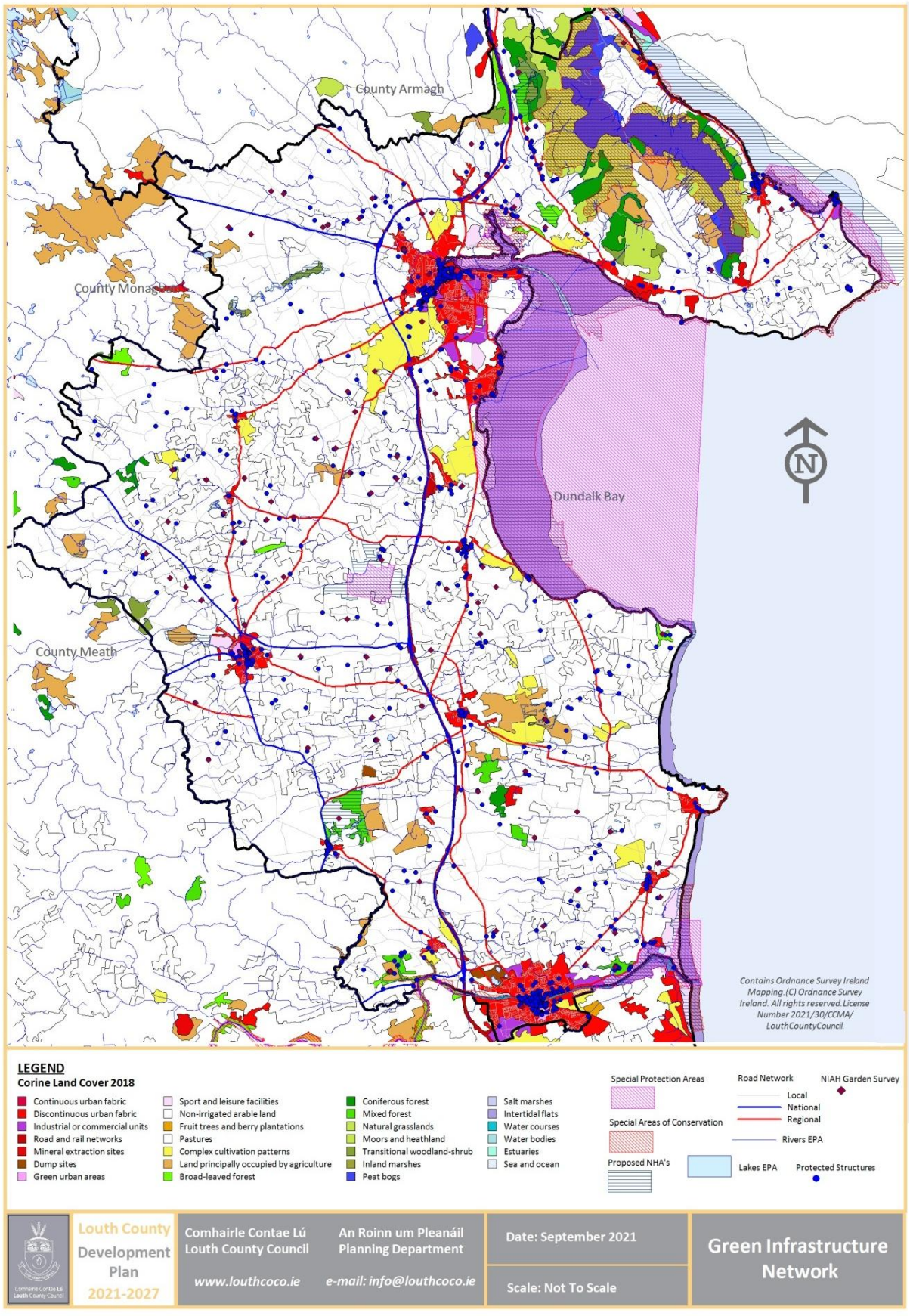
Policy Objective	
NBG 54	To ensure the protection, enhancement and maintenance of Green Infrastructure in recognition of its health benefits in addition to the economic, social, environmental and physical value of green spaces, through the integration of Green Infrastructure planning and development in the planning process.

Policy Objective	
NBG 55	To create an integrated and coherent green infrastructure for County Louth by ensuring compliance with the objectives listed in the Green Infrastructure Strategy outlined in Appendix 8, Volume 3, to improve pedestrian and cycle access routes within this green infrastructure network while ensuring that ecosystem functions and existing amenity uses are not compromised and existing biodiversity and heritage is protected and enhanced.

Policy Objective	
NBG 56	To focus on 'greening' key streets in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and key towns and villages by way of higher standards for planning and amenity along key routes.

Policy Objective	
NBG 57	To ensure that no development, including clearing or storage of materials, takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse.

Map 8.21: Green Infrastructure Network in County Louth





Chapter 9

Built Heritage and Culture

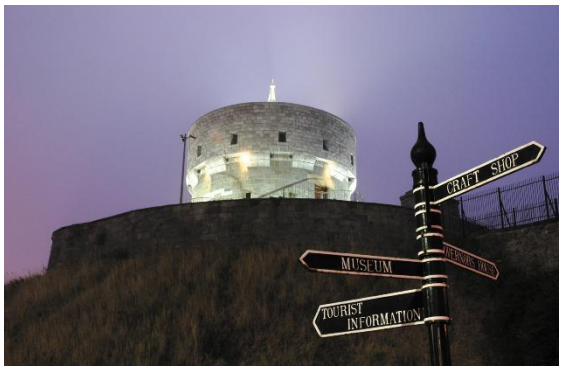
'To protect, conserve and manage the archaeological and architectural heritage of the County and encourage sensitive, sustainable development to ensure its survival and maintenance for future generations'.

9 - BUILT HERITAGE AND CULTURE

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Louth's built heritage, linking the past to the present, is both rich and varied and manifested in the physical traces left in the landscape by previous generations in the form of archaeological sites and monuments, townscapes, historic buildings and vernacular structures. This archaeological and architectural heritage is an intrinsic part of our identity, and of the character and attractiveness of the County. It contributes to the vibrancy and attractiveness of places where we live, work and play in addition to serving as a catalyst in attracting tourism and investment.

It provides an opportunity to learn from the past, reinforce our sense of place and to serve as guardians for future generations.



The Council will seek to protect the County's built and archaeological heritage from the direct and indirect impacts from climate change.

The importance of the built and cultural heritage and access thereto is acknowledged and supported in the RSES and the associated Regional Policy Objectives. The Plan in the formulation of its Policy Objectives has been in accordance with the RSES.

9.2 POLICY CONTEXT

'Heritage' was not formally defined by the Heritage Act, 1995 which set up the Heritage Council. However, the Act referred to the following as aspects of Ireland's heritage: monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways.



The word 'heritage' therefore encompasses both natural and built resources and is extended to cover intangible and cultural heritage too.

Heritage therefore surrounds us, helps to define us and contributes to the development of a strong sense of place and identity.

The preparation of this chapter has had regard to relevant national legislation and guidelines, regional and local plans and policies, and the need to ensure that the Plan is compliant with all relevant EU and national legislation and regulations in relation to the protection of the built and cultural heritage of the County.

A new National Heritage Plan '*Heritage Ireland 2030*' is currently being drafted by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

It will be a coherent, comprehensive and inspiring framework of values, principles, strategic priorities and actions to guide and inform the heritage sector over the next decade. The National Planning Framework through NSO7 and NPO60 highlights the rich qualities of our natural and cultural heritage and their conservation and enhancement, in an appropriate manner to their significance. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region recognises that culture and heritage are an integral part of Irish life ranging from their intrinsic value, to their wider social benefit and economic potential. The Council will consider full legislative provisions and supporting guidance and policy documents issued to give effect to legislative provisions.

There are a significant number of Section 28 and other government Guidelines which relate directly to the built heritage. The *'Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2011),* published by the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht is the main planning policy guidance document in respect of our built heritage. Other relevant guidance includes the *'Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage' (1999)*.

9.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Archaeology is the study of past societies through their material remains and the evidence of their environment. It is not restricted solely to ancient periods; and includes the study of relatively recent societies. The archaeological heritage is comprised of all material remains of past societies with the potential to add to our knowledge of such societies.

It therefore includes the remains of features such as settlements, monuments, burials, ships and boats and portable objects of all kinds, from the everyday to the very special.

It also includes evidence of the environment in which those societies lived. Archaeological heritage occurs in all environments, urban and rural, upland and lowland, grassland, tillage and forestry, inland and coastal, dryland, wetland (including peatlands) and underwater (including watercourses, lakes and the sea).

Archaeological heritage may exist in the form of upstanding or visible remains, or as subsurface features with no surface presentation. Given the above, archaeological heritage is present and as yet unidentified in all environments. In addition it helps us to understand how humans in the past interacted with the environment, to formulate an explanation for the development of cultures and to preserve the history for present and future learning. It is a finite and fragile resource, which enriches our landscapes and townscapes, but which is vulnerable to modern development and land use changes. Its preservation is a legitimate objective against which the need for development must be balanced and assessed. National policy in relation to archaeological heritage is set out in the '*Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage'* (Government of Ireland 1999). The Plan will be guided by and will seek to ensure that policies set out therein will be taken into account and implemented appropriately through the planning process.

The *National Monuments Acts 1930-2014* is the specific national legislative code for protection of monuments, historic wrecks and archaeological objects providing legal protection for all archaeological objects, wrecks 100 or more years old and for a range of categories of monuments and places. Archaeological objects (which, in broad terms includes all moveable objects of archaeological importance) are comprehensively protected under the National Monuments Acts.

The protection of archaeological heritage and other features includes the following:

- Sites and monuments included in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as maintained by the National Monuments Service (NMS);
- Monuments and places included in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as established under section 12 of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994*;
- Historic monuments and archaeological areas included in the Register of Historic Monuments as established under Section 5 of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987;*
- National monuments subject to Preservation Orders under the *National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014* and national monuments which are in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage or a local authority;
- Archaeological objects within the meaning of the National Monuments Acts;
- Wrecks protected under the *National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014* or otherwise included in the Wreck Viewer maintained by the National Monuments Service; and
- Archaeological features not as yet identified but which may be impacted on by development.

Presently, a monument is protected in one of four ways:

*1. Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)***:** This is the most widely applicable listing of all known monuments of archaeological interest and updated as and when previously unrecorded archaeological sites are discovered. Currently, there are approximately 1,600 archaeological recorded monuments in the RMP for County Louth.

The carrying out of any work at, or in relation to a Recorded Monument requires giving written notice to the Minister two months before commencing said work, to facilitate consideration of both the proposed works and the protection of the monument. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) for County Louth can be inspected at www.archaeology.ie.

2. Register of Historic Monuments: Historic monuments (i.e. any monument pre-dating 1700AD and any other monument of relevant interest) and archaeological areas are entered on this register.

The carrying out of any work at or in relation to a Registered Monument requires giving written notice to the Minister two months before commencing said work, to facilitate consideration of both the proposed works and any measures needed to ensure the protection of the monument.



3. National monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media or a Local Authority: A National Monument is any monument, the preservation of, which is a matter of national importance on grounds of archaeological, architectural, historical, traditional or artistic interest. Legal protection only comes into effect if the national monument is owned/in the guardianship of the Minister or a local authority or is the subject of a Preservation Order.

National monuments in State care include those in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, whose maintenance and upkeep are the responsibility of the State. A list of National Monuments in County Louth, which are in State Care, is available in Table 9.1.

The prior written consent of the Minister is required for any works at or in proximity to national monuments in State care.

National monuments may also be in the ownership or guardianship of Local Authorities which have similar responsibilities to the DCHG. The prior written consent of the Minister is required for any works at or in proximity to national monuments in the care of the Local Authority.

4. National monument subject to a preservation order (or temporary preservation order): A list of National Monuments in County Louth subject to a Preservation Order is available in Table 9.2. The prior written consent of the Minister is required for any works at or in proximity to national monuments subject to a Preservation Order.

Archaeological heritage encompasses designated and unknown archaeological heritage including; entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, underwater archaeology, entries to the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record, and Northern Ireland Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest and Archaeological Potential. Also encompassed are intervisibility and interrelationships between archaeological heritage within the wider landscape, including cross-border intervisibility and interrelationships.



Table 9.1 National Monuments in Louth in State Care

Name	Description	Townland	Legal Status	RMP No.	National Monument No.
Aghnaskeagh	Two Cairns	Aghnaskeagh	Guardianship	LH004-032 LH004-033	326
Athclare Castle	Castle	Athclare	Guardianship	LH018-040	Unknown
Mansfieldstown	Church	Bawn	Guardianship	LH015-004001	480
Carlingford Castle	Castle	Carlingford	Guardianship	LH005-042002	249
The Mint (Carlingford)	Urban Tower House	Carlingford	Guardianship	LH005-042008	242
Dún Dealgan	Motte	Castletown	Guardianship	LH007-118007	388
Donaghmore	Souterrain	Donaghmore	Guardianship	LH006- 060001, LH006-060002	526
St. Laurence's Gate (Drogheda)	Town Gate	Drogheda	Guardianship	LH024-020	511
Dromiskin	Church & Round Tower	Dromiskin	Ownership	LH012-046001, LH012-046003	92
Greenmount	Motte	Greenmount	Ownership	LH015-012001	144
Carlingford Abbey	Friary (Dominican)	Liberties	Ownership	LH005-042013	623
Lisnaran Fort	Ringfort	Linns	Guardianship	LH015-015001	579
Mellifont Abbey	Abbey (Cistercian)	Mellifont	Ownership	LH023-002	93
Monasterboice	High Crosses, Churches & Round Tower	Monasterboice	Ownership	LH021-062007, LH021-062003, LH021-062004, LH021-062008, LH021-062009, LH021-062006	94
St. Mochta's House	Church	Priorstate	Guardianship	LH011-115002	312
Proleek	Portal Tomb & wedge Tomb	Proleek	Guardianship	LH004-074, LH004-075	476
Clochafarmore	Standing Stone	Rathiddy	Guardianship	LH011-020	474
Ravensdale Park	Cairn	Ravensdale Park	Ownership	LH004-004	597
Castleroche	Castle	Castle Roche	Guardianship	LH003-029001	460
Rockmarshall	Court Tomb	Rockmarshall	Ownership	LH008-033	562
Roodstown Castle	Castle	Roodstown	Ownership	LH014-047	298
Termonfeckin Castle	Castle	Termonfeckin	Ownership	LH022-041012	178
Townleyhall	Passage Tomb	Townleyhall	Ownership	LH024-008002	529

Source: www.archaeology.ie accessed on 25th June 2014

Table 9.2 National Monuments subject to a Preservation Order

PO No.	Description	Townland	RMP No.
36/1934	Aghnaskeagh Cairns (Two)	Aghnaskeagh	LH004-032; LH004-032001; LH004-033-26
25/1976	Ringfort	Aghnaskeagh	LH004-031001; LH004-031002
3/1998	Archaeological Complex	Belpatrick	LH020-004001; LH020-004002; LH020-004003; LH020-004004; LH020-004005; LH020-012; LH020-013
8/1985	Souterrain	Benagh	LH008-051001; LH008-051002; LH008-051003
11/1973	Ringfort & Annexe	Castletowncooley	LH008-054001; LH008-054002
2/1971	Lisnaran Fort	Linns	LH015-015001; LH015-015002; LH015-015003
2/1999	Dwelling	Milltown	LH018-052
16/1977	Barrow	Milltown	LH021-037
05/1932	St. Mochta's House, Priorstate	Priorstate	LH011-115002
1/2002	Ringfort	Rampark	LH008-070001; LH008-070002
3/1971	Rathdrumin Rath	Rathdrumin	LH018-045001; LH018-045002

9.3.1 Zone of Archaeological Potential

Some recorded monuments are extensive in scale, covering the historic core of medieval towns in the County, whether or not they are currently urban (i.e. deserted medieval towns in addition to present day urban centres of medieval origin). In addition to noting upstanding remains, zones where likely subsurface archaeological remains exist, were also identified and included in the Record of Monuments and Places.

These recorded monuments in the Plan are referred to as Zones of Archaeological Potential (ZAP), of which there are thirteen in the County. These recorded monuments are protected under the *National Monuments Acts 1930-2014.*

These Zones of Archaeological Potential are listed in Table 9.3 and the associated maps are available in Appendix 9, Volume 3.

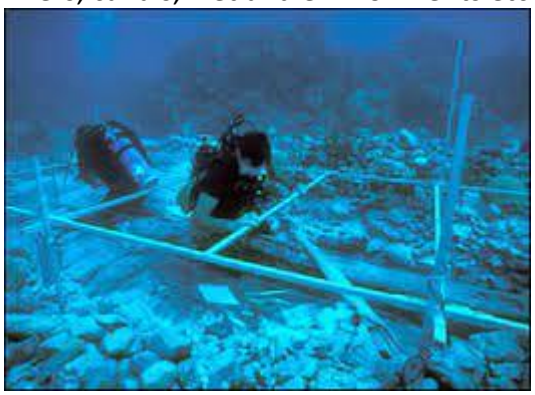
The qualities of archaeological and architectural interest are not mutually exclusive. Certain structures may be designated as both a Recorded Monument and a Protected Structure and may therefore appear on both the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), Volume 4.

Table 9.3: Zone of Archaeological Potential, County Louth

Reference	Location
ZAP 1	Drogheda
ZAP 2	Dundalk
ZAP 3	Ardee
ZAP 4	Carlingford
ZAP 5	Castlering
ZAP 6	Castle Roche
ZAP 7	Collon
ZAP 8	Dromiskin
ZAP 9	Dunleer
ZAP 10	Grange
ZAP 11	Louth Village
ZAP 12	Monasterboice
ZAP 13	Termonfeckin

9.3.2 Maritime Archaeology

Ireland's waterways – both marine and freshwater – have been central to the development of life on this island and consequently Ireland has a longstanding maritime legacy. While a significant number of shipwrecks have been recorded from around the coast by the National Monuments Service (NMS), it is estimated that there are significantly more as yet undiscovered. Other cultural remains, such as submerged landscapes, harbours and landing places, attest to Ireland's rich underwater cultural heritage which is found in Ireland's designated waters, along the Irish coastline, in the rivers, canals, wetland environments etc.



Underwater cultural heritage is a finite and irreplaceable resource with both manmade and natural pressures threatening its preservation. The NMS is tasked with the protection and preservation of the country's underwater cultural heritage. It maintains the Wreck Viewer and Wreck Inventory of Ireland Database (WIID) which hold records of over 18,000 known and potential wreck sites and which serve as a tool to help manage and protect historic wrecks.

Any development either above or below water, including to river banks or coastal edges, within the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest, shall not be detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or its setting. Planning applications will be referred to the National Monuments Service where relevant.

9.3.3 Walled Towns

Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda and Dundalk are all former walled towns in County Louth, which were founded between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Each of these walled towns is regarded as a single recorded monument and all are Zones of Archaeological Potential. Maps of the Walled Towns of Drogheda, Ardee and Carlingford are available in Volume 3, Appendix 10. With the exception of Dundalk, Conservation and Management Plans were prepared by the Council, with support from the Irish Walled Towns Network, (part of the Heritage Council), for all of the walled towns.

Town walls and other defences are categorised as National Monuments under the National Walled Towns Policy 2008. Maps of the Walled Towns for Drogheda, Ardee, and Carlingford are available in Volume 3, Appendix 10. The upstanding remains of the walled towns in Drogheda, Ardee and Carlingford are identified as Protected Structures and included in the Record of Protected Structures, Volume 4.

Policy Objective	
BHC 1	To protect and enhance archaeological sites and monuments, underwater archaeology, and archaeological objects listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and/or the Register of Historic Monuments and seek their preservation (i.e. presumption in favour of preservation in situ or in exceptional cases, at a minimum, preservation by record) through the planning process and having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the principles as set out in the '*Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*' (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands 1999).

Policy Objective	
BHC 2	To protect the built heritage assets of the county and ensure they are managed and preserved in a manner that does not adversely impact on the intrinsic value of these assets whilst supporting economic renewal and sustainable development.

Policy Objective	
BHC 3	To protect known and unknown archaeological areas, sites, monuments, structures and objects, having regard to the advice of the National Monuments Services of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Policy Objective	
BHC 4	To promote awareness and knowledge of the archaeological resources of the County and support initiatives where appropriate that provide better access to the historic built environment.

Policy Objective	
BHC 5	To protect all sites and features of archaeological interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places (i.e. preservation in situ or in exceptional circumstances, at a minimum preservation by record) having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Section of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Policy Objective	
BHC 6	To ensure any development, either above or below ground, adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of a recorded monument or a Zone of Archaeological Potential (including formerly walled towns) shall not be detrimental to or detract from the character of the archaeological site or its setting and be sited and designed to protect the monument and its setting. Where upstanding remains exist, a visual impact assessment may be required.

Policy Objective	
BHC 7	To require applicants seeking permission for development within Zones of Archaeological Potential and other sites as listed in the Record of Monuments and Places to include an assessment of the likely archaeological potential as part of the planning application and the Council may require that an on-site archaeological assessment is carried out by trial work, prior to a decision on a planning application being taken.

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

Policy Objective	
BHC 9	To retain the surviving medieval street pattern, building lines and burgage plot widths in historic walled towns.

Policy Objective	
BHC 10	To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical surveys, test excavations and monitoring, as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground clearance of more than half a hectare or for linear developments over one kilometre in length or for developments in proximity to areas with a density of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery, as identified by a licensed archaeologist.

9.3.4 Battlefield Sites

Albeit that they represent historically transient events, the importance of famous battlefield sites as key locations in Irish history is widely recognised. Historically, Louth has been the scene of several major battles, none more so than the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. The conservation, management and protection of Battlefield Sites is complex, and an emerging field of study nationally.

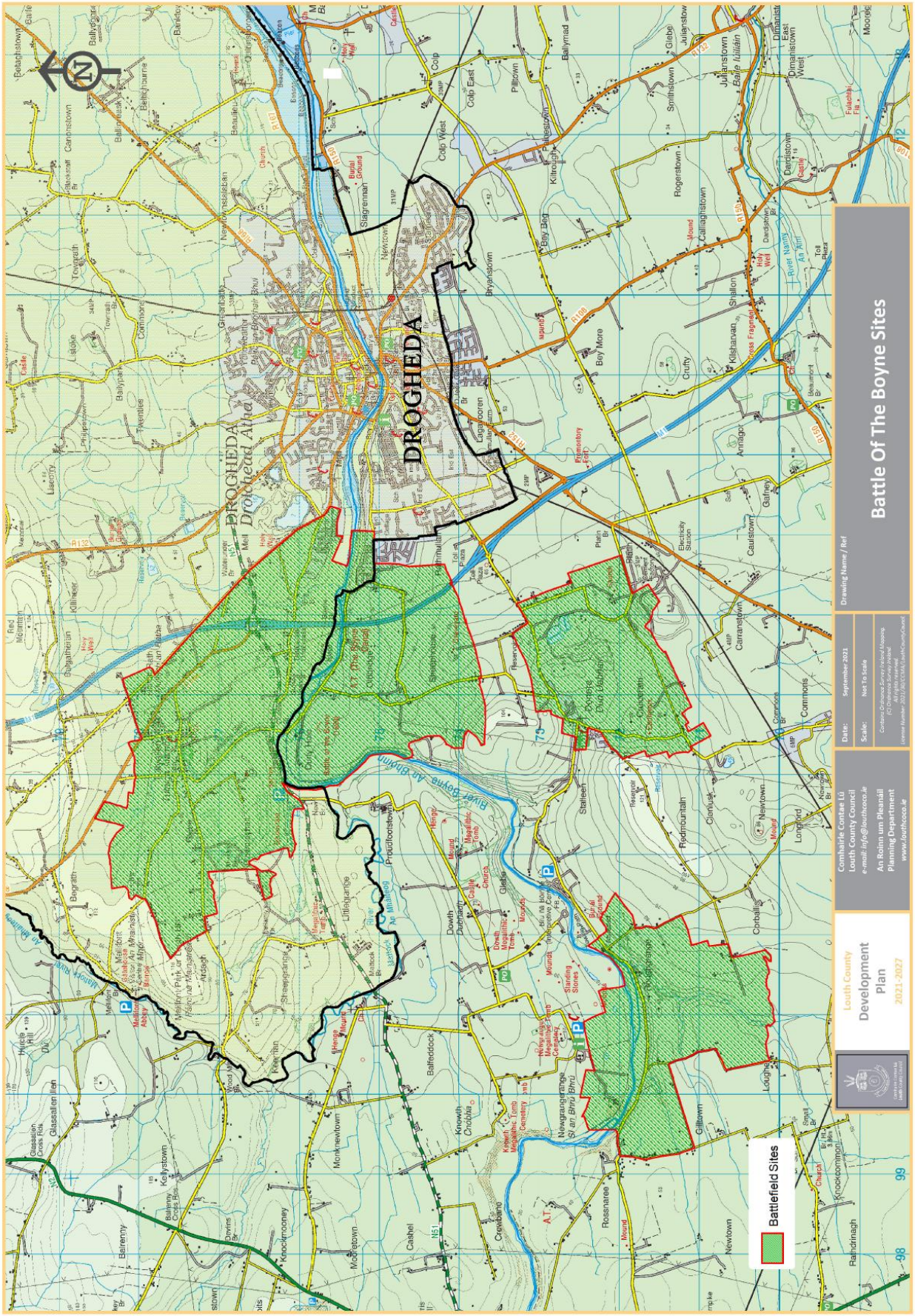
The *'Irish Battlefields Project'* is a study researching key battlefield sites in Irish history, their location, extent, and historical and archaeological backgrounds, all of which will increase our knowledge and understanding of such momentous events. Its work has been completed and currently with the National Monuments Service. If published during the lifetime of the Plan, it is the intention of the Council to propose a variation of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 for its incorporation. The Boyne Battlefield Sites are illustrated on Map 9.1.

Policy Objective	
BHC 11	To work in partnership with Meath County Council, relevant agencies and the public to promote, understand, conserve and sustainably manage the Battlefield site of the Battle of the Boyne whilst protecting and enhancing its cultural landscape.

Policy Objective	
BHC 12	To propose a variation of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, if required, to make appropriate amendments to the Plan, as a result of any recommendations arising from the publication of '*The Irish Battlefields Project*'.

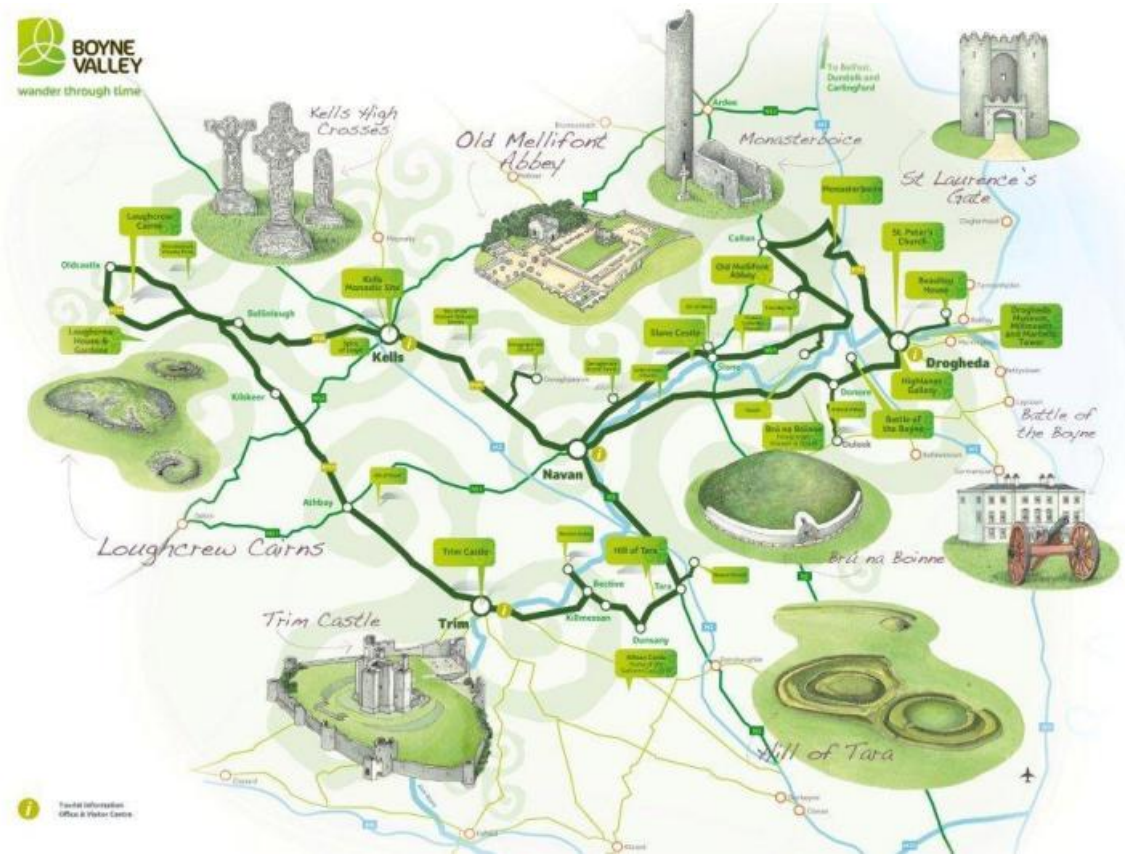
Policy Objective	
BHC 13	To seek to protect historic and archaeological landscapes including battlefields, from inappropriate development.

Map 9.1: Battle of the Boyne Sites

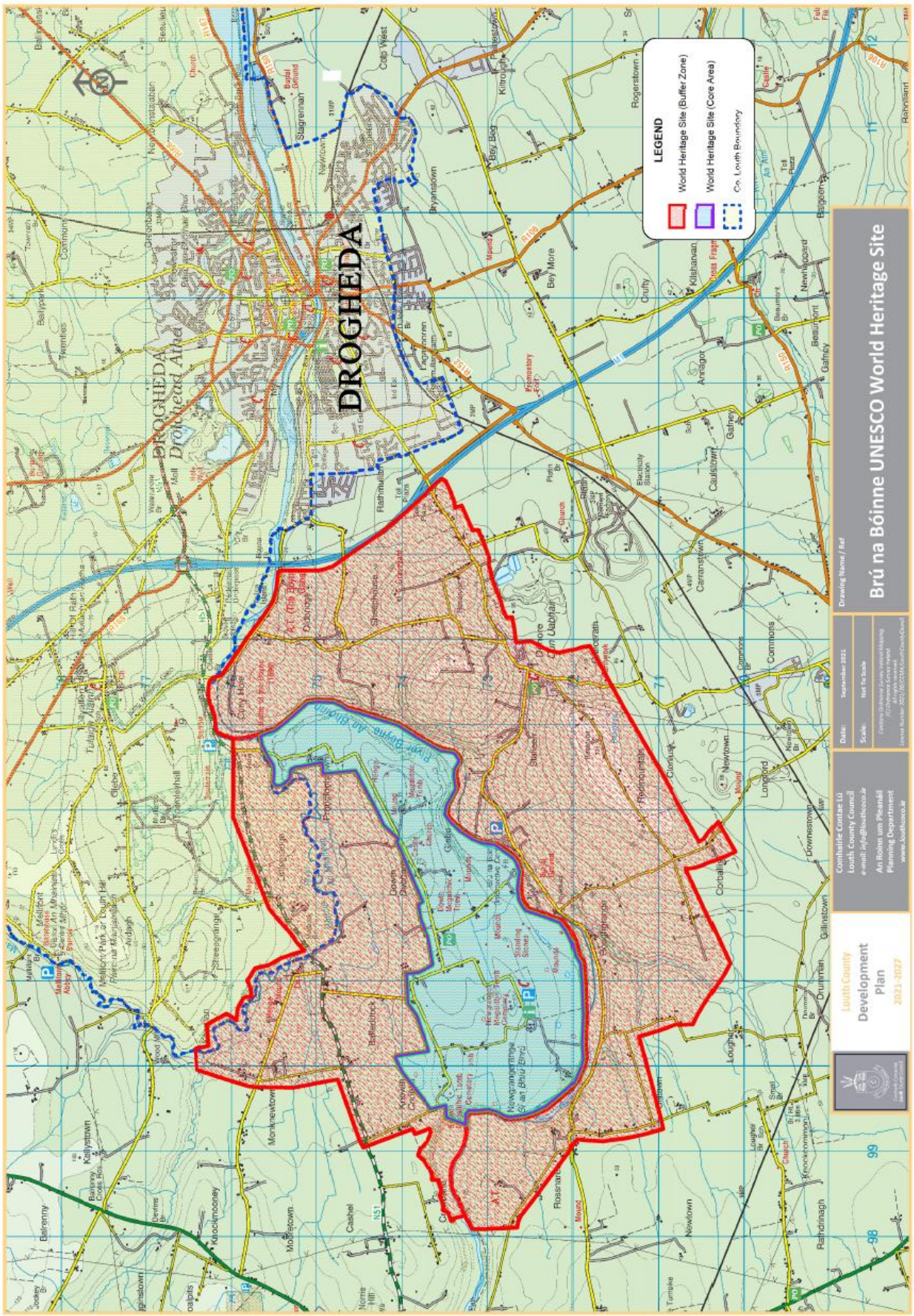


9.3.5 UNESCO World Heritage Site – Brú na Bóinne

Brú na Bóinne is one of the world's most important archaeological landscapes, and Europe's largest and most important concentration of prehistoric megalithic art, a fact recognised by its inscription in 1993 by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site (WHS). It is an archaeological landscape, also known as "The Bend of the Boyne," containing the three main prehistoric sites of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. This WHS covers a Core Area and a Buffer Zone the majority of which is situated in County Meath. However, an area contained within the Buffer Zone is located in County Louth in the townland of Littlegrange as illustrated on Map 9.2. The World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne is 4.8km west of Drogheda and almost the same distance from Slane in County Meath.



Map 9.2: Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site



9.3.6 Outstanding Universal Value

The inscription of the World Heritage Site obliges the State to protect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne to the highest international standards. The Outstanding Universal Value of a site is derived from; statements on universal value, how it fits UNESCO criteria, and statements on authenticity and integrity. The OUV forms the basis for the protection, management and conservation of a World Heritage Site, its core area and buffer zones, as identified in the inscription.

The Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne was assessed by UNESCO to be of Outstanding Universal Value, meeting three of the six criteria regarding cultural heritage as outlined below:

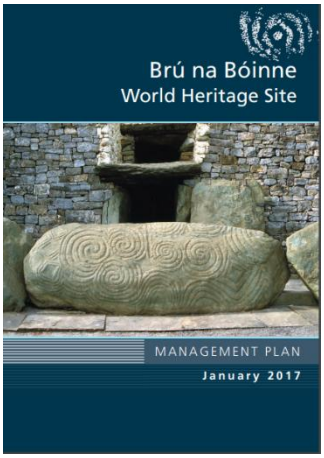
Criterion (i): The Brú na Bóinne monuments represent the largest and most important expression of prehistoric megalithic plastic art in Europe.
Criterion (iii): The concentration of social, economic and funerary monuments at this important ritual centre and the long continuity from prehistory to the late medieval period makes this one of the most significant archaeological sites in Europe.
Criterion (iv): The passage grave, here brought to its finest expression, was a feature of outstanding importance in prehistoric Europe and beyond.

9.3.6.1 Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value

The first Management Plan for the UNESCO World Heritage Site - Brú na Bóinne was published in December 2002 by the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government (DECLG).

In accordance with the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2019), each nominated property should have an appropriate management plan or other documented management system which must specify how the Outstanding Universal Value of a property should be preserved, preferably through participatory means. The current *Brú na Bóinne Management Plan, 2017* which is a non-statutory plan, was submitted to UNESCO by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The planning authority is cognisant of the potential irreversible and adverse cumulative impact of incremental piecemeal development in this unique landscape. It is critically important that further new development is not permitted to erode the heritage significance of this landscape.



Rural Policy Zone 1 covers, *inter alia,* the sensitive landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the battlefield site of the Battle of the Boyne, which seeks to protect its heritage and cultural landscape. In this regard it is the intention of the Council to prepare a Framework Plan for this area.

Policy Objective	
BHC 14	To work in partnership with Meath County Council, relevant agencies and the public to promote, understand, conserve and sustainably manage the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne to maintain its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

Policy Objective	
BHC 15	To ensure no development which might have significant deleterious impacts upon the character of the World Heritage Site is permitted.

Policy Objective	
BHC 16	To protect the northern ridgeline (Chapter 13, Map 13.1) which frames the views within and from the World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne from visually intrusive and inappropriate development, subject to the Development Management Assessment Criteria detailed in Chapter 13 and using view-shed analysis as a tool to guide and inform development management.

Policy Objective	
BHC 17	To encourage the retention, appropriate re-use and conservation of vernacular buildings in Rural Policy Zone One in preference to their replacement or the construction of new buildings on green-field sites and require all development herein to be subject to the Development Management Assessment Criteria as detailed in Chapter 13.

Policy Objective	
BHC 18	To prepare a Framework Plan for the protection, development and promotion of lands subject to Rural Policy Zone One (as applicable to the lands including the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice, and the Battle of the Boyne Battlefield site).

9.4 Exempted Development

Development is not exempt from the obligation of applying for planning permission, if it would; interfere with the character of a landscape, or a view or prospect of special amenity value or special interest, the preservation of which, is an objective of the Plan, or consist of the excavation, alteration or demolition of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological, geological, or historical, scientific or ecological interest, the preservation of which is an objective of the Plan.

As it is an objective of this Plan to protect and enhance the landscape, views and prospects in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, many developments, which would be considered exempt in other areas may require planning permission. Those considering undertaking development works within the area of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne should first consult Louth County Council before commencement of any works.

9.5 TENTATIVE WORLD HERITAGE SITES

A Tentative List is an inventory of properties, which a country intends to consider for nomination to the World Heritage List. The most recent Tentative List was submitted to UNESCO in 2010 with one site in Louth included therein, which is:

- Early Medieval Monastic Sites (including Monasterboice).

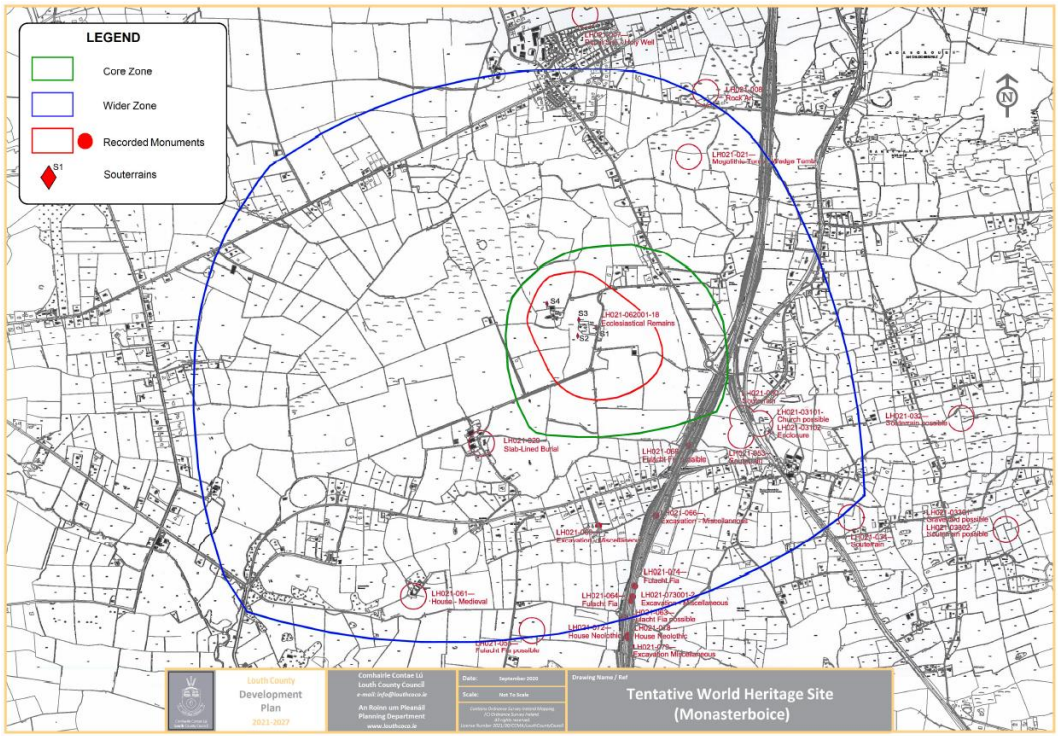


While formal designation of Monasterboice and other sites is likely to be many years away, it is important that this Plan protects the landscape and other values contributing to the site's nomination and ensure that this is not damaged in any way. The Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht invited applications for Ireland's Tentative List of properties for potential future nomination to the World Heritage List 2020-2030.

The nomination of any property from the new Tentative List for inscription on the World Heritage List will only take place after consultation with relevant stakeholders, interested parties and local communities. The Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice is illustrated in Map 9.3.

Policy Objective	
BHC 19	To maintain the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and support its nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Map 9.3: Tentative World Heritage Site, Monasterboice



9.6 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Our architectural heritage is an irreplaceable resource and a valuable expression of our past, whose sustainable appropriate maintenance and reuse has economic and environmental benefits, and which serves as historic evidence of social changes through time.

Architectural heritage encompasses that which is designated or included within the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), NIAH Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Records of Protected Structures and Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings and Northern Ireland's Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes. Also encompassed are intervisibility and interrelationships between architectural heritage within the wider landscape, including cross-border intervisibility and interrelationships. Further details in relation to the NIAH can be found at www.buildingsofireland.ie.

County Louth is fortunate to host a rich and varied heritage of buildings and structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical importance.

The principle mechanism for protection of these buildings and structures is by inclusion in the 'Record of Protected Structures'.

This affords positive recognition of the structures importance, whilst seeking the protection of its special character from adverse impacts.

In accordance with Part IV of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* the Council is required to maintain a Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Unless otherwise stated it includes:

- The exterior and interior of the structure;
- The land lying within its curtilage;
- Any other structures and their interiors lying within that curtilage; and
- All fixtures and features, which form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures.

The RPS is a live register and structures may be added and deleted from the RPS during the review process of the Development Plan (Section 12) and outside of the review process (Section 55). This Plan includes the full RPS for the County in its entirety including the urban areas of Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee. The RPS is both listed and mapped in Volume 4.

The placing of a structure on the RPS seeks to ensure the character of the structure is maintained and any changes or alterations to it are carried out in such a way as to retain and enhance its character. This does not mean that development or alterations to a protected structure are not possible, but rather, if proposed works would materially affect the character of a protected structure, planning permission will be required.

Exempted development regulations may not apply to protected structures. Owners or occupiers of protected structures can seek a Declaration under Section 57 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* to list the type of works that do and do not affect the character of the structure and therefore do or do not require planning permission.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) places the onus on owners and occupiers of protected structures to ensure that the structure (or any element of the structure, which contributes to its special interest) is not endangered, either through neglect or inappropriate works.

Owners and occupiers are encouraged to consult with Louth County Council if considering works to a protected structure.

Proposals for works to Protected Structures should be:

- Accompanied by appropriate documentation as described in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DAHG),* to enable a proper assessment of the proposed works and their impact on the structure or area;
- In keeping with the character of the building and to preserve the special architectural or historical character and any features it possesses;
- Of a quality of design and sympathetic in terms of scale and form to the original building and in the use of materials and other details of the period and style; and
- Carried out in accordance with best practice *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities* and supervised by an appropriately qualified professional.

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

Policy Objective	
BHC 21	The form and structural integrity of the protected structure and its setting shall be retained and the relationship between the protected structure, its curtilage and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, designed views or vistas from or to the structure shall be protected.

Policy Objective	
BHC 22	To prohibit inappropriate development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds of a protected structure. Any proposed development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds must demonstrate that it is part of an overall strategy for the future conservation of the entire complex including the structures, demesne and/or attendant grounds.

Policy Objective	
BHC 23	To require that all planning applications relating to protected structures contain the appropriate documentation as described in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)* or any subsequent guidelines, to enable a proper assessment of the proposed works and their impact on the structure or area.

Policy Objective	
BHC 24	To require the retention of original features such as windows, doors, renders, roof coverings, and other significant features which contribute to the character of protected structures and encourage the reinstatement of appropriately detailed features which have been lost, to restore the character of protected structures as part of development proposals.

Policy Objective	
BHC 25	To promote best conservation practice and the use of skilled specialist practitioners in the conservation of and for any works to protected structures.

Policy Objective	
BHC 26	To encourage the retention, sympathetic reuse and rehabilitation of protected structures and their settings where appropriate and where the proposal is compatible with their character and significance. In certain cases, development management guidelines may be relaxed in order to secure the conservation of the protected structure and architectural features of special interest.

Policy Objective	
BHC 27	To permit the demolition or significant modification of a protected structure, only in exceptional circumstances.

Policy Objective	
BHC 28	To ensure the protection of architectural features of special interest as part of any proposed re-development where there is conflict with other development plan requirements such as open space, car parking etc.

Policy Objective	
BHC 29	To review and update the Record of Protected Structures on an ongoing basis and to make additions and deletions as appropriate.

Policy Objective	
BHC 30	To seek funding streams for specific priority projects and to assist owners with the repair and conservation of protected structures and aim to make the structure climate resilient.

9.6.1 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures.

An ACA can be entire streetscapes, a terrace of houses, a town centre or structures associated with a specific building such as a country house. The spatial character of ACAs can be the basis for their designation.

Hence the need to protect elements such as public realm, planting, traditional settlement patterns and building materials, by controlling the nature of alterations and new development.

The protected status of an ACA applies to the exteriors and the streetscape, and any works which would materially affect its character requires planning permission. However, the designation of an area as an ACA is not intended to bring excessive restrictions on development but rather to be a positive influence, to ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to an area that has been identified as being of significant importance. Changes to the buildings or the public realm, signage and public infrastructure can alter the character of an ACA and need to be assessed for the possible impact on its character.

In total, including Drogheda and Dundalk, there are 36 designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's) in County Louth which are identified in Table 9.4. The boundaries of the designated ACA's within the County, Drogheda and Dundalk identified in Table 9.4 are mapped and available in Appendix 11, Volume 3.

The designated ACA's within Dundalk are accompanied by Guideline Objectives for development, while the designated ACA's within the County are accompanied by objectives and a brief character appraisal all of which are available in Appendix 11, Volume 3.

A detailed Character Appraisal has been prepared as a guidance document for the Ardee ACA. This is available in Appendix 12, Volume 3. It is intended that further ACA Character Appraisals will be carried out during the lifetime of this Plan, including West Street in Drogheda and Clanbrassil Street in Dundalk.

Table 9.4: Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's)

County	Drogheda	Dundalk
Ardee	Bolton Square/Green Lanes	St Mary's Road
Carlingford	Clinton's Lane	Roden Place
Castlebellingham	The Dale	The Crescent
Collon	Fair Street	Clanbrassil Street
Greenore	Laurence's Street	Jocelyn Street / Seatown Place
Monasterboice	Legavoureen Park	Soldiers Point – Coastguard Houses
Newtown – Monasterboice - Clachan	Magdalene Street (North)	Magnet Road/The Demesne
Salterstown	St. Mary's Cottages	The Crescent, Blackrock
Whitestown	Millmount	
Townley Hall Demesne	North Quays/Back Lanes	
Oldbridge Demesne (Co. Meath)	St. Peter's Church and its Environs	
	Railway Terrace	
	Windmill Road (part of)	
	West Street and surrounding shopping streets forming Drogheda's shopping core	
	Leyland Place	
	Ship Street	
	Old Abbey Lane	
	Merchant's Quay	

Note: ACA guidance as outlined below is available at the following link.

- Guidelines for works in Architectural Conservation Areas (Appendix 13, Volume 3)
- A Guide to Architectural Conservation Areas in Louth (Appendix 14, Volume 3)
- Development Management Guidelines for ACA (Appendix 15, Volume 3)

Policy Objective	
BHC 31	To require that all development proposals within or affecting an Architectural Conservation Area preserve or enhance the character and appearance of that area, protect architectural features of special interest and ensure that the design respects the character of the historic architecture in terms of height, scale, layout, and materials. All development proposals shall have regard to the Architectural Conservation Area objectives in Appendix 11, Volume 3 and objectives contained in applicable Character Appraisals where available.

Policy Objective	
BHC 32	To retain any building within an Architectural Conservation Area which makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area. Demolition of such structures, the removal of features and street furniture which contribute to the character of the area shall only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Applications for demolition shall be accompanied by a measured and photographic survey, condition report and architectural heritage assessment.

Policy Objective	
BHC 33	To ensure any new service infrastructure (installed by the Local Authority or Public/Private Sector Utility Companies) shall not be located where it will be detrimental to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area.

Policy Objective	
BHC 34	To ensure that the protection of architectural features of special interest within an Architectural Conservation Area are retained as part of any proposed re-development. In certain cases development management guidelines may be relaxed in order to secure their conservation.

Policy Objective	
BHC 35	To require that any development on the periphery of an Architectural Conservation Area does not detract from the existing character of the designated Architectural Conservation Area.

Policy Objective	
BHC 36	To ensure that new trading bays and all associated signage shall not be located where it will be detrimental to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area or any important building or vista in the Architectural Conservation Area.

Policy Objective	
BHC 37	To retain surviving medieval plots and street patterns in the Architectural Conservation Areas and other towns and villages where in evidence and in the course of development, to record and mark evidence of ancient boundaries and layouts etc.

9.7 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

Louth has a rich heritage of gardens and designed landscaped gardens consisting of public parks, private gardens, and landscapes associated with country estates and demesnes. These landscapes often include tree-lined avenues, formal ornamental woods, water-features, planned gardens, terraces and other formal features. In some cases, the house and buildings are no longer extant, but the demesne and designed landscape remains.

The Council recognises the importance of these historic gardens and designed landscapes and their role in providing the setting for protected structures and therefore seeks to ensure that they are protected from encroaching or adjacent development. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) has conducted a field survey, which has listed 93 historic gardens and designed landscapes in County Louth. These are listed in Table 9.5, illustrated on Map 9.4 and are also available on the Buildings of Ireland website.

Table 9.5 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

	Name	Garden ID	NIAH Buildings	RPS
1.	Allardstown	LH0032	NA	NA
2.	An Grianán (Termonfeckin)	LH0055	13834001	Lhs022-010
3.	Anaverna House	LH0001	13900422 - 13900425	Lhs004-006 - 006c
4.	Ardee District Hospital (Ardee House) St Joseph's & St Brigid's & Tower House	LH0002	13823032,13823033, 13823035, 13823036	Lhs017-035, Lhs017 -037, Lhs017- 038
5.	Arthurstown House	LH0003	NA	NA
6.	Ashville (Funshog)	LH0075	13901702 13901703	NA
7.	Ballymascanlan Hotel	LH0004	13900416, 13900747 - 13900753, 13900756 - 13900760	Lhs004-024, Lhs007-007 -Lhs007-013 Lhs007-022 - Lhs007-025
8.	Barmeath Castle	LH0005	13901816, 13901817	Lhs018-020
9.	Barronstown Rectory	LH0006	13900604	Lhs006-005
10.	Beaulieu House	LH0007	13902506 - 13902519	Lhs025-001 Lhs025-002 –Lhs025-002i

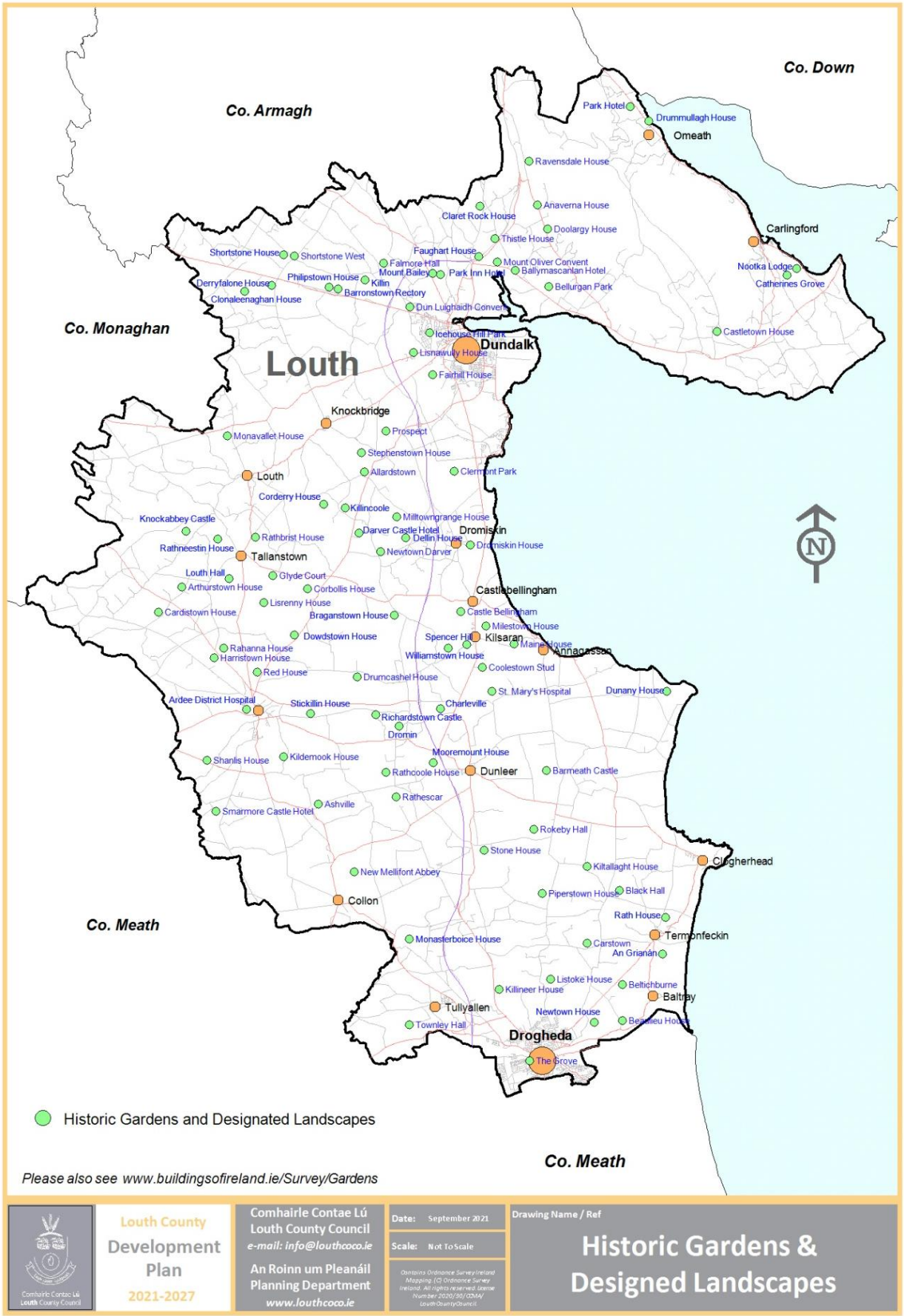
	Name	Garden ID	NIAH Buildings	RPS
11.	Bellurgan Park	LH0008	13900746	Lhs007-014
12.	Beltichburne	LH0009	13902528 - 13902530	Lhs025-018
13.	Black Hall	LH0010	13902207,13902206	Lhs022-003 - Lhs022-004
14.	Braganstown House	LH0011	13901517	Lhs015-048
15.	Cardistown House	LH0076	13901303,13901304	Lhs013-003 Lhs013-004
16.	Carstown House	LH0013	13902116,13902202, 13902203	Lhs021-010 Lhs022-027 Lhs022-028
17.	Castlebellingham (Bellingham Castle)	LH0014	13826003,13826005, 13826008,13826009, 13826010,13826011, 13826012	Lhs015-005 Lhs015-006 Lhs015-007 Lhs015-008 Lhs015-009 Lhs015-010 Lhs015-011 Lhs015-033
18.	Castletown House (Castletown Cooley)	LH0077	13900809	Lhs008-015
19.	Catherines Grove (Mullatee Carlingford)	LH0016	NA	NA
20.	Charleville	LH0017	NA	NA
21.	Claret Rock House	LH0018	13900408	NA
22.	Clermont Park	LH0019	13901215,13901216	Lhs012-021 Lhs012-023, Lhs012-027
23.	Clonaleenaghan House	LH0020	13900601	Lhs006-003
24.	Coolestown Stud Greenmount, Kilsaran	LH0038	13901509	Lhs015-045
25.	Corbollis House	LH0022	13901427	Lhs014-029
26.	Corderry House	LH0023	13901115	Lhs011-037
27.	Darver Castle Hotel	LH0024	13901118	Lhs011-028
28.	Dellin House (Dromiskin)	LH0080	13901203	NA
29.	Derryfalone House	LH0025	NA	NA
30.	Doolargy House	LH0063	13900433	Lhs004-038
31.	Dowdstown House	LH0082	13901416	Lhs014-008
32.	Dromin House	LH0081	13901833	Lhs018-003
33.	Dromiskin House	LH0083	13829002	Lhs012-036
34.	Drumcashel House	LH0084	13901402,13901403	Lhs014-011
35.	Drummullagh House	LH0027	13833006	NA

	Name	Garden ID	NIAH Buildings	RPS
36.	Dun Luighaidh Convent	LH0015	13900737	D089, D090, D091, D092
37.	Dunany House	LH0028	139011902	Lhs019-009
38.	Fairhill House	LH0030	NA	NA
39.	Falmore Hall	LH0031	13900401	Lhs004-012
40.	Faughart House	LH0032	NA	NA
41.	Glyde Court, Tallanstown	LH0012	13901425	Lhs014-007
42.	Harristown House, Ardee	LH0039	NA	NA
43.	Icehouse Hill Park (Dundalk House)	LH0029	13704017	D179
44.	Kildemook House, Ardee	LH0036	13901708,13901709	Lhs017-089, Lhs017-090
45.	Killin	LH0040	13900739	Lhs007-001
46.	Killincoole House & Castle, Knockbridge	LH0085	13901116	Lhs011-026
47.	Killineer House	LH0041	13902428,13902429, 13902430	Lhs024-003 Lhs024-003b Lhs024-003c
48.	Kiltallaght House	LH0042	NA	NA
49.	Knockabbey Castle	LH0072	13901130	Lhs011-004
50.	Lisnawully House	LH0043	NA	D035
51.	Lisrenny House, Tallanstown	LH0044	13901418, 13901419	Lhs014-005 Lhs014-023,
52.	Listoke House, Drogheda	LH0045	13902432	Lhs024-015 Lhs024-018
53.	Louth Hall	LH0046	13901426	Lhs014-004
54.	Maine House	LH0047	NA	NA
55.	Milestown House	LH0048	NA	Lhs015-026
56.	Milltowngrange House	LH0037	13901208,13901209	Lhs012-044, Lhs012-045
57.	Monasterboice House	LH0049	13902101 -13902104	Lhs021-001 Lhs021-002 Lhs021-002b Lhs021-002c
58.	Monavallet House	LH0050	13901105	Lhs011-007
59.	Mooremount House	LH0051	NA	NA
60.	Mount Bailey (Carnbeg)	LH0052	NA	NA
61.	Mount Oliver Convent	LH0053	13900414	Lhs004-003
62.	New Mellifont Abbey	LH0021	13828001 Collon House	Lhs020-009

	Name	Garden ID	NIAH Buildings	RPS
63.	Newtown Darver	LH0097	13901204	Lhs012-040
64.	Newtown House (Newtownstalaban)	LH0054	13902436	Lhs024-017
65.	Nootka Lodge (Carlingford)	LH0056	NA	NA
66.	Park Hotel Drummullagh, Omeath	LH0095	NA	NA
67.	Park Inn Hotel (Carnbeg)	LH0094	NA	NA
68.	Philipstown House	LH0057	13900603	Lhs006-004
69.	Piperstown House	LH0087	13902112	Lhs021-015
70.	Prospect (Cavan Hill)	LH0058	NA	NA
71.	Rahanna House	LH0065	13901408, 13901409,13901410	Lhs014-016,
72.	Rath House	LH0059	13902201	Lhs022-011
73.	Rathbrist House	LH0088	13901121	Lhs011-038
74.	Rathcoole House	LH0060	13901828	Lhs018-047
75.	Rathescar House	LH0061	13901826 13901827	Lhs018-001 Lhs018-046
76.	Rathneestin House	LH0089	NA	NA
77.	Ravensdale House (Ravensdale Park)	LH0062	13900419, 13900420, 1390043	Lhs001-001 Lhs004-027 Lhs004-028, Lhs004-035 Lhs004-040
78.	Red House (Ardee)	LH0064	13901401	Lhs014-006
79.	Richardstown Castle	LH0090	13901712,13901711,13901713	Lhs017-051
80.	Rokeby Hall, Dunleer	LH0066	13901801,13901802, 13901803,13901809, 13901810	Lhs018-019 Lhs018-019, Lhs018-035, Lhs018-036
81.	Shanlis House	LH0091	13901706	NA
82.	Shortstone House	LH0067	NA	NA
83.	Shortstone West	LH0096	13900305	Lhs003-005
84.	Smarmore Castle Hotel	LH0068	13901701	Lhs017-050
85.	Spencer Hill	LH0034	13901513	Lhs015-047
86.	St. Mary's Hospital (Drumcar)	LH0026	13901503	Lhs015-027
87.	Stephenstown House	LH0069	13901114	Lhs011-042
88.	Stickillin House	LH0098	13901716	NA
89.	Stone House (Mullary Cross, Dunleer)	LH0070	13902110	Lhs021-006

	Name	Garden ID	NIAH Buildings	RPS
90.	The Grove Ballsgrove House & Gate	LH0101	13621018, 13621015	DB-219 DB-220
91.	Thistle House	LH0071	13900411	Lhs004-021
92.	Townley Hall	LH0073	13902411,13902412, 13902414-13902417, 13902419	Lhs025-001a Lhs025-001j
93.	Williamstown House	LH0074	13901511, 13901512	Lhs015-003

Map 9.4: Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes



Policy Objective	
BHC 38	To ensure new development will not adversely affect the site, setting or views to and from historic gardens and designed landscapes of heritage significance.

Policy Objective	
BHC 39	To require proposals for new development in designed landscapes and demesnes include an appraisal of the landscape, designed views and vistas, and an assessment of significant trees or groups of trees, where appropriate, in order to inform site appropriate design proposals.

Policy Objective	
BHC 40	To require that proposals for large scale developments within Designed Landscapes and Demesnes to utilise 3D Digital Survey Modelling tools or such other processes/tools acceptable to the Planning Authority, to demonstrate that the proposed development does not adversely affect the site or its setting.

Policy Objective	
BHC 41	To have regard to the *'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines' (2011)* and the '*Guidance Notes for the 'Appraisal of Historic Gardens, Demesnes, Estates and their Settings' (2006)* in the appraisal and description of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, and any subsequent Guidelines.

9.8 VERNACULAR HERITAGE

Scattered throughout the countryside and within the towns and villages of County Louth, there is an extensive stock of historic buildings and structures built by local people, using local skills and materials, such as thatch, reflecting the unique local history and character of a place. In architectural terms, they constitute Vernacular Heritage, expressing the culture of a community and forming a vital component of the landscape. While these older buildings may not merit specific designation as Protected Structures, their form, scale, materials and orientation contribute positively to the rural landscape in addition to the towns and villages of Louth, establishing the distinctive character of a particular area. Characteristics of vernacular buildings are as contained in Appendix 16, Volume 3.



Vernacular structures, including thatched cottages, are extremely vulnerable due to the changing needs and demands of the modern generation and many are lost through demolition, replacement, or dereliction and consequently, what was once commonplace is becoming increasingly rare.

The Council will encourage and promote the re-use of vernacular buildings rather than their replacement, while recognising the need for such buildings to evolve and survive.

The loss of vernacular architecture relates not only to the loss of entire structures, but also the gradual attrition of architectural details. Alterations to individual buildings can have a significant and cumulative effect on streetscapes and landscapes. Any changes proposed to a vernacular structure should be sympathetic to its special features and its character, while ensuring its continued use.

9.9 Historic Building Stock

In the interest of sustainability, it is considered that the re-use and adaptation of existing buildings including thatched cottages is preferable to their demolition. The Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015 suggests all public authorities address the re-use of existing building stock, regardless of protected status or otherwise.

Policy Objective	
BHC 42	To promote, where feasible, the protection, retention, sympathetic maintenance and appropriate revitalisation and use of the vernacular built heritage, including thatched cottages and other structures in both urban and rural areas, which contribute to the streetscape and landscape character and deter the demolition of these structures.

Policy Objective	
BHC 43	To maintain and refurbish stone kerbs and paving stones where feasible and where new kerbs are necessary, ensure they are of a high quality and in character with the existing.

Policy Objective	
BHC 44	To encourage the re-use and adaption of existing historic buildings in a manner compatible with their character.

9.10 Linguistic Cultural Heritage

The 2003 UN Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage recognises the vital role of language in the expression and transmission of living heritage. It notes that all intangible cultural heritage depends on language for its day-to-day vitality, and to ensure it is passed from one generation to the next. Louth has a rich language and literary tradition. The Oriel Irish dialect continued to be spoken in Omeath until just after the middle of the 20th century. In recognition of this, and the increasing numbers of Irish language speakers setting up home in the area, the Omeath branch of Conradh na Gaeilge was set-up in July 2014 to promote the Irish language in Omeath and its surrounding area. The Council recognises the importance of and will support initiatives in promoting the Irish language in the County.

Policy Objective	
BHC 45	To support initiatives promoting the Irish language within the County.



Chapter 10

Infrastructure and Public Utilities

"Support County Louth's strategy for targeted population and strong economic growth in line with national and regional objectives through protection, improvement and extension of water services infrastructure, and flood alleviation services throughout the County, in conjunction with other statutory bodies. Encourage and support energy and communication efficiency to achieve a reasonable balance between responding to EU and national policies on climate change, renewable energy, communications and enabling resources to be harnessed in a sustainable manner in accordance with the future proper planning and development of the County. "

10 INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC UTILITIES

10.1 IRISH WATER

10.1.1 Introduction

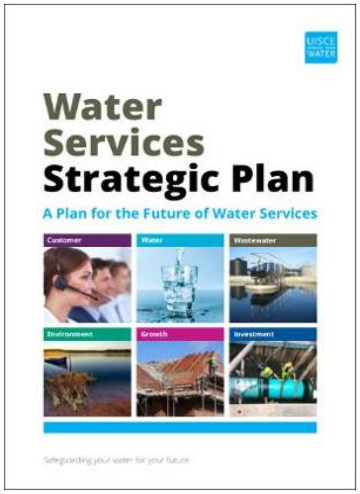
The sustainable growth of the County is dependent, *inter alia,* on the provision of adequate water and waste water services and infrastructure. A strategic approach in accordance with the County's Core and Settlement Strategies is essential for the delivery of such services, in order to ensure there is adequate capacity to support the future development of the County including economic investment and sustainable and attractive communities. Such infrastructure provision must be implemented in a manner that protects public health, is environmentally appropriate and all within the context of a changing climate.

In accordance with the *Water Services Act 2013*, the responsibility for the provision of public water supply, wastewater collection and treatment services transferred from the remit of the local authorities to Irish Water. Since 2014, Irish Water has been responsible for the operation of public water services including the management and maintenance of water assets and infrastructure, the delivery of capital projects, strategic planning and policy development. It is an objective of Irish Water to provide drinking water and wastewater capacity to facilitate growth in accordance with core strategies at County level and in accordance with the policies and objectives at both national and regional level. It is accountable to two regulatory bodies; the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) which is the economic regulator for the water industry and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which is the environmental regulator.

Louth County Council through its Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Irish Water is contracted to manage and maintain all aspects of water and wastewater provision, operation and maintenance and capital project management in County Louth, on behalf of Irish Water.

Currently, Irish Water is developing the National Water Resource Plan (NWRP) outlining how to move to a sustainable, secure and reliable public drinking water supply over a 25 year period while safeguarding the environment. It will outline how Irish Water intends to maintain a balance between supply from water sources around the country and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long term. This will facilitate future planning and ensure provision of sufficient, safe and clean drinking water to facilitate the social and economic growth of our country.

In 2015 Irish Water prepared its *Water Services Strategic Plan* (WSSP) setting out the strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over a 25 year period whilst setting the context for investment and implementation plans.



This Plan is reviewed on a five yearly cycle and the first review was completed in October 2020. Irish Water and Louth County Council will continue to work in partnership, to identify the water services required to support planned development in line with national and regional planning policies for inclusion in the Irish Water Capital Investment Plans.

Irish Water's Capital Investment Programme (CIP) outlines the indicative priorities and investments in water services infrastructure over the plan period.

The CIP aims to deliver improvements in drinking water quality, leakage, wastewater compliance, business efficiencies and customer service. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) has recently approved Irish Water's third Revenue Control Period (RC3), with supporting Investment Plan (2020-2024).

Where development proposals arise that require upgrading/expansion of Irish Water strategic infrastructure over and above that included in the Capital Investment Plan (CIP), or require the accelerated delivery of planned infrastructure, Irish Water will undertake an economic assessment of the implications of these requirements. This will take account of the provisions of this Plan and wider government policy on planning and will provide, where relevant, indicative costs to the connection applicant of Irish Water providing this infrastructure (as detailed in Irish Water's Connection Charging Policy).

The Council, in conjunction with Irish Water, will continue to encourage full capacity use of available infrastructure and to encourage connections to existing infrastructure where capacity exists, in order to maximise use of existing infrastructure and reduce additional investment costs.

The Council remains the designated Water Authority for the assessment and approval of individual domestic on-site wastewater treatment systems in the County. It is also responsible for the Rural Water Programme, surface water drainage, flood management and monitoring of surface water quality.

Policy Objective	
IU 1	To liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water in identifying, prioritising and progressing the implementation of water and wastewater projects throughout County Louth over the lifetime of the Plan, in accordance with the Core and Settlement Strategies.



10.1.2 Wastewater and Water Services

The Water Services Section of Louth County Council will co-operate with Irish Water in providing and maintaining adequate public water supply and wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure throughout the County for the period of the plan and beyond.

In conjunction with Irish Water, the Water Services Section of Louth County Council will endeavour to ensure the continued investment in, and delivery of, improvements to water infrastructure over the Plan period, through the implementation of the CIP 2020-2024.

10.1.2.1 Wastewater Collection and Treatment

The provision and maintenance of quality wastewater collection and wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential for the sustainable development and protection of the environment and public health. Irish Water is responsible for the treatment of wastewater in towns and villages where public wastewater treatment facilities exist and currently operates eighteen public sewerage schemes in the County.

It is the policy of Louth County Council to work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect existing wastewater infrastructure, to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new wastewater services infrastructure to facilitate future growth.

10.1.2.2 Water Supply and Distribution

The provision and maintenance of quality water treatment and water distribution infrastructure is essential for the sustainable development of communities and businesses within the County. Irish Water is responsible for the treatment and supply of water in towns, villages and rural areas, where public water supply schemes are in place and currently operates thirteen water supply schemes in the County, from three water resource zones. It is the policy of the Council to work in conjunction with Irish Water, to protect existing water infrastructure, to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new wastewater services infrastructure to facilitate future growth.

Policy Objective	
IU 2	To work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect and make existing water and wastewater infrastructure climate resilient to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new water and wastewater services infrastructure, to facilitate existing and future growth.

Policy Objective	
IU 3	To support the development of Drinking Water Protection Plans in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the current and future cycles of River Basin Management Plans. In this regard, the Council supports mitigation and protection measures for all protected areas, including Drinking Water Protected Areas and associated Source Protection Plans.

Policy Objective	
IU 4	To support the provision, extension and upgrade of high quality water and wastewater services infrastructure for both existing and future developments within County Louth, consistent with the principles of sustainability, prioritising those centres where serious deficiencies are in evidence or where further sustainable development can be reasonably anticipated.

Policy Objective	
IU 5	To support the extension or upgrading of existing water services infrastructure within the County (including those listed in the IW Investment Programme) and the provision of water services infrastructure in unserviced settlements to assist in the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

Policy Objective	
IU 6	To require all new developments connect to the public supply where public water and wastewater infrastructure is available or likely to be available and which has sufficient capacity.

Policy Objective	
IU 7	To support the development and proper management of Group Water Schemes subject to appropriate level of treatment being provided and suitable robust arrangements being put in place.

Policy Objective	
IU 8	To discourage the use of pump stations for conveyance of sewage unless the proposed pump station will cater for a significant catchment of zoned development lands that otherwise cannot be serviced. Where deemed appropriate, in consultation with Irish Water, temporary pumping arrangements may be considered as an interim measure, pending the provision of more permanent arrangements within a reasonable timeframe. All arrangements for same will be as per the requirements and agreement of Irish Water.

10.2 Water Conservation

Louth County Council has been successful in its water conservation programmes to date in both Drogheda and Dundalk. Water conservation measures such as leak detection, demand management and pressure management are employed to reduce the demand for potable water, therefore facilitating additional development and improving the level of service to existing customers.

Irish Water operates a National Leakage Reduction Programme, which involves fixing or replacing old, damaged pipes and reducing high levels of leakage to provide a more reliable water supply.

Policy Objective	
IU9	To support the commitment to water conservation and leakage reduction in accordance with best practice, and through the implementation of the National Leakage Reduction Programme, in order to conserve valuable resources and reduce wastage.

Policy Objective	
IU 10	To support Irish Water in promoting public awareness and involvement in water conservation measures by households, business and industry.

Policy Objective	
IU 11	To encourage new developments to incorporate water conservation measures such as rain water harvesting to minimise wastage of water supply.

10.2.1 Rural Water Programme

Private supplies provide water to those areas not served by a public water supply. They comprise private Group Water Schemes serving local communities or private wells serving single dwelling houses. There are seven private Group Schemes operating in County Louth. The Council supports the continued operation and development of the private Group Scheme sector through the administering of subsidies and grants, as provided for under the Rural Water Programme.

Policy Objective	
IU 12	To promote and support the development and proper management of Group Water Schemes in the County, subject to an appropriate level of treatment being provided and suitable robust operational arrangements being put in place.

10.2.2 Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems

The provision of well-maintained quality wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential to facilitate sustainable development in the County, while also protecting the environment and public health. All wastewater, including domestic and trade, ultimately discharges to water, whether ground, surface or marine. Therefore, the provision of satisfactory waste water treatment and disposal is essential for the protection of the environment. Irish Water is now responsible for the treatment and disposal of wastewater, where public wastewater facilities exist within settlements.

All trade effluent requires an effluent discharge licence whether discharging to ground or surface waters. Domestic effluent discharging to surface waters and to ground waters (where the volume of discharge exceeds 5 cubic metres in any 24hr period) also requires a discharge licence. Treated wastewater discharging to ground and surface waters under licence, must not result in deterioration of the status of the water body and must comply with the groundwater and surface water regulations.

The use of grey water collection and recovery systems may be considered subject to compliance with building regulations. The building regulations recommend that only water from washing machines and baths is used for this purpose and not from kitchen sinks and dishwashers.

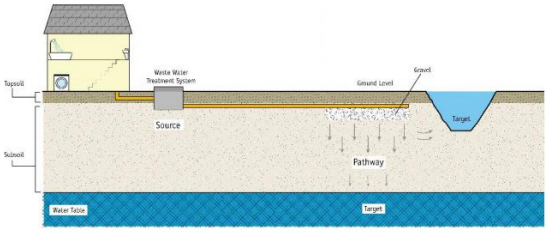
Policy Objective	
IU 13	To require that all development taking place within an area served by a public wastewater treatment system connects to that system.

Policy Objective	
IU 14	To require that on lands identified for non-domestic development where no public waste water facility exists or is proposed, that the wastewater be adequately treated and discharged to suitable receiving water, subject to a discharge licence.

Policy Objective	
IU 15	To promote rain water harvesting and grey water use in all developments and in particular for larger developments, as an alternative to attenuation.

10.2.3 On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems

Louth County Council is the designated Water Authority for the assessment and approval of individual private domestic on-site wastewater treatment systems in the County.



The main method of sewage disposal in rural areas is by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary wastewater treatment systems. The requirements for these systems are set out in the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems, Population Equivalent ≤ 10 (2021).

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

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

Policy Objective	
IU 18	To require that private wastewater treatment systems for individual houses where permitted, comply with the recommendations contained within the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems, Population Equivalent ≤ 10 (2021).

10.2.4 Water Drainage

Louth County Council and Irish Water have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in respect of surface water drainage and flood management.

With the construction of new development, less rainfall is absorbed into the ground with a corresponding increased volume and rate of flow to drains. This has the potential to cause localised flooding in streams and piped drains, in addition to bringing surface contaminants directly into water courses, causing pollution.

10.2.5 Sustainable Drainage Systems

The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) produced five policy documents, which include:

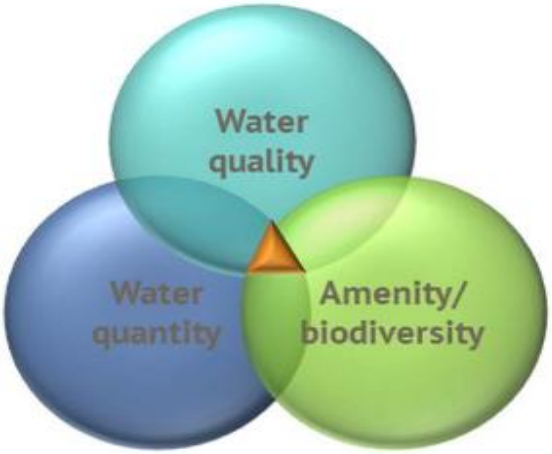
- Environmental Management;
- Drainage of New Developments and;
- Climate Change.

These documents focused on the design approach and criteria for drainage infrastructure within new development to ensure it did not continue the trend of pollution and flooding of waterways.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can best be summarised as offering an integrated approach and total solution to rainwater management and is applicable to urban and rural areas. The SuDS technique is a method of replicating the natural characteristics of rainfall runoff from any site, ensuring water is infiltrated or conveyed more slowly to the drainage system and ultimately to water courses via permeable paving, swales, green roofs, rain water harvesting, detention basins, ponds and wetlands.

These facilities are designed to prevent pollution of streams and rivers and minimise the impacts of urban runoff by its capture as close to the source as possible and its subsequent slow release so that development impact is neutral or positive on flooding.

In addition to forming part of the County's drainage infrastructure, SuDS can also provide amenity benefits to local communities and benefits for biodiversity simultaneously. Properly designed and located SuDS features can be incorporated within and can complement the amenity and aesthetic value of open spaces. Detailed measures in relation to SuDS techniques in all forthcoming Local Area Plans shall be appropriately designed to enhance biodiversity and amenities and to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive sites and habitats, including where flood risk management measures are planned.



The SuDS triangle

The SuDS philosophy is to replicate, as closely as possible the natural drainage from a site before development.

SuDS is designed within the opportunities and constraints of a site to deliver the most benefits for water quantity, quality and amenity/biodiversity. Where these objectives overlap this is called the SuDS triangle.



Policy Objective	
IU 19	To require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of SuDS measures be incorporated in all new development (including extensions to existing developments). All development proposals shall be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment including run-off quantity, run off quality and impacts on habitat and water quality.

Policy Objective	
IU 20	To require all development proposals meet the design criteria, (adjusted to reflect local conditions), and material designs contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) and demonstrate how runoff is captured as close to source as possible with subsequent slow release to the drainage system and watercourse.

Policy Objective	
IU 21	To seek to avoid the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and solutions to maximise the capacity of towns with combined drainage systems.

Policy Objective	
IU 22	To ensure all new development incorporates appropriate measures to protect existing water bodies, through appropriate treatment of runoff. In particular, discharges from car parks shall be appropriately treated so as to remove pollutant materials.

Policy Objective	
IU 23	To ensure all new developments provide for separated drainage systems.

Policy Objective	
IU 24	To encourage particularly in buildings of increased height the provision of green roofs and green walls as an integrated part of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and which provide benefits for biodiversity, wherever possible.

10.2.6 Riparian Corridor

A riparian corridor is the land directly adjacent to or surrounding a natural or artificial waterway and can include major and secondary rivers, wetlands, intermittent or permanent creeks and streams. The width of the riparian corridor may vary along the waterway and is dependent on location within the catchment (valley or floodplain) and the adjacent land use.

These corridors provide a crucial link between terrestrial and stream ecosystems forming a unique and distinct unit within the surrounding landscape and are typically home to a diverse range of plant species.

Where it is necessary to maintain the ecological or environmental quality of a watercourse and in relation to watercourses of a significance conveyance capacity, it is necessary that there is a set back from the edge of watercourses to allow access for channel clearing and maintenance. A minimum setback of at least 10m (or other width, as determined by the Council) will be required on each side of the watercourse, depending on the width of the watercourse.

Policy Objective	
IU 25	To ensure that no development including clearing or storage of materials takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse.

10.3 Flood Risk Management

Flooding is a natural phenomenon of the hydrological cycle that can occur at any time, in a wide variety of locations, with significant impacts, threatening people's lives, their property and the environment.

Whilst instances of flooding have occurred in Louth, relative to other counties, the extent of this flooding has been low. However, given the reality of climate change, there are areas of the County which are at risk of coastal, fluvial, pluvial and estuarial flooding.

Drainage and flood management are a central theme within the Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024, which has an overarching objective to manage the risk of flooding through a variety of responses.

Coastal Flooding: Resulting from higher sea levels than normal causing the sea to overflow onto land. Such flooding is influenced by high tide level, storm surges and wave action.

Pluvial Flooding: Resulting from high intensity rainfall events where run-off volume exceeds capacity of the surface water network.

Fluvial Flooding: Watercourse capacity is exceeded or the channel is blocked and excess water spills from the channel onto adjacent floodplains.

Estuarial Flooding: A combination of high tide and high river flows prevents water from flowing out to sea, causing water levels inland to flood river banks.

Like other natural processes flooding cannot be completely eliminated, but its impacts can be minimised, with proactive and environmentally sustainable management of catchments, identifying areas vulnerable to flooding and by taking measures to ensure development does not individually or cumulatively contribute to an increase in flood risk.

With climate change, there is a likelihood of increased rainfall and rising sea levels, which coupled with increased urbanisation means that flood risk to property is likely to increase in the future.

10.3.1 Flood Risk

The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is a national screening exercise completed by the OPW, based on available and readily derivable information and undertaken to identify areas at potential of flooding.

The PFRA study considered flooding from a number of sources, including fluvial, tidal, pluvial and groundwater and resulted in a national suite of broad scale flood maps.

The PFRA is a requirement of the EU Floods Directive and the publication of the work has led to and informed more detailed assessment, which is being undertaken as part of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) studies.

It prioritised the areas of greatest potential risk from one or more sources of flooding and designated these as Areas for Further Assessment (AFA), of which there are eight identified in County Louth. Separate to this, Louth County Council produced the Dunleer Flood Study in 2016, which includes detailed Flood Mapping for Dunleer village.

The OPW undertook the Catchment Flood Risk and Management (CFRAM) programme to elicit a comprehensive picture of flood risk in the AFA's and identify how to effectively and sustainably manage this flood risk. This culminated in the OPW producing the following:

- Neagh Bann Flood Risk Management Plan; and
- Eastern Flood Risk Management Plan.

The eight Areas for Further Assessment and their associated Flood Risk Management Plans are as outlined in Table 10.1.

Implementing the measures set out in these plans requires significant capital investment in addition to prioritisation of this investment. Having been allocated funding, and in conjunction with the OPW, the Council is seeking to deliver on the following Flood Relief Schemes during the lifetime of this Plan:

- Dundalk, Blackrock & Ardee Flood Relief Scheme;
- Drogheda & Baltray Flood Relief Scheme; and
- Carlingford & Greenore Flood Relief Scheme.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to be completed during the Plan making process in accordance with *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009)* has been appended to this Plan.

These guidelines follow the principle that certain types of vulnerable development should not be permitted in flood risk areas, particularly flood plains, except where there are no alternative and appropriate sites available in lower risk areas that are consistent with the objectives of proper planning and sustainable development.

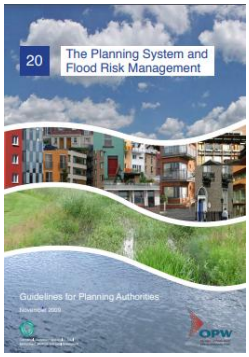


Table 10.1 Areas for Further Assessment and their Associated Flood Risk Management Plan

Area for Further Assessment (AFA)	Flood Risk and Management Plan (FRAM)
Annagassan	Neagh Bann
Ardee	Neagh Bann
Baltray	Eastern
Carlingford	Neagh Bann
Drogheda	Eastern
Dundalk & Blackrock	Neagh Bann
Greenore	Neagh Bann
Termonfeckin	Neagh Bann

Flood zones are geographical areas within which the likelihood of flooding is in a particular range and they are a key tool in flood risk management. There are three types of flood zones defined in the guidelines. These are outlined in Table 10.2.

The SFRA mapping identifies where Flood Zones A and B are most likely to occur, focusing on the smaller towns and villages throughout the County.

Further mapping illustrates flooding in all urban and rural locations, which facilitates identification of areas within which development proposals will be subject to site specific Flood Risk Assessment.

Table 10.2: Flood Zone Type

Flood Zone Type	Description
A	The probability of flooding is highest (greater than 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding or 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding) and where a wide range of receptors would be vulnerable
B	The probability of flooding is moderate (between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 and 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding and between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 year and 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding)
C	The probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1% or 1 in 1000 for both river and coastal flooding)

Policy Objective	
IU 26	To reduce the risk of new development being affected by possible future flooding by: • Avoiding development in areas at risk of flooding and • Where development in floodplains cannot be avoided, taking a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and adaptation to the risk.

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

Policy Objective	
IU 28	Where a site specific Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that there are significant residual flood risks to a proposed development or its occupiers in conflict with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2009, planning permission will normally not be granted unless the requirements of Section 5.28 'Assessment of minor proposals in areas of flood risk' can be satisfied.

Policy Objective	
IU 29	To implement the Flood Risk Management Measures as detailed in the Neagh Bann Flood Risk Management Plan, the Eastern Flood Risk Management Plan and the Dunleer Flood Risk Management Plan, ensuring that proposals for development support and do not impede the progression of these measures. Louth County Council will, in partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW) deliver the following Flood Relief Schemes: • Dundalk , Blackrock and Ardee; • Drogheda and Baltray; and • Carlingford and Greenore.

Policy Objective	
IU 30	To work with the Office for Public Works in the development and implementation of catchment-based strategies for the management of flood risk – including those relating to storage and conveyance.

Policy Objective	
IU 31	To contribute towards the improvement and/or restoration of the natural flood risk management functions of flood plains subject to compliance with the environmental legislation and availability of resources.

Policy Objective	
IU 32	To ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.

Policy Objective	
IU 33	Where a portion of a site is at risk of flooding, the lands at risk will be subject to the sequential approach to ensure first and foremost that new development is directed towards lands at low risk of flooding; and to restrict the type of development to that 'appropriate' to each flood zone in accordance with Tables 3.1 and 3.2 of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines.

Policy Objective	
IU 34	To consult with the Office of Public Works (OPW) in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible.

Policy Objective	
IU 35	To consult with the Office of Public Works (OPW) in relation to proposed developments which include the construction, replacement or alteration of a bridge or culvert and to require that the developers obtain consent from the OPW under *Section 50 of the EU (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010* and *Section 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act 1945, where appropriate.*

10.3.2 PFRA Mapping

PFRA mapping has been used to define the flood zones in places outside of the scope of the CFRAM Study and the Dunleer Flood Study. These areas should be treated with caution due to the indicative nature of the PFRA mapping. It is provided for information purposes to help identify areas where flood risk should be explored in greater detail. For this reason, all Zoning and Composite Mapping for each of the Settlements associated with the Development Plan clearly differentiate between flood zones derived from PFRA mapping and the CFRAM Study, on the attached legend. Any planning application on lands where pluvial flooding is identified will be required to include an assessment of the potential flood risks associated with the development of the lands together with any mitigating measures that will ensure the development and associated infrastructure will avoid significant risks of flooding and not exacerbate flooding elsewhere.

10.4 COMMUNICATIONS

10.4.1 Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is a term used to cover the technical means of processing and communicating information, primarily involving digital technology.



The importance of ICT is recognised in two ways. Firstly, access to fast, reliable and cost effective communications offsets the impact of geographic remoteness, increasing social inclusion, economic competitiveness and employment opportunities.

Secondly, it can contribute to sustainability goals by reducing the need to travel e.g. home working which provides for a better home life balance with fewer car journeys and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. With respect to Telecommunication Technologies, the Council acknowledges its importance and seeks to promote and facilitate widespread telecommunication infrastructure throughout the County in order to achieve balanced social and economic development.

The Council will promote the development of additional ICT infrastructure including broadband, telecommunication facilities, mobile phone coverage etc., to provide for the physical and economic development of County Louth subject to normal planning considerations.

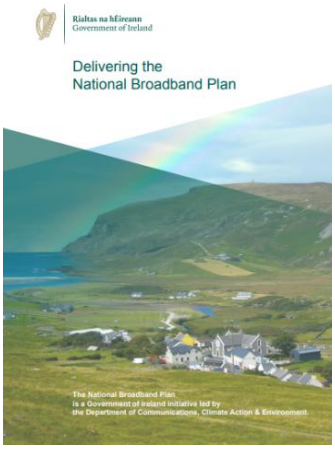
Policy Objective	
IU 36	To promote and facilitate the sustainable delivery of a high quality ICT infrastructure network throughout the County taking account of the need to protect the countryside and the urban environment together with seeking to achieve balanced social and economic development.

10.4.2 Broadband Infrastructure

High speed, cost competitive and reliable broadband underpins economic development. It is increasingly recognised as a critical piece of infrastructure enabling businesses adopt innovative technologies, more flexible working patterns and to trade online.

Its absence makes it significantly more difficult to retain existing employment, attract new jobs and develop new enterprise opportunities.

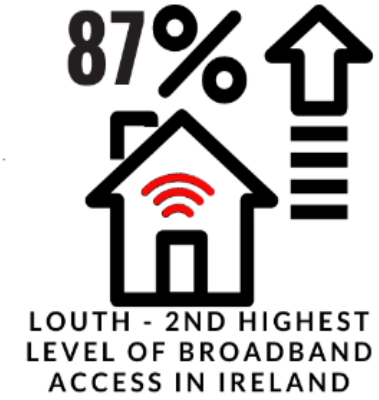
The implementation of high speed broadband connectivity falls within the remit of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (formerly the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources) which, in 2012 published *Delivering a Connected Society – A National Broadband Plan for Ireland (NBP).* This is the Governments initiative to radically changing the broadband landscape of Ireland and delivering high speed, reliable and cost effective broadband services to all premises in the country.



The NBP will deliver this through a combination of private industry investment and state intervention (known as the Intervention Strategy), to those parts of the country where private companies have no plans to invest.

By signing the contract for the delivery of the *National Broadband Plan in 2019*, the Government guaranteed that rural communities would have the same opportunities as urban areas. The optimum way for telecommunication services to be delivered is via fibre optic based networks.

The deployment of such networks drives the level of high speed broadband penetration in an area. County Louth has 5 no. Open Access Network Specialists and Wholesale Providers, (eNET/MANS, SIRO, Open Eir, Viatel and BT). Virgin Media Ireland has also developed two high speed proprietary broadband networks in Drogheda and Dundalk.



Due to the recent fibre optic network deployments by these commercial providers, County Louth has the second highest level of broadband access in Ireland at 87% of premises.

Under the NDP, the remaining 13% of premises, which fall into the State Intervention Area, will be provided with access to high speed broadband.

Louth continues to benefit from the rollout of several Government led broadband schemes, ensuring broadband services are available in communities across the County.

One such scheme which benefits County Louth, is Broadband Connection Points (BCPs). These are public locations (public buildings/sites) which will receive 150Mb high speed broadband connectivity and where public Wi-Fi will be provided, allowing people in the area to make use of broadband as and when required. Nine such sites were identified in County Louth.

10.4.2.1 Metropolitan Area Networks (MANS)

This is a network of ducting and fibre optic cable laid within a metropolitan area, which can be used by a variety of businesses and organisations to provide services including, but not limited to telecoms, television and internet. While MANS are publically owned (managed by eNET), they allow all telecommunication service operators (retailers) open access to the network. MANS, to date has been provided in Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee. The availability of broadband in promoting these centres to potential employment generating investors is deemed to be critical.

10.4.2.2 Louth Broadband Action Plan

The Louth Economic Forum (LEC) devised an overall 10 Point Plan, identifying 10 specific areas to be addressed within its work programme.

This included high speed broadband in recognition of its importance in underpinning economic growth. The aim of the Action Plan is to continue significant progress and advance broadband to rural areas in accordance with the National Broadband Plan.

Both Drogheda and Dundalk have six high speed broadband infrastructure providers/wholesalers, enabling a variety of telecom retailers to offer up speeds to 1000Mbps to businesses and consumers.

Ardee and Dunleer have access to high speed broadband for premises in those towns.

Approximately 22% of the premises on the outskirts of the two towns will require state intervention under the NBP. Regarding the Level 3 and 4 Settlements, approximately 66% of the premises have access to high speed broadband with the remaining 34% requiring state intervention under the NBP.

Policy Objective	
IU 37	To support the delivery and implementation of the National Broadband Plan.

Policy Objective	
IU 38	To secure the rollout of high quality broadband and telecommunication infrastructure throughout the County and facilitate its expansion in remote rural areas, in the interest of promoting economic growth, competitiveness and social inclusion.

Policy Objective	
IU 39	To co-operate with the relevant agencies to facilitate the undergrounding of all electricity, telephone and television cables in urban areas wherever possible, in the interests of visual amenity.

10.4.2.3 Open Access Ducting

With the support of the Louth Broadband Action Plan, the Council will require that open access is made available to all ducting networks provided within the Plan area, in support of a competitive telecommunications services and to safeguard roads and footpaths from excavation. The networks will remain in the ownership of the developer until taken in charge by the Council.

Thereafter, the service provider will be responsible for the telecommunications infrastructure.

The Council will require, by way of condition attached to a permission, that the service provider enter an agreement with the Council to ensure that open access, at an economic cost, is provided.

Policy Objective	
IU 40	To require open access ducting for new developments is made available to all service providers on a non-exclusive lease basis at an economic cost.

10.4.2.4 Telecommunications Support Structures and Antennae:

The Council recognises the importance of high quality telecommunication infrastructure as a prerequisite for a successful economy and accepts the critical importance of a high quality telecommunications service at national, regional and local level.

Deregulation of the telecommunications industry has resulted in both choice and competition in conjunction with duplication and over provision of facilities. While the advantages of a high quality ICT infrastructure are acknowledged, these must be balanced against the need to safeguard both the urban and rural landscape, which can be significantly impacted due to the physical nature of these structures.

Visual impact should be kept to a minimum with detailed consideration of design, siting and scope for utilising landscaping measures effectively.

In considering planning applications, regard will be had to *Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG, 1996*, Circular Letter Pl07/12 and the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)*.

These guidelines and regulations encourage the sharing or clustering of sites, which will be reflected in Council policy.

Further guidance on the design and development of Telecommunications Structures Details is provided for in Chapter 13, Section 13.18.3.

Policy Objective	
IU 41	To ensure the orderly development of telecommunications throughout the County in accordance with the requirements of the *Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG, 1996*, except where they conflict with Circular Letter Pl07/12 which shall take precedence, and any subsequent revisions or expanded guidelines in this area.

Policy Objective	
IU 42	To require co-location of antennae support structures and sites where feasible. Operators shall be required to submit documentary evidence as to the non-feasibility of this option in proposals for new structures.

Policy Objective	
IU 43	To facilitate the public and private sector in making available where feasible and suitable, strategically located structures or sites, including those in the ownership of Louth County Council, to facilitate improved telecommunications coverage.

Policy Objective	
IU 44	To require best practice in both siting and design in relation to the erection of communication antennae and support infrastructure, in the interests of visual amenity and the protection of sensitive landscapes.

Policy Objective	
IU 45	To operate a presumption against the location of antennae support structures where they would have a serious negative impact on the visual amenity of sensitive sites and locations.

Policy Objective	
IU 46	To require the de-commissioning of a telecommunications structure and its removal off-site at the operator's expense where it is no longer required.

Policy Objective	
IU 47	To encourage service providers to engage in pre-planning discussions with the Planning Authority prior to the submission of planning applications.

10.4.2.5 Domestic Satellite Dishes

If inappropriately sited, satellite dishes can materially harm the character and appearance of historic buildings, important townscapes and the character of rural areas. While satellite dishes can be erected subject to specified conditions and limitations under the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)* these provisions are not applicable where the dwelling is a Protected Structure or sited within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

Policy Objective	
IU 48	To prohibit satellite dishes where they would materially harm the character and appearance of a Protected Structure, an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) or in any other area where they could cause unacceptable harm to the visual amenity.

10.5 ENERGY

10.5.1 Introduction

Energy is an essential component of Ireland's economy and society. Continued growth in County Louth, with respect to both population and the economy, will require energy to power businesses, homes, transport and public services.

A reliable, resilient and efficient energy system that caters for growth year round and across all sectors, will be required to underpin the future development of the County.

Louth requires world class energy infrastructure which is fit for purpose and, in this regard, our native renewable energy sources need to be developed. Such development will reduce dependence on fossil fuels and external sources, improve energy mix and provide a secure and resilient supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions creating environmental benefits and protect against climate change.

A reduction in our dependence on foreign fossil fuels will simultaneously provide positive social, economic and environmental dividends.

Renewable energy can be defined as energy developed from sources that are constantly replenished through the cycles of nature and unlike fossil fuels, are not finite. International, European and National policies all seek and support a more energy efficient society relying on sustainable renewable energy sources.

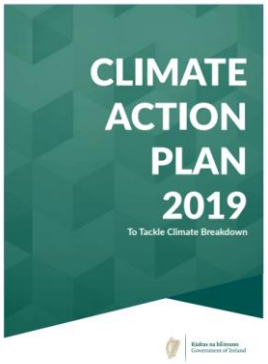
This Plan promotes energy efficiency and the development of indigenous renewable resources. The Development Plan can progress a sustainable energy future for the County, by recognising the importance of land use and transportation planning in promoting a low carbon society and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

10.5.2 Renewable Energy

Ireland's geographic location on the western edge of Europe accentuates our need for secure and continuous energy supplies, especially where our expenditure on energy imports remains significant. National policies promoting energy efficiency and sustainable renewable energy sources will ensure we secure our international competitiveness by increased use of and demand for indigenous resources and increased security of supply.

The Government supports the adoption of a net zero target by 2050 at EU level.

The *Climate Action Plan 2019* puts in place a decarbonisation pathway to 2030, which would be consistent with the adoption of a net zero target in Ireland by 2050.



From a national perspective, to achieve the target of 70% renewable electricity by 2030, the *'Climate Action Plan' 2019* identifies that to meet the required level of emissions reduction by 2030 that certain identified targets need to be met and which are detailed in Figure 10.1 below. This will involve phasing out coal- and peat-fired electricity generation plants, increasing renewable electricity, reinforcing the grid and putting systems in place to manage intermittent sources of power, especially from wind.

The Council acknowledges that it is critically important that it plays its part in realising national targets and this will be achieved through the inclusion of supporting policy objectives for renewable energy generation and development and through the preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy.

Figure 10.1

To meet the required level of emissions reduction, by 2030 we will:

- Reduce CO2 eq. Emissions from the sector by 50-55% relative to 2030 Pre-NDP projections
- Deliver an early and complete phase-out of coal- and peat fired electricity generation
- Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70%, indicatively comprised of:*
  - At least 3.5 GW of offshore renewable energy
  - Up to 1.5 GW of grid-scale solar energy
  - Up to 8.2 GW total of increase onshore wind capacity
- Meet 15% of electricity demand by renewable sources contracted under Corporate PPA's

[*The exact level of offshore wind, onshore wind, solar and other renewable technology will be determined by a new system of competitive auctions where the lowest cost technology will be determined, see box below.]

The National Planning Framework establishes a single vision for all communities in accordance with 10 shared goals identified as National Strategic Outcomes and herein NSO 8 recognises the national objective of achieving a transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This recognises that new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing the considerable onshore and off shore potential from a range of energy sources including wind, wave and solar and connection to major sources of demand.

The Council in the Plan will seek to support the NPF in harnessing the potential of the Eastern and Midland Region in renewable energy terms across the technological spectrum in helping to realise national targets.

The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy recognises the need to shift from a reliance on fossil fuel usage to a more diverse range of low and zero carbon sources, thereby supporting an increase in renewable energy sources across the technological spectrum within the Region.

EMRA seeks to identify, in conjunction with its constituent Local Authorities within the Region, Strategic Energy Zones (SEZ) as areas suitable for larger energy generating projects, the role of community and micro energy production in urban and rural settings and the potential for renewable energy within industrial areas.

This would contribute to the delivery of the targets set in the *'Climate Action Plan'* in respect of renewable energy.

The SEZ will ensure all environmental constraints are addressed in the analysis. The need for early stakeholder engagement is critical as effective community engagement is essential for building public confidence and helping the country, the Region and the County in achieving a transition to renewable energy.





The renewable energy options for County Louth include the following:

- Wind Energy (onshore and offshore);
- Solar Energy;
- Water Energy (hydro, wave and tidal);
- Heat Pump Systems (including geothermal);
- Bioenergy; and
- Waste Material.

At a national level, much of the growth in renewable energy has been derived from wind energy but Ireland has significant further renewable energy resource potential, which includes for solar, tidal, bioenergy and wave.

The Government is investigating opportunities to develop Ireland's abundant offshore renewable energy resources including offshore wind, wave and tidal energy in recognition of their rich potential offering in the coming decades. Given its coastal location, Louth has a clear part to play in the development of renewable energy and the provision of such alternative energy resources will be considered on suitable sites throughout the County.

The Council recognises the range of new and developing technologies that can contribute to minimising greenhouse gas emissions, providing a secure and stable energy supply and securing a greater proportion of our energy from renewable sources.

In 2017 the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government published '*Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change' under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* which included a Specific Planning Policy Requirement concerning policies or objectives that relate to wind energy developments and requirements of planning authorities in this regard.

In considering renewable energy the Council has had regard to the following documentation;

- The National Renewable Energy Action Plan 2010 (Irish Government submission to the European Commission);
- The Government's Strategy for Renewable Energy 2012 – 2020 (DCENR);
- The Government's White Paper on Energy Policy - Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 (DCENR); and
- The Government's National Mitigation Plan, July 2017 (DCCAE).

In relation to renewable energy, the Council will consider full legislation provision and supporting guidance, policy documents etc. issued by the relevant department to give effect to legislative provisions.

10.5.2.1 Energy Efficiency

The Council supports the concept of generating renewable energy at a 'local' level and is cognisant of the benefits that consequently accrue to local communities.

Local community engagement will form a key part of the Council's future energy strategy, to inform people of the economic, environmental and social benefits of moving away from solid/fossil fuels towards a low carbon economy.

The Council will endeavour to:

- Promote the rational use of energy;
- Promote renewable energy;
- Promote and disseminate energy information;
- Protect the environment;
- Reduce energy waste in all sectors of society; and
- Encourage the replacement of imported fossil fuels with regionally generated renewable energy in an effort to ensure security of energy supply, where it is feasible.

10.5.2.2 Louth Sustainable Energy Action Plan

The Louth Economic Forum devised an overall 10 point plan which identified 10 specific topics to be addressed within its work programme.

This included a Sustainable Energy Action Plan, the objective of which is to help sustain, support and create jobs through developing the concept of Louth as a leader in the delivery of the Green Economy.

Its objectives include building on and replicating sustainable energy best practices developed in Dundalk to elsewhere in the County, assisting local business to be competitive through energy efficiency supports and allowing green businesses use County Louth as a living laboratory to develop their products and services.

10.5.2.3 Renewable Energy Strategy

Louth County Council is committed to supporting investment in renewable energy and to developing a robust and sustainable Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) for the County. It will be informed by and aim to deliver on the *Climate Action Plan 2019* targets (and any revisions thereto) and position the County as a leader in renewable energy generation, supporting energy efficiency and conservation.

The RES will outline the potential for a range of renewable resources, including inter alia onshore and offshore wind, solar, bioenergy, geothermal, hydro, wave and tidal energy. It will establish baseline data and set out the renewable energy resource targets for the County to 2027, seeking a sustainable balance of renewable energy sources. Consistent with the Development Plan the RES will acknowledge the contribution that can be made to Louth being more energy secure, less reliant on traditional fossil fuels and meeting assigned national targets.

Policy Objective	
IU 49	To support international, national and County initiatives for limiting and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, utilising the natural resources of the County, in an environmentally acceptable manner subject to normal proper planning considerations including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.

Policy Objective	
IU 50	To co-operate with the appropriate authorities both north and south of the border in the provision of all-island renewable energy.

Policy Objective	
IU 51	To support initiatives aimed at reducing the level of energy consumption within the County.

Policy Objective	
IU 52	To produce a Renewable Energy Strategy for County Louth within one year of adoption of the Revised Wind Energy Guidelines. This strategy shall have regard to *'A Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies'*, (SEAI) and shall be compliant with the requirements of the SEA & Habitats Directives.

Policy Objective	
IU 53	To support the identification, in conjunction with EMRA, of Strategic Energy Zones, areas suitable to accommodate large energy generating projects within the Eastern and Midland Region.

Policy Objective	
IU 54	To support Sustainable Energy Communities and Local Community Group Initiatives to develop clean energy opportunities within the County.

Policy Objective	
IU 55	To support the implementation of the EU Green Deal, *Climate Action Plan 2019* (or any subsequent plan), *Programme for Government 2020, Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for County Louth* and the Climate Action Charter and facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

10.6 WIND ENERGY

Wind energy is currently the largest contributing resource of renewable energy in Ireland and is both Ireland's largest and cheapest renewable electricity resource. In 2018 wind provided 85% of Ireland's renewable electricity and 30% of our total electricity demand. Ireland is one of the leading countries in its use of wind energy, which is the second greatest source of electricity generation after natural gas.

The Council recognises the significant contribution that wind energy can make as a clean sustainable solution to energy requirements and its vital role in helping achieve national targets in relation to fossil fuel reductions and consequently greenhouse gas emissions. In the next decade, onshore wind will continue to be Ireland's main source of renewable energy.

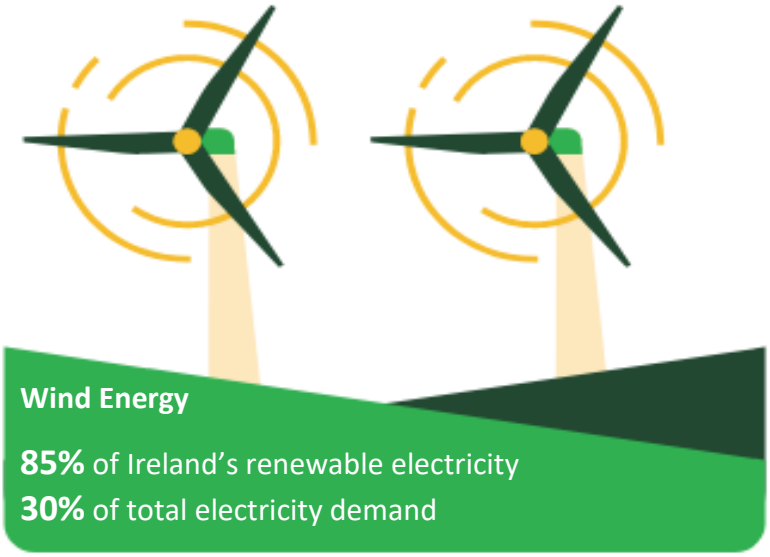
Such a radical shift away from our current reliance on fossil fuels will require significant changes nationally to the grid, existing infrastructure, legislation and the regulatory framework.

These changes are necessary and crucial if the country is to move to a more sustainable energy system.

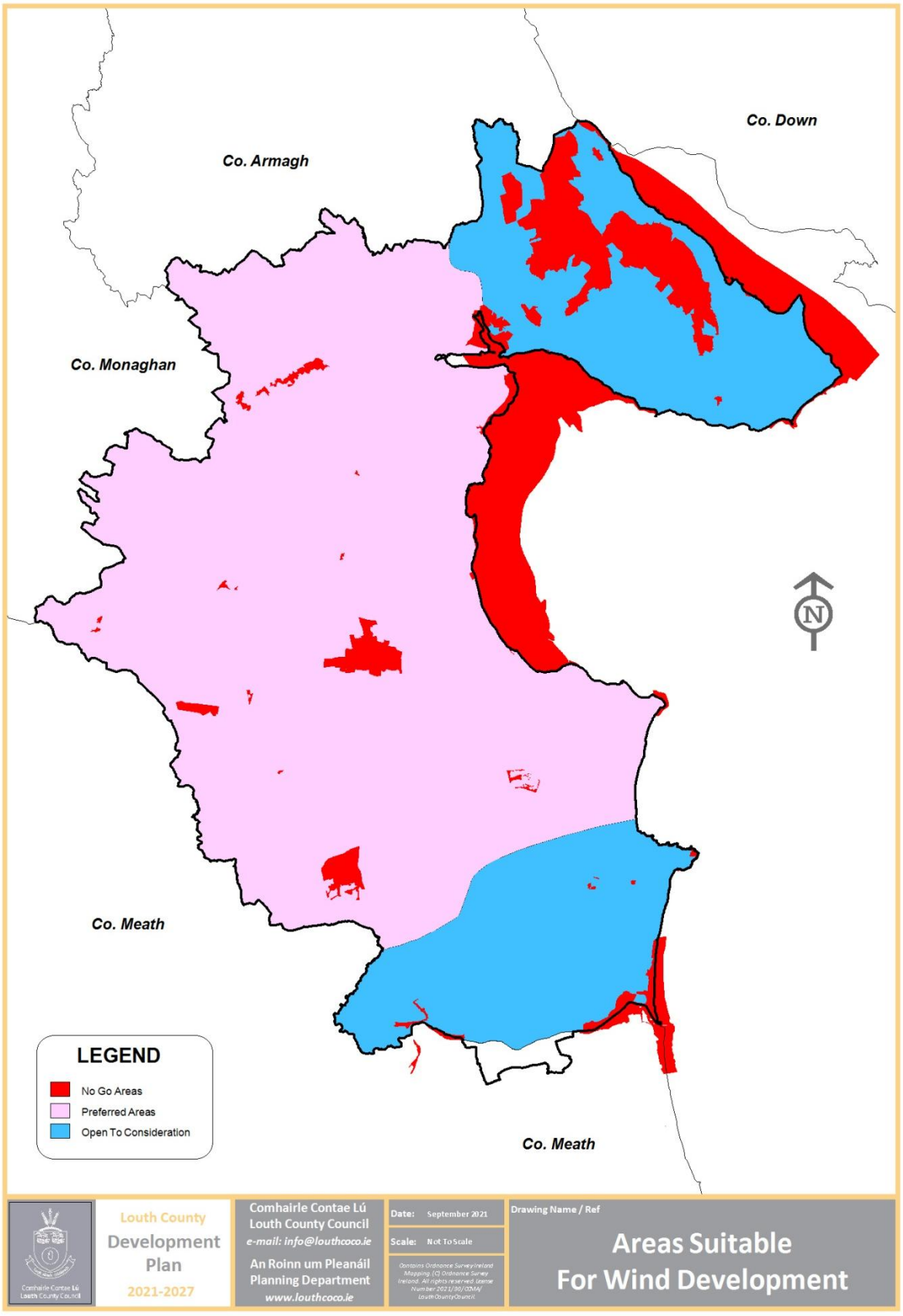
The Council will continue to support and encourage the principle of wind energy development in accordance with Government policy and having regard to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities or any update made thereto during the lifetime of the Plan.

A Wind Energy Strategy will be an intrinsic element of the Renewable Energy Strategy and will be informed by the targets for onshore wind capacity as set out in the *Climate Action Plan 2019* (8.2 GW of increased onshore wind capacity), targets which the Council will want to successfully help to achieve.

The Council is also mindful of Louth's diverse landscapes with varying degrees of sensitivity to wind energy generating infrastructure and therefore care will need to be exercised in the location and siting of such infrastructure.



Map 10.1: Areas suitable for Wind Development



10.6.1 Off Shore Wind Development

Louth, with its considerable coastal extent presents significant opportunities for economic development in servicing off-shore wind developments. The Climate Action Plan 2019 expects the connection of at least 3.5GW of offshore renewable energy to the grid by 2030. An off shore wind energy strategy will be an integral part of the Renewable Energy Strategy.



Policy Objective	
IU 56	To encourage the development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and guidance and the *'Wind Energy Development Guidelines' (2006)* or any revisions thereof which may be issued during the lifetime of the Plan.

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

Policy Objective	
IU 58	To promote the location of wind farms and wind energy infrastructure in the 'preferred areas' as outlined on Map 10.1, to prohibit such infrastructure in areas identified as 'no-go areas' and to consider, subject to appropriate assessment, the location of wind generating infrastructure in areas 'open for consideration'.

Policy Objective	
IU 59	To favourably consider small scale wind energy development for auto-consumption purposes, that accord with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area including residential amenity, heritage, environmental and landscape impacts.

Policy Objective	
IU 60	To support the development of off shore windfarm developments subject to normal planning considerations, including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.

Policy Objective	
IU 61	To ensure that terrestrial developments along the coastline provide adequate provision for connection to the national grid for off-shore wind farms.

Policy Objective	
IU 62	To support the repowering/life extension of wind turbines where appropriate and subject to normal proper planning considerations.

Policy Objective	
IU 63	The Council will determine how the implementation of the Plan over its effective period will contribute to realising overall national targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource (in megawatts), within 6 months of making the Plan.

10.7 SOLAR ENERGY

As solar energy technology has become more effective, more northerly countries like Ireland, have become viable for technology including solar panels and solar farms with storage facilities. As a result, solar energy is increasingly contributing to a reduction in energy demand and energy costs for a range of commercial, residential and industrial properties.

There are three main forms of solar energy, which are:

- Passive Solar (e.g. Building Design);
- Solar Thermal (e.g. direct solar water heating); and
- Active Solar (e.g. generation of electricity through photovoltaic cells).

Passive solar heating relies on the manner in which buildings are designed to maximise solar gain and minimise heat loss through a combination of factors including layout, orientation and materials. Solar thermal heating involves the use of solar panels to transform solar energy to heat and provide water and/or space heating. Both offer significant potential to generate heat from solar energies.

Photovoltaic (PV) systems use daylight to convert solar radiation into electricity and this technology can be used for domestic as well as larger industrial or commercial applications. The Council will support and facilitate the development of solar energy, encourage passive solar design, solar PV, and solar water heating in new buildings and in retrofitting buildings.

Solar energy like all forms of renewable energy technology is constantly evolving. Solar farms have the potential to affect the landscape and natural and built heritage.

When assessing planning applications for solar energy, development proposals shall have regard *inter alia* to:

- Landscape Character of County;
- Site contours and levelling on site;
- Site suitability: Brownfield lands or poor agricultural lands;
- Visual and landscape impact;
- Ecology ;
- Heritage;
- Glint & glare;
- Ground maintenance, soil stripping, storage and maintenance;
- Fencing, security & lighting;
- Drainage; and
- Decommissioning.

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

Policy Objective	
IU 65	To encourage and support the development of solar energy infrastructure for on-site energy use, including solar PV, solar thermal and seasonal storage technologies.

10.7.1 Heat Pump Systems

The *National Climate Action Plan 2019* has a stated installation target of 600,000 heat pumps nationally by 2030, two-thirds of which are to be retro-fitted into existing properties. This equates to 15,800 heat pumps in Louth on a pro-rata population basis.

Heat-pumps are electrical devices which convert energy from the air outside into useful heat and where a building is well insulated, they are very economical to run and an extremely efficient alternative to oil, gas, solid fuel and electric heating systems. Different types of heat pump systems extract heat from different sources: air, water or the ground. Heat generated is released via radiators, underfloor heating or warm air.

There are many variants such as Air to Water, Ground Source to Water, Exhaust Air to Water, Water to Water and Air to Air. These can be broadly divided into three classes:

Air Source: The most common heat pump systems extract heat from external air, typically using an outside unit. These heat pump systems do not require underground piping to source heat and so can be cheaper and easier to install compared to ground source heat pump systems. The most popular heat pumps are air to water heat pumps.

Ground Source (Geothermal): A ground-source heat pump system uses the earth as a source of renewable heat. Heat is removed from the ground through collector pipework and then transferred to the heat pump. The ground collector can be laid out horizontally at a shallow depth below the surface or else vertically to a greater depth.

Water Source: Water source heat pump systems use open water, such as lakes, rivers or streams, as a heat source. Heat is removed from the water through collector pipework and then transferred to the heat pump.

Policy Objective	
IU 66	To encourage and support the development and promote the use of heat pumps for heating domestic, commercial and recreational buildings and water subject to normal planning and environmental considerations.

10.8 BIOENERGY

Bioenergy is the term used to denote renewable energy derived from biomass. Biomass is defined as the biodegradable proportion of products, waste and residues from agriculture, forestry, and related industries and the biodegradable fraction of industrial and municipal waste. It is a renewable indigenous source of fuel for electricity, heat, transport and fuel.

Projects involving the combustion of biomass can range from domestic boilers to industrial installations.

The principle feedstocks are wood chip and wood pellets, energy crops and the combustion of municipal waste in waste to energy facilities.

Biofuels may be defined as liquid or gaseous fuels for transport, which are produced from biomass such as oilseed rape. Biogas, (when subjected to suitable processing) can be injected into the natural gas grid to complement or substitute natural gas and can also be compressed and used as transport fuel.

The advantages of Bioenergy include *inter alia*, security and diversity of supply, alternative farming opportunities, employment generation and potential to reduce greenhouse emissions.

The Council will promote renewable gas and support investment in the sustainable development of an agricultural biogas sector and assist in the integration of renewable gas into the grid network.

Policy Objective	
IU 67	To support and promote the development of projects that convert biomass to energy subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.

Policy Objective	
IU 68	To direct commercial bioenergy plants to locate on lands reserved for industrial use, brownfield sites adjacent to industrial areas, or brownfield sites in the rural area (including existing farmyards) which are served by a good public roads network to absorb increased traffic movements.

10.8.1 Biogas Generation

Renewable Gas, often referred to as bio-methane, is a clean, renewable and carbon neutral fuel and it can be produced from a range of feedstocks. Its potential is as a renewable fuel in all energy sectors; for heat, electricity and transport and thus contributing to Ireland's decarbonisation, renewable energy and energy security objectives.



Ireland has the highest potential for Renewable Gas production per capita in Europe with a potential of 13TWh achievable by 2030, according to EU Commissioned report '*Optimal use of biogas from waste streams An assessment of the potential of biogas from digestion in the EU beyond 2020'.*

Policy Objective	
IU 69	To support and promote the development of bio-gas production and networking technologies at suitable locations and subject to normal planning and environmental considerations.

10.8.2 District Heating

Ireland has one of the lowest shares of district heating in Europe at less than 1% of the heat market. District Heating can play a key role in improved energy efficiency and emissions reduction through the use of low carbon energy resources, improvements in energy conversion efficiency through, for example, CHP (Combined Heat and Power) and capturing low value heat resources which would otherwise go to waste.

Public bodies are identified as key enablers of district heating, particularly where larger scale co-ordination of projects is required among diverse stakeholders. The development of district heating will require coordinated, local-level action to effectively plan for successful widespread district heating implementation.

In accordance with RPO 7.38 of the RSES, Louth County Council will utilise heat mapping to support developments which deliver energy efficiency and the recovery of energy that would otherwise be wasted.

Further, the Council will carry out a feasibility assessment for district heating within its functional area and shall identify local waste heat sources.

Policy Objective	
IU 70	Facilitate and promote District Heating installation where practical through the County, while protecting residential amenity.

Policy Objective	
IU 71	To ensure the use of heat mapping to inform the best and justifiable location for district heating schemes.

Policy Objective	
IU 72	The Council will carry out a feasibility assessment for district heating schemes and shall identify local waste heat sources accordingly.

10.9 HYDRO ENERGY

Where suitable, the use of rivers for the development of Hydro Energy will be encouraged by the Council to play a part in the County's renewable energy mix. In particular, the Council will be supportive of individual developments along the banks of rivers, which propose hydro energy to provide an element of their energy requirements, all subject to environmental considerations.

Policy Objective	
IU 73	To support the sustainable development of hydroelectric projects on rivers and lakes where they do not have an ecological impact on any sites of EU or national designation and/or impact negatively on freshwater species and the free passage of fish.

10.9.1 Tidal and Ocean Energy

Although situated along the east coast of the country, there is no doubt that potential exists in the waters off Louth's coast. Realisation of this resource will depend on the cost effectiveness of wave energy technology, the amount of power which can practically be connected to the grid and the capacity available on the network. While proposals below the water mark lie outside the Council's jurisdiction, on-shore ancillary plant, buildings and power lines will require assessment and all on-shore impacts must be mitigated to the greatest extent possible. In this regard, detailed visual and environmental considerations of any development proposal will be assessed in determining their acceptability.



In 2012, *Our Ocean Wealth – An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland* (DAFM) was a strategy aiming to introduce ocean energy into Ireland's renewables portfolio wherein tidal energy is recognised as an important element. Carlingford and the Boyne Estuary may have potential for the generation of tidal energy.

Policy Objective	
IU 74	To support the development of wave and tidal energy in suitable waters off the coast of County Louth subject to the protection of important marine habitats and acceptable visual and environmental considerations.

10.10 Small Scale Renewable Electricity Generation

With the development of new technologies, the generation of electricity on a small scale from renewable or low carbon sources is becoming more viable. Small scale installations are available in the form of PV cells (solar panels), single stand alone or wall mounted wind turbines and biomass converters. The *Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)* set out exemptions for certain small scale renewable installations. The installation of any class of micro renewable technology that does not fall within the exemptions requires planning permission.

Policy Objective	
IU 75	To promote and facilitate the development of small scale electricity generation installations and green technologies which do not negatively impact on environmental quality, landscape, wildlife and habitats and residential amenities.

10.10.1 Energy Supply and Infrastructure

The Council acknowledges the need to utilise electricity for commercial and domestic use within the County. Notwithstanding the Council's desire to promote the growth in renewable energy alternatives, the majority of the County's energy is generated from non-renewable sources such as natural gas, burning of coal, oil and peat.

This energy is transferred around the country on the national grid transmission infrastructure.

The development of a secure and reliable transmission network is critical to ensuring that Louth has the necessary infrastructure to accommodate and promote economic growth, attract investment to the area and facilitate the development of the County in line with the Core and Settlement Strategies.

Policy Objective	
IU 76	To require that in all new developments, local services such as electricity be undergrounded where possible and appropriate.

Policy Objective	
IU 77	To seek to avoid the sterilisation of lands proximate to key public transport corridors such as rail routes when future energy transmission routes/pipelines are being designed and provided.

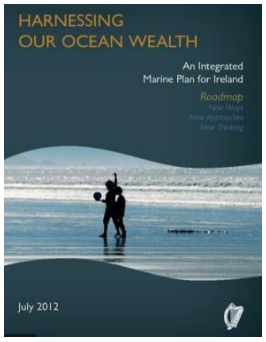
10.10.2 Electricity Supply and Infrastructure

EirGrid is responsible for the safe, secure and reliable transmission of electricity – both now and into the future. It develops, manages and operates the electricity transmission grid, which brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout the country.

The grid also supplies power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity and powers the distribution network.

The distribution network in turn supplies electricity to homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, etc. The transmission system on the island of Ireland refers to the higher capacity electricity network.

Eirgrid published *Ireland's Grid Development Strategy - Your Grid, Your Tomorrow*, which was its second review of Grid 25. This Strategy recognises that the development of the transmission grid is of critical importance to support the economy and society, as well as to realise the transformation of Ireland's energy system to meet climate change and energy obligations.



It reflects EirGrid's focus on facilitating greater public participation in decision-making during project development, an updated economic context, and the testing and/or availability of new technologies, which can and will increasingly be available for use on the transmission grid.

It concludes that Eirgrid will only build new infrastructure when new infrastructure remains as the best solution after considering all options.

Eirgrid's *Implementation Plan 2017-2022* is an overview of how the early stages of Ireland's Grid Development Strategy will be implemented, identifying those parts of the transmission system that are likely to need development over the five year period (2017-2022) and the planning and development of the grid that will be undertaken in implementing the Strategy.



The Implementation Plan has also had regard to the *Transmission Development Plan 2016,* which is a plan for the development of the Irish transmission network and interconnection over a ten year period.

The Council supports the development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity and the development of enhanced electricity networks to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and to strengthen all-island energy infrastructure and interconnection capacity.

In relation to County Louth, works proposed relate primarily to upgrading and refurbishing the existing network.

Where strategic route corridors are identified, the Council will safeguard such corridors from encroachment by inappropriate development and ensure their scope for development is maintained.

10.10.3 Gas Supply Network

The natural gas pipeline infrastructure is under the remit of Gas Networks Ireland. A high capacity gas pipeline currently runs along a north-south trajectory from North County Dublin through County Louth into the Northern Ireland gas network. This network provides potential for gas fired generation in the North-East of the country.

County Louth has a substantial gas distribution network and factors such as demand, settlement size and commercial developments, in particular where it is in proximity to the existing network, drives expansion of the service.

Natural gas from a fossil fuel source is a limited resource, which is not renewable. However, the existing gas distribution network in Ireland is effective and supports gas from fossil fuel sources and biogas.

Therefore as Ireland heads towards 2050, it seems likely that there will be more focus on biogas and a consequent reduction of gas from fossil fuel sources in the gas distribution network.

Policy Objective	
IU 78	To support and facilitate the reinforcement and development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the County and Region. This will include the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements facilitating linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid, in a sustainable and timely manner, subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

Policy Objective	
IU 79	To support statutory and other providers of national grid infrastructure by protecting strategic route corridors from encroachment by development that might compromise the provision of energy networks.

Policy Objective	
IU 80	To ensure that development proposals for energy transmission and distribution infrastructure follow best practice with regard to siting and design. Proposed high voltage overhead lines shall as far as possible seek to avoid areas of sensitivity. Where avoidance is not possible, full consideration shall be given to undergrounding the lines where technically feasible and environmentally appropriate.

Policy Objective	
IU 81	To require the under-grounding of electrical cables within new residential, commercial or civic developments. Where existing, and proposed high voltage lines traverse new residential, commercial or civic developments, these should be re-located under-ground where technically feasible.

Policy Objective	
IU 82	To require in all new developments, that multiple services are accommodated in shared strips underground and that access covers are shared, whenever possible.

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

10.11 Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings

According to the EU, buildings account for 40% of total energy consumption in the EU and therefore, promoting sustainable design and increasing energy efficiency in buildings is critically important. *The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) (2010/31/EU) was transposed into Irish law through the European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2012.*

This Directive (EPBD) requires all new buildings (public and private) are Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) by 2020, which is considered to be a critical requirement for the housing stock in particular.

A 'Nearly Zero Energy Building' means a building that has a very high energy performance and the nearly zero or very low amount of energy required should be covered to a very significant extent by energy from renewable sources, including energy from renewable sources produced on-site or nearby.

The sustainable design, construction and operation of new buildings and in major renovations to existing dwellings, has a significant role to play in reducing energy demand and increasing energy efficiency into the future.

The right design decisions in relation to building form, internal layout, levels of insulation, amount and orientation of glazing, utilisation of solar energy, heating system and fuel type, use of draught lobbies, construction materials and measures to conserve potable water can contribute greatly to sustainability. In addition, these will lead to cost savings in the long term, while raising the level of comfort for the occupants of the dwelling.

The energy efficiency and renewable energy requirements for the construction of new residential and non-residential buildings, along with major renovations to existing dwellings are primarily addressed in the current Building Regulations Part L (1997-2019). A 'major renovation' refers to the renovation of a building where more than 25% of the surface of the building envelope undergoes renovation.

Part L requires that a building be designed and constructed so as to ensure that the energy performance is such as to limit the amount of energy required in the operation of the building and the amount of carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions associated with this energy use insofar as is reasonably practicable.

The Building Regulations requirements for new dwellings also prescribe that a reasonable proportion of the energy consumption to meet the energy performance of a dwelling is provided by renewable energy sources, limiting heat loss, availing of heat gain through the fabric of the dwelling and energy efficiency space and water heating systems.

Energy efficient buildings will generate savings and is a cost effective way of mitigating climate change and improving energy security. The primary focus is to design buildings that create a thermally efficient building envelope.

The use of on-site micro renewable or district heating systems also offers significant opportunities.

The BER label (Building Energy Rating), allows for dwellings to be assessed on their energy performance. This in turn allows individuals to make informed decisions regarding energy efficiency of a building. Exemptions for Protected Structures (proposed protected structures) and buildings protected under National Monuments Legislation apply.

The Council promotes energy efficient design and recommends consideration of energy design at the earliest stage in the design process. However, careful consideration should also be given to the adaptability of buildings over time to enable the building stock to be retrofitted to meet higher efficiency standards into the future. The upgrading and refurbishment of homes and business premises can make a significant contribution in reducing energy demands and costs. The energy performance of existing buildings is one of the foremost considerations in responding to the energy challenges in the County.

Details in relation to Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings, is provided for in Section 10.11.1 of this chapter.

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

Policy Objective	
IU 85	To ensure that all new buildings in the County achieve the Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) standard in line with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and having regard to the Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings.

Policy Objective	
IU 86	To promote the use of district heating systems in large scale development and master planned areas and encourage the integration of micro renewable energy sources into the design and construction of single and multiple housing developments.

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

Policy Objective	
IU 88	To encourage and facilitate the reuse of existing vacant buildings particularly in town centres.

Policy Objective	
IU 89	To support the recycling of building materials on development sites subject to compliance with environmental and building control legislation.

Policy Objective	
IU 90	To support and promote structural materials in the construction industry that have low to zero embodied energy and CO_2 emissions as assessed across the whole life of the building.

Policy Objective	
IU 91	To encourage and support the utilisation of siting and landscape design features to minimise energy requirements.

10.11.1 Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings

This section sets out guidelines for the sustainable design, siting and construction of buildings, particularly with regard to energy efficiency and energy conservation, as well as waste management, waste disposal and sustainable urban drainage systems. These standards need to be read and adhered to in conjunction with Part L of the Building Regulations (1997-2019).

Measures that promote energy conservation and efficiency in buildings include air tightness, appropriate use of glazing, high insulation standards and more efficient heating. Alternative forms of electricity and heat generation should also be considered.

The various elements in relation to energy conservation and ecological building design are further outlined in this section.

10.11.2 Passive Solar Design

Passive Solar Design (PSD) techniques relate to the siting, layout, built form and the landscaping of a development.

The use of PSD techniques are cost effective, as it requires little or no cost to the developer and can amount to substantial savings on behalf of the owner/occupier.

It also reduces the long-term use of fossil fuels and thereby reduces CO_2 production.

The main elements for the application of PSD with regards to design, siting and layout are as follows:

- **Orientation** - To maximise solar access and its benefits, the principle façade of a building should be orientated to be within 30 degrees of the south, where feasible. A southerly orientation maximises solar gain in winter.
- **Wind** - Buildings should be designed and located to reduce the impact of wind chill and suitable shelter belts should be incorporated.
- **Openings** - Large glazed surfaces should be located on the southern face of the building. These surfaces must be highly insulated through high performance glazing to prevent the loss of heat.
- **Internal planning** - The internal layout of buildings should be designed by setting occupied spaces to the south and service spaces to the cooler north.
- **Avoidance of overshadowing** – Where feasible, buildings should be carefully spaced to minimise the loss of solar gain due to overshadowing.

10.11.3 Passive Housing

A Passive House is an energy efficient building with year round comfort and good indoor environmental conditions without the use of active space heating or cooling systems. The concept is based on minimising heat losses and maximising heat gains (i.e. orientation), thus enabling the use of simple building services.

The construction of Passive Houses should have regard to the 'Guidelines for the Design and Construction of Passive House Dwellings in Ireland (SEAI)'.

10.11.4 Nearly Zero Energy Performance Buildings

All new buildings should be designed to comply with Nearly Zero Energy Performance in accordance with the *Building Regulations 1997 - 2019*. These regulations cover a range of conservation of fuel and energy measures together with the requirement that for new dwellings, a reasonable proportion of the energy consumption of the dwelling is provided by renewable energy sources.

It will be a prerequisite of all development in the Plan area that there is compliance with the provisions of the amended building regulations.

10.11.5 Active Solar Design

Active solar systems can work in unison with passive systems and provide an alternative mechanism for harnessing solar energy. This system does not rely on site orientation or layout but can be incorporated into any building design to maximise energy efficiency. Active solar technology involves the installation of a solar collector device; this device absorbs the sun's heat to provide space or water heating.

A correctly sized unit can provide around half of a household's water needs over a year; large buildings can introduce several systems to increase solar absorption.

10.11.6 Alternative Heating Systems

Energy efficient heating systems such as mixed fuel and wood pellet stoves, boilers and heat pump systems can greatly help to reduce energy consumption. Heat pumps are very economical. For every unit of electricity used to power the heat pump, 3 to 4 units of heat are generated.

They work best in conjunction with low temperature heat distribution systems e.g. under floor heating. Wood burning systems do emit carbon dioxide.

However, as the wood fuel is cultivated, it absorbs the exact same amount of carbon dioxide as is released when burnt. As such, it does not add to the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. An eligible system can be used for heating a single room, hot water or a whole house.

10.11.7 Reduction in Water Consumption

Fresh water resources are increasingly becoming an issue of environmental and economic importance. According to Irish Water, the average daily consumption for all household purposes is about 150 litres per person. On this basis, the average water consumption per person in Ireland comes to 55,000 litres per person per year.

10.11.8 Rain Water Harvesting

Rain water recovery systems harvest rain water which can then be used for the flushing of toilets, washing machines and general outside use. A rainwater holding tank is installed below the ground that gathers water from the roof of buildings.

This water is pumped into a tank within the building's roof space where it is stored until required. This water would otherwise have to be treated and pumped by Irish Water representing a substantial saving. The system filters and collects between 20% and 30% of total water consumption used by a family of four. The system is isolated from the mains water system to eliminate any possibilities of contamination.

In the event of using all of the rainwater reserve, an automatic change over system switches over to using mains water until the rainwater tank starts to refill.
The rainwater system generally has three separate filters, which reduce particles down to 130 microns. These systems should have the British Board of Agrément approval to meet the Building Regulations.

10.11.9 Wind Energy

The use of wind turbines to provide a self-sufficient power source or to supply power in combination with other energy sources merits investigation for any large scale development. A series of Planning & Development Regulations exempts from planning permission certain types of renewable energy structures including small scale wind turbines in relation to dwelling houses, agricultural buildings and industrial buildings. The use of these technologies should be incorporated into the design of buildings from the outset. Proposals for the provision of small and medium size wind turbines, which fall outside the exempted development categories, will be favourably considered by the Council provided that they do not significantly impact on visual or residential amenities of the area.

10.11.10 Micro-Hydro Generation

The development of micro-hydro generation facilities does not constitute exempted development and as such will require applicants to apply for planning permission. Considerations will include:

- The visual impact of the development must be considered and therefore matters such as turbine siting, cables, channels will be required to be addressed;
- Any potential impact upon residential amenity will also be a consideration in any determination;
- Is the proposed development located in a designated area e.g. Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and / or Special Protection Area (SPA); and
- Where a proposed development occurs within or near a designated site, there is an obligation on the Planning Authority to inform a number of statutory bodies including the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Department Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) among others. These bodies may recommend a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) and/or Appropriate Assessment (AA), which may add considerable cost to the total project cost.

10.11.11 Construction Methods

Consideration should be given to the use of renewable building materials such as wood from sustainably managed forests and locally sourced building materials for development projects. Other features of construction should also be considered such as off-site construction and prefabrication to minimise the impact of building on the site, reductions in levels of on-site waste and also minimising cost.
The re-use of construction waste such as excavated material and topsoil should also be considered. Any materials used in the construction of new buildings are to be in compliance with the minimum standards as set out in the *Building Regulations (1997-2019).*

10.11.12 Waste Management and Disposal

All future developments should seek to minimise waste through reduction, re-use and recycling. Waste management and disposal should be considered as part of the construction process and in the operation of the development when completed.

10.11.13 Construction Waste

Construction related waste accounts for a significant proportion of total land filled waste in Ireland. Therefore, developers and builders should minimise construction waste generated in development projects. During the construction process measures should be implemented to minimise soil removal (as part of the scheme design process), properly manage construction waste and encourage off-site prefabrication where feasible.

10.11.14 Domestic Waste

Everyday domestic waste produced by future residents and businesses shall be minimised through reduction, reuse and recycling. All new developments should provide for occupants to comply with the Louth County Council *Segregation, Storage and Presentation of Household and Commercial Waste Bye-laws, 2019*, whereby people must segregate their waste into dry recyclables, food waste and residual domestic waste. New developments should facilitate a three bin system in each unit.

10.11.15 Precipitation and Climate Change

Buildings should, as far as is practical, be future proofed against increased precipitation and storm frequency likely to result from climate change. The following check-list should be applied:

- Check existing water table and natural patterns of drainage;
- Calculate rainwater guttering and pipe work on the basis of up to 30% increase in precipitation;
- Use soft landscaping to reduce storm water runoff and help the rain to percolate naturally into the water table; Use porous paving schemes to allow water to flow down through hard landscaping directly into the water table to minimise drainage requirements and relieve pressure on existing drainage;
- Retain robust roofing details including sarking in preference to battens; and
- Preserve and increase planting of trees to absorb CO_2 to help reduce global climate change.

10.11.16 Micro Climate Enhancement

Trees and shrubs can make a significant contribution to energy conservation by providing shelter and modifying climate at the micro level. Designers and developers should plant deciduous trees and use hard landscaping on the south side of buildings to enhance the micro climate and minimise energy use.



Chapter 11

Environment, Natural Resources & the Coast

"Harness the County's natural and coastal resources in a manner that is compatible with the sensitivity of rural areas, the existing quality of life, and the protection and enhancement of the County's natural environment"

11 ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES & THE COAST

11.1 ENVIRONMENT

The quality of our natural environment provides the fundamental components for sustaining human life and the society and economy in which we live. The physical landscapes form our surroundings and everything we see from trees, coastlines, water bodies and countryside forms part of the biodiversity network.



A changing environment demands changing and adapting policies and programmes to meet the challenges posed by the environment at a local, national and international level. The need to maintain water quality is key to conservation of biodiversity and water dependant habitats and species. Biodiversity loss is a serious threat as habitat degradation and species loss are often irreversible. There is an underlying challenge to preserve, enhance and protect the quality of the environment whilst facilitating and encouraging development. A high-quality environment is not only of inherent value in itself but is also crucial for economic development and the health and well-being of our communities.

This Chapter details policy objectives, which will facilitate development in appropriate locations while ensuring the conservation of the natural environment for generations.

11.1.1 Policy Context

The European Environment Agency (EEA) *'2020 State of the Environment Report for Europe'* concludes that Europe faces environmental challenges of unprecedented scale and urgency. The Report states that achieving the goals of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the Paris Agreement will require urgent action in key areas during the next 10 years. The Report concludes that Europe will not achieve its sustainability vision of 'living well, within the limits of our planet' simply by promoting economic growth and seeking to manage harmful side-effects with environmental and social policy tools. Instead, sustainability needs to become the guiding principle for ambitious and coherent policies and actions across society.

At a national level, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has produced *'Ireland's Environment – An Assessment 2016'.* This Report is the latest in the EPA '*State of the Environment*' series, which is published every 4 years. The Report outlines at a strategic level the current state of Ireland's environment.

It provides an update on environmental challenges that we face both nationally and globally. The Report concludes that there are many positive aspects associated with Ireland's environment: Air quality is generally classified as good, good-quality water in many rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters and excellent progress has been made in meeting EU waste recycling, recovery and diversion targets.

However, the Report acknowledges that there are challenges and necessary actions, which are important for the delivery of environmental protection and sustainable development.

The seven key environmental actions identified in the report are:

- Recognition of the benefits of a good quality environment to health and wellbeing;
- Implement measures that achieve ongoing improvements in the environmental status of water bodies from source to the sea;
- Accelerate mitigation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation measures to increase our resilience in dealing with adverse climate impacts;
- Integrate resource efficiency and environmental sustainability ideas and performance accounting across all economic sectors;
- Inform, engage and support communities in the protection and improvement of the environment;
- Protect pristine and wild places that act as biodiversity hubs, contribute to health and wellbeing and provide sustainable tourism opportunities, and
- Improve the tracking of plans and policies and the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation to protect the environment.

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

Policy Objective	
ENV 2	To pursue the precautionary and the polluter pays principles in relation to permitted development in the County.

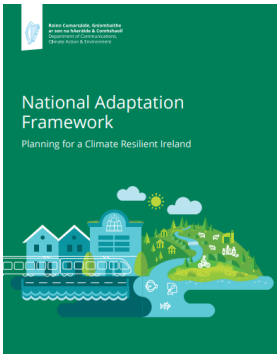
Policy Objective	
ENV 3	To seek to achieve European and National standards in relation to air, noise and water quality in the County and apply BAT standard (Best Available Techniques).

11.1.2 Climate Action

Climate Change is one of the most important and urgent issues at an International, National and Local level. Addressing the issue of climate action requires co-ordinated action at various levels in addition to behavioural changes. The Plan will play an important role in this regard. Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures are required by local authorities as part of their development plan review process and commitments under the *Climate Action Charter, Louth County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and the National Climate Action Plan 2019.*

The National Climate Change Adaptation Framework – Building Resilience to Climate Change DECLG 2012 and the *National Adaptation Framework* provide guidance on adaptation measures. Chapter 12 of the Plan specifically addresses Climate Action and adaptation measures.





Policy Objective	
ENV 4	To support the goals and objectives of the *EU Green Deal*, the *Climate Action Plan* 2019 and the *Climate Action Charter* in ensuring sustainable development across the County.

Policy Objective	
ENV 5	To promote the future sustainable development of County Louth in such a manner as to support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures through the implementation of infrastructure in designated settlements.

11.1.3 Noise Emissions

Environmental noise refers to noise emitted by means of road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic and noise in urban agglomerations over a specified size. Noise levels can intrude on the peace and quiet that residents and users of amenities should reasonably expect to enjoy. Louth County Council has produced a *Noise Action Plan*, in accordance with the *European Noise Directive 2002/49/EC*. The *Noise Action Plan* is a 5 year strategic plan covering the period 2018 - 2023.

11.1.3.1 Noise Action Plan 2018 - 2023

The overall aim of managing environmental noise within the framework of the regulations is to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects due to long term exposure to environmental noise. This will in turn promote good health.

The *Noise Action Plan* is therefore designed with the twin aims of:

- Avoiding significant adverse health impacts from noise; and
- Preserving environmental noise quality where good.

In County Louth, the only noise source to be considered by the *Noise Action Plan* relates to major roads carrying in excess of 3 million vehicle passages per year, as defined in the Regulations.

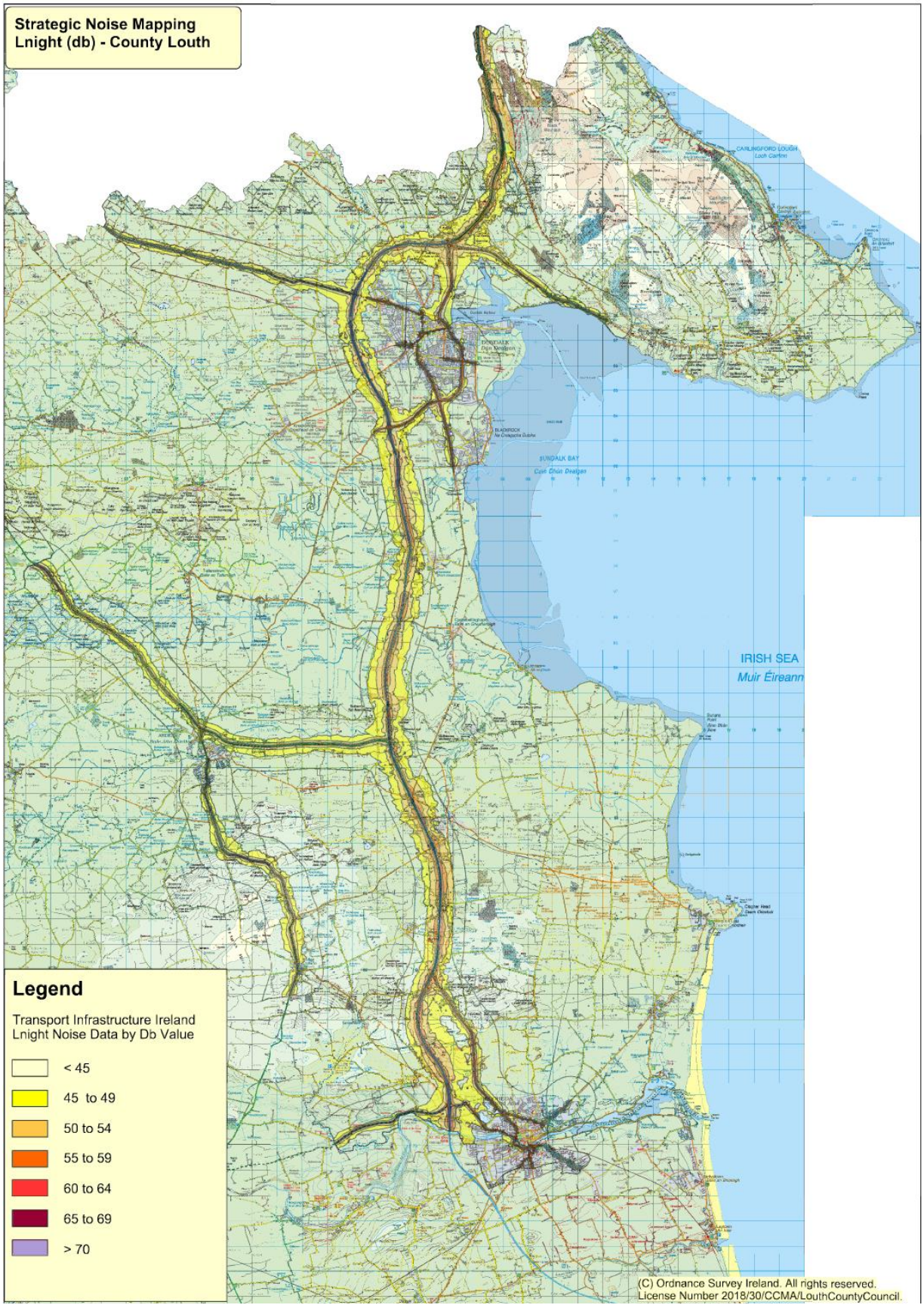
The designated noise mapping agency, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), has produced distinct noise maps for national and regional roads in Co Louth.

The *Noise Action Plan* sets out a list of roads within the County that have exceeded the three million vehicles passages per year threshold. Figure 11.1 illustrates the extent of these routes.

Policy Objective	
ENV 6	To implement the Louth County Council *Noise Action Plan 2018-2023* (and any subsequent Plan) in order to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to environmental noise exposure.

Policy Objective	
ENV 7	To require that where new development is proposed within the limits of the noise maps for the designated sections of roads in the County, appropriate mitigation measures are undertaken so as to prevent harmful effects from environmental noise.

Figure 11.1: Noise Action Plan - Routes within County Louth



11.1.4 Light Pollution

While artificial lighting is essential for a safe and secure night-time environment, the Council recognises the impacts light pollution, glare and spillage can have on the visual, wildlife and residential amenities of surrounding areas.

Policy Objective	
ENV 8	To ensure that all external lighting whether free standing or attached to a building shall be designed and constructed so as not to cause excessive light spillage, glare, or dazzle motorists, and thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties, traffic and wildlife.

Policy Objective	
ENV 9	To require all details of on-site lighting associated with all future development are submitted to and agreed with the planning authority.

Policy Objective	
ENV 10	To promote the use of low energy LED (or equivalent) lighting in support of Climate Action.

Policy Objective	
ENV 11	To implement a hierarchy of light intensity zones as required in development schemes to ensure that environmental impact is minimised as far as possible particularly in areas proximate to ecological corridors.

11.1.5 Air Quality

Poor air quality both in the urban and rural environment has the potential to lead to significant environmental problems.

Similarly, poor air quality is directly linked to poor health amongst the general population. Air quality is monitored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Louth County Council. The Council recognise the need to ensure the highest standards of air quality within the County.

The work of the EPA in monitoring air quality is noted and the Plan is supportive of new air quality real time monitoring stations within the County.

Policy Objective	
ENV 12	To promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the *EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC)* and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the *Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011)*, or any updated/superseding documents.

11.1.6 Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. It is formed by the radioactive decay of uranium. Uranium is usually found in igneous rocks and soil, which means that certain areas of the country are at a greater risk from radon. Radon is a colourless, odourless and tasteless radioactive gas. Exposure to radon accounts for over half the total radiation dose received by the Irish population.

Radon problems only begin to arise when the gas is in a confined space such as your home or workplace.

Policy Objective	
ENV 13	To ensure the implementation of the specific guidance on radon prevention measures for new homes as contained within the existing Building Regulations including any updated/ superseding regulations.

11.1.7 Soil

Soil is a biologically active mixture of weathered minerals, organic matter, organisms and water which provides the foundation of life in terrestrial ecosystems. Soil supports natural ecosystems and human life by providing raw materials, food production and land for facilitating development. Soil also stores, filters, transforms and acts as a buffer to substances that are introduced to the environment which is particularly important in the production and protection of water supplies and for regulating greenhouse gases.

The Plan recognises the key role that soil plays in many areas including food production, surface water, flooding management and providing the key ingredient for supporting a wide range of ecosystem habitats and enhancing biodiversity.

The EPA's publication *Code of Practice: Environmental Risk Assessment for Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites (2007)* shall be taken into account as relevant by proposals for development within or adjacent to old landfill sites. All undeveloped, contaminated sites shall be remediated to internationally accepted standards prior to redevelopment.

All applications shall be accompanied by a report from a qualified, expert remediation consultant, incorporating international best practice and expertise on innovative ecological restoration techniques, including specialist planting and green initiatives that create aesthetically improved sites, healthy environments and contribute to the provision of new green open spaces as integral parts of newly created areas.

The treatment/management of any contaminated material shall comply as appropriate with the *Waste Management Act 1996* (waste licence, waste facility permit), as amended, and under the *EPA Act 1992* (Industrial Emissions licensing, in particular the First Schedule, Class 11 Waste), as amended. These measures will ensure that contaminated material will be managed in a manner that removes any risk to human health and ensures that the end use will be compatible with any risk.

Policy Objective	
ENV 14	To ensure that adequate soil protection measures are undertaken where appropriate. Adequate and appropriate investigations shall be carried out into the nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work, where brownfield development is proposed.

11.1.8 Water Quality

The economic, social and environmental wellbeing of County Louth requires water quality to be of the highest possible standard. This includes surface water, ground water, estuarine and coastal waters all of which are vital to life and must, therefore, be managed accordingly.

The *EPA Water Quality in Ireland report 2013-2018* published in 2019 indicates that of the 25 monitored river water bodies at the catchment level in Louth, 8 were classified as having 'Good' ecological status, 12 were 'Moderate' and 5 were 'Poor'.

11.1.8.1 The Water Framework Directive

The *Water Framework Directive* (WFD) is an initiative aimed at improving water quality throughout the European Union. The Directive was adopted in 2000 and requires governments to take a new approach to managing all their waters; rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, groundwater, protected areas (including wetlands and other water dependent ecosystems), estuaries (transitional) and coastal waters up to 1 nautical mile.

The Directive requires the status of water bodies to be classified as high, good, moderate, poor or bad and the status is defined with respect to its biology, chemistry, quantity and morphology. The WFD brings water related directives under one framework, including those dealing with bathing water, waters used for the abstraction of drinking waters, wastewater disposal and the protection of economically significant aquatic species (shellfish and freshwater fish).

The WFD requires an integrated approach to managing water quality on a river basin basis, with the aim of maintaining and improving water quality. It requires that management plans be prepared on a river basin basis in six year cycles and specifies a structured approach to developing those plans. Ireland is committed to managing all waters through a catchment based process, and the River Basin Management Plan is the mechanism for achieving this.

The Council supports the development of Drinking Water Protection Plans in line with the requirements of the *WFD* and the current and future cycles of RBMP. In this regard, the Council supports mitigation and protection measures for all protected areas, including *Drinking Water Protected Areas* and *associated Source Protection Plans.*

11.1.8.2 River Basin Management

The Government has published the *River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland 2018-2021.*



River Basin Management Plan for Ireland

2018 - 2021

This is the second RBMP (the first cycle covered the period 2009–2015) and it outlines the new approach that Ireland will take as it works to protect its rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters over the next four years. The Plan sets out the actions to improve water quality and achieve 'good' ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2027. Ireland is required to produce a river basin management plan under the *Water Framework Directive* (WFD). The majority of the County (predominantly north and mid Louth) is within the Neagh Bann River Basin District, with south Louth being covered by the Ireland River Basin District (previously the Eastern River Basin District).

Louth County Council acknowledges the importance of a collaborative approach to local catchment management, which will assist in the more effective implementation of the RBMPs.

The water quality in County Louth, including surface waters and groundwater, represents an important ecological, recreational, economic, public health and aesthetic resource. The availability of a drinking water supply is essential for public health and the economic development of the County.

However, the need to balance the increasing demand for water with the needs of the environment and those of existing users is crucial. Population growth and increasing pressures for new development will increase the overall demand for water.

Louth County Council has responsibility for the protection of all waters in the County.

The Council also has an important role to play in the protection, maintenance and improvement of water quality through the planning and management of future development.

Policy Objective	
ENV 15	To implement the recommendations contained in the *River Basin District Management Plans for Ireland 2018-2021* or any subsequent plan. Proposed plans, programmes and projects shall not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface waters, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated woodlands. Also, to have cognisance of, where relevant, the *EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Document No. 20 and 36* which provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the *Water Framework Directive.*

Policy Objective	
ENV 16	To increase awareness through educational and other means so as to inform the public of the need and importance of maintaining the highest possible water quality standards.

11.1.8.3 Groundwater

Groundwater is an important water source for use in a range of commercial activities. Good quality groundwater is a key natural resource, which directly and indirectly contributes to and sustains a variety of important ecosystems.

The groundwater chemistry is continually being modified by the influence of human activity, whether that is through changes in groundwater flow, caused by groundwater abstraction, or the introduction of anthropogenic substances. The presence of purely anthropogenic substances, e.g. hydrocarbons or pesticides, clearly indicates departure from natural conditions. There are certain developments, such as agriculture, mining, solid waste disposal, industries, sewerage schemes, septic tanks, chemical and fuel storage depots, which can generate contaminants that pose a threat to groundwater. Contamination manifests itself in chemical and/or biological form. Approximately 6-8% of Louth's water supply comes from groundwater sources. The protection of this resource is imperative for the Council.

Groundwater protection schemes are County based projects that are undertaken jointly between the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) and local authorities. The aim of a groundwater protection scheme is to ensure the sustainability of groundwater reserves in addition to meeting the requirements of the Groundwater Directives.

The EPA carry out ground water monitoring at a number of locations around the County.
These are private group water schemes. Groundwater Source Protection Zones have been established at locations around the County.

Policy Objective	
ENV 17	To implement the recommendations contained in any Groundwater Protection Scheme prepared under EU Ground Water Directives and to protect ground water resources in County Louth, nutrient sensitive areas and the designated shellfish growing areas within Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay.

Policy Objective	
ENV 18	To protect fisheries in all rivers in the County, where appropriate, including relevant species as contained in *Annex II of the Habitats Directive.*

Policy Objective	
ENV 19	To implement the requirements of the Groundwater Protection Scheme to protect known and potential ground water reserves.

11.1.8.4 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

Agricultural activities and waste generated from such activities has the potential if not appropriately managed, particularly in respect of storage and management of waste and phosphate control measures, to impact on the environment. S.I. No. 605 of 2017, EU Regulations on Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters (2017) gives effect to Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) for the protection of waters against pollution, caused by agricultural sources. The set of measures in these regulations provides a basic level of protection against possible adverse impacts to waters arising from the agricultural expansion targets.
The *Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)* has been in place since 1991 and it aims to protect water quality from pollution by agricultural sources and to promote the use of good farming practice. All EU Member States are required to prepare National Nitrates Action Programmes (NAP) that outline the rules for the management and application of livestock manures and other fertilisers. Ireland's NAP is designed to prevent pollution of surface waters and ground water from agricultural sources and to protect and improve water quality. Ireland's 4th NAP came into operation in 2017 and will be reviewed in 2021.

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

Policy Objective	
ENV 21	To assess agricultural developments and associated agricultural waste matters within the County in accordance with the *European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017* for the purpose of preventing or eliminating the entry of polluting matters to waters.

Policy Objective	
ENV 22	To encourage the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets and comply with the River Basin Management Plan.

Policy Objective	
ENV 23	To implement the relevant provisions of the *Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011,* and the *European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011*, which require planning permission be sought where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares, or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment.

11.1.9 Waste Management

11.1.9.1 Regional Waste Management Plans

The Eastern-Midlands Waste Management Region is one of Ireland's three Waste Management Regions. The region comprises of 12 constituent local authorities, including Louth County Council. Dublin City Council is the lead authority within the Region acting on behalf of the other authorities and hosting the Eastern-Midlands Waste Regional Office (EMWRO).

The *Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan* is a statutory document, prepared by the local authorities of the Region. It covers the period from 2015 to 2021, after which time it will be revised or replaced.

It is underpinned by National and European waste legislation and the work carried out will ensure the continued management of waste in a safe and sustainable manner. The plan includes eight Strategic Objectives and three overarching targets:

- A 1% reduction per annum in the quality of household waste generated per capita;
- Reduce to 0% the direct disposal of unprocessed municipal waste to of higher value pre-treatment processes and indigenous recovery practices; and
- A recycling rate of 50% of managed municipal waste by 2020.



The Plan states that the future role of local authorities in waste management will be focused on education, prevention, and resource efficiency activities as well as regulating householders, businesses and waste operators and enforcing waste legislation. Waste infrastructure provided by local authorities will mainly include bring banks and civic amenities.

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

Policy Objective	
ENV 25	To support the development of an additional recycling centre in the Mid-Louth area.

Policy Objective	
ENV 26	To facilitate the provision of adequate waste recovery and disposal facilities in appropriate locations, as deemed necessary in accordance with the requirements of the current *'Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan'* and any subsequent plans.

11.2 MAJOR ACCIDENTS – SEVESO SITES

The European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2006 transposes the SEVESO II Directive 96/82/EC (relating to the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances) into Irish Law.

The Directive aims to prevent major accident hazards involving dangerous substances and limit their consequences for humans and the environment. This is achieved through the following:

- The siting of new establishments;
- Modifications to existing establishments; and
- Development in the vicinity of an establishment which, by virtue of its type or siting is likely to increase the risk or consequence of a major accident.

The Health & Safety Authority (HSA) provides advice to Planning Authorities in respect of planning applications for development within a certain distance of the perimeter of these sites. The document, entitled '*Policy & Approach of the Health & Safety Authority to COMAH Risk-based Land-use Planning'*, sets out the policy of the HSA on the land use planning requirements of the European 'Seveso' Directive on the control of major accident hazards.

The SEVESO sites in County Louth are identified in Table 11.1 below (as of November 2019) including the advised consultation distances (with the HSA) to be applied in respect of these sites.

Table 11.1 Notified Seveso Establishments

Establishment	Tier	Consultation Distance
Flogas Ireland Limited, Marsh Road, Drogheda	Upper	600 metres
BAK Bulk Services Red Barns, Drumcar Road, Dunleer	Lower	400 metres
Cooley Distillery, Riverstown, Cooley	Lower	400 metres

Policy Objective	
ENV 27	To comply with the *SEVESO II Directive* in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents.

Policy Objective	
ENV 28	To ensure that land use policies take account of the need to maintain appropriate distance between future major accident hazard establishments and residential areas, areas of substantial public use and of particular natural sensitivity or interest.

Policy Objective	
ENV 29	To have regard to the advice of the HSA when proposals for a new SEVESO site, modifications to an existing SEVESO site or when proposals for development within the consultation zone of a SEVESO site are being considered (including and as detailed in Table 11.1)

11.3 VETERINARY SERVICES

The Veterinary Services Section carries out a range of duties involving veterinary public health as well as animal control & welfare. These duties are carried out in conjunction with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

Louth County Council provides food safety duties under a service contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

The County Veterinary Officer and a 'Temporary Veterinary Inspector' (TVI) are responsible for the inspection and supervision of Louth's abattoir (slaughter house) and small meat manufacturing plants.

The animal control & welfare section operates an animal compound in Dromiskin, Co. Louth.

The facility has indoor, individual, heated kennels from where it bases its activities under the *Control of Dogs Act 1986*, and also four stables for housing larger animals taken in under the *Control of Horses Act 1996 or the Animals Act 1985*.

Policy Objective	
ENV 30	To support the implementation of the veterinary functions of the Council in partnership with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

11.4 NATURAL RESOURCES

There are a number of naturally occurring resources within the County that contribute to its social and economic fabric. The continued sustainable development of these resources at appropriate locations will serve to diversify and strengthen the economy of the County. A balanced approach is required with appropriate policies for the growth and development of these resources while ensuring that the adverse environmental impact is minimised.

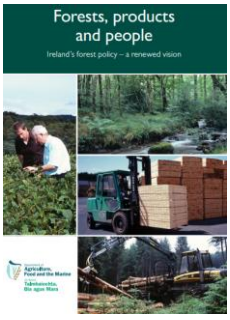
11.4.1 Forestry

Forests and woodlands provide important social, economic and environmental benefits. Forestry is an important natural and renewable resource with a major role to play in sustainable rural development. Forests also have a key role as pollution filters and carbon sinks and their contribution towards climate action.

In addition to the direct benefits of planting, in terms of valuable crops and employment, forestry has an important impact on rural economies through the development of related industries, locally produced sustainable energy and rural tourism opportunities. In 2016, over 5,900 individuals were employed in both forestry and logging or manufacture of wood and wood products sector (CSO). In 2018, exports of forest products from the Republic of Ireland were valued at €450 million, an 8.7% increase on 2017. The national forest estate is an important carbon reservoir, amounting to 311.7 million tonnes of carbon in 2017.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is responsible for ensuring the development of forestry within Ireland in a manner and to a scale that maximises its contribution to national socio-economic well-being on a sustainable basis that is compatible with the protection of the environment.

The Department published a forest policy in 2014, *'Forests, Products and People - Ireland's Forest Policy - A Renewed Vision'*, which sets out Government policy in relation to this sector.



This policy document sets out a strategic goal to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forestry sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society and which accords with the 'Forest Europe' definition of sustainable forest management.

The DoAFM also published *'Forest Statistics Ireland 2019'*. This report indicates that County Louth's land cover comprises approximately 2.9% of forest cover, which is significantly below the national average.

The most significant of the forested areas under public ownership are in Ravensdale Forest and Slieve Foye Woods in the north of the County and Townley Hall in the south of the County. There is also significant privately owned forestry in the areas of Collon, Mullary and Jenkinstown. Ravensdale Forest is the most densely forested area in the County. Figure 11.2 illustrates the extent of forestry located within County Louth (2017).

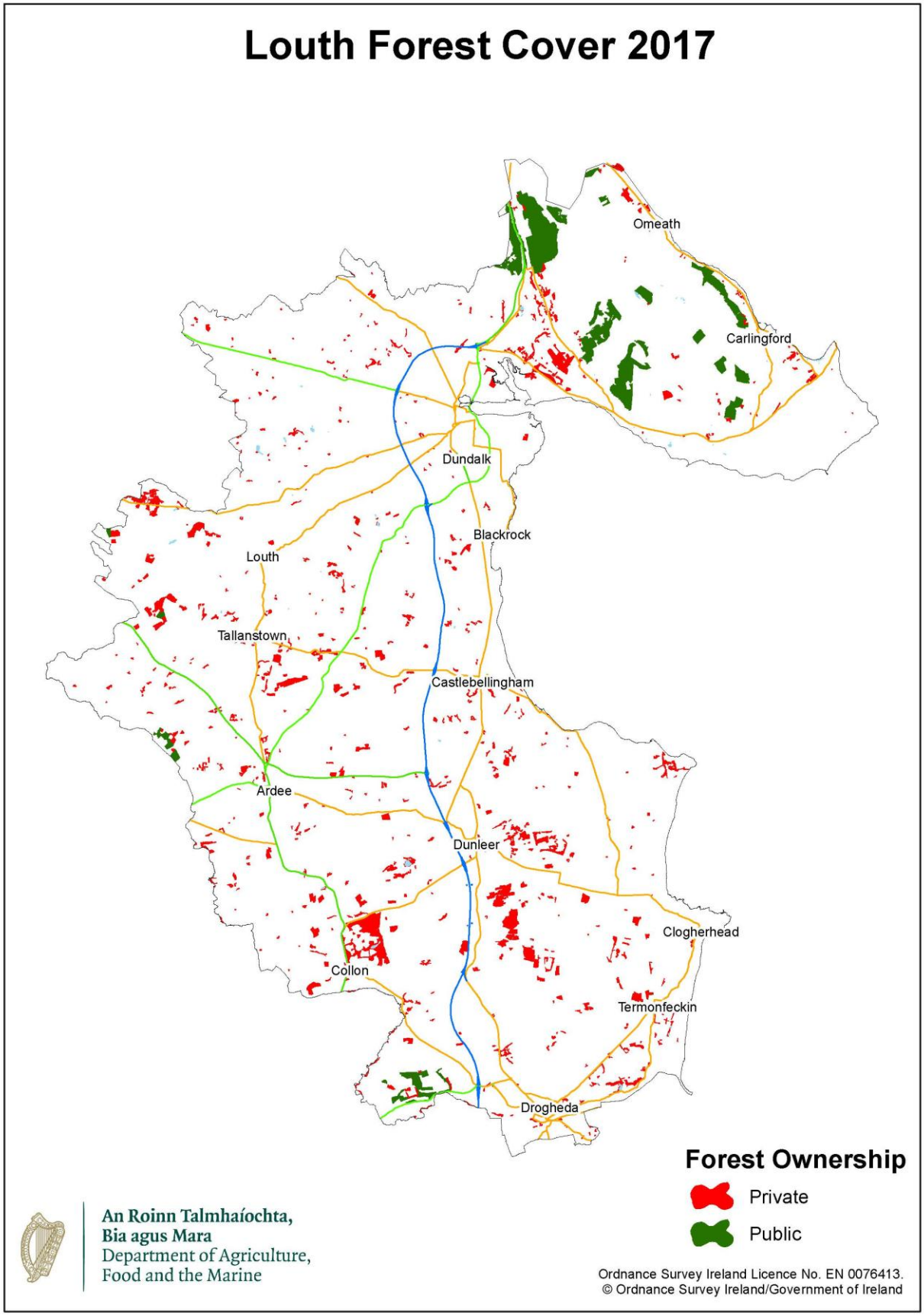
Forestry is encouraged in appropriate areas, where it will not significantly impact upon designated habitats, archaeology, interfering with high amenity areas, protected views or scenic routes, be obtrusive in the landscape or present a risk to sensitive ecosystems or water quality. The Plan aims to support the sustainable growth of forestry as an economic activity whilst affording maximum protection to the rural environment and landscape.

This Plan acknowledges the tourism and amenity potential of forested lands. The Council will encourage the provision of public access to new forests through walking and bridle paths, recreational areas and other similar facilities.

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

Policy Objective	
ENV 32	To encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on European sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the *Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality'* and any subsequent guidelines.

Figure 11.2 Forest Cover within County Louth



Policy Objective	
ENV 33	To encourage forestry and forestry related development, as a means of diversifying from traditional agriculture activity with a preference for native species.

Policy Objective	
ENV 34	To encourage access to forestry and woodlands, including private forestry, in cooperation with stakeholders for walking routes, bridle paths, mountain biking, nature walks, orienteering, hiking, recreational areas and other similar facilities.

Policy Objective	
ENV 35	To promote the avoidance of deforestation or commercial afforestation within European sites unless directly relating to the management of the site for its qualifying interests.

Policy Objective	
ENV 36	To support the development of appropriate and sustainable tourism development within forestry locations, while retaining adequate tree cover in the general area.

Policy Objective	
ENV 37	To consider the preservation of any tree, trees or groups of trees or woodland of special amenity or environmental value by use of Tree Preservation Orders.

Policy Objective	
ENV 38	To retain and protect significant stands of existing trees/ hedgerows/woodlands, and seek increased planting of native trees, where appropriate, in new developments.

Policy Objective	
ENV 39	Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works or other works seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area.

11.4.1.1 Carbon Sequestration

The increase in greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere is considered to be one of the main causes of global warming. Human activity is releasing vast amounts of carbon dioxide. Land-use changes such as the unsustainable exploitation and destruction of tropical forests are also having an impact.

Trees and woodlands play an important role in the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Through the biochemical process of photosynthesis, carbon dioxide is taken in by trees and stored as carbon in the trunk, branches, leaves and roots. Carbon is also stored in the soil and indeed this is a major sink for carbon in the forest.

Decay of the organic material eventually releases the CO_2 back to the atmosphere, and providing the forests are sustainably managed, it is taken up by replacement trees, thereby maintaining a balance in the carbon budget.

The release of CO_2, however, can be delayed through the harvesting of trees as they mature if the wood is used for construction, furniture and other end uses that prolong its life.



Sustainable forestry is positively contributing to carbon sequestration and is an important management tool in combating climate change. International agreements to regulate carbon emissions such as the Kyoto Protocol recognise the importance of forests as carbon sinks.

Policy Objective	
ENV 40	In accordance with the *National Climate Action Plan 2019* (or any subsequent Plan) Louth County Council shall promote sustainable forestry development of appropriate scale within the County in order to address climate action directly through carbon sequestration and indirectly through the displacement of fossil fuel.

11.4.2 Extractive Industry

The National Planning Framework (NPF) notes that 'aggregates and minerals extraction will continue to be enabled where this is compatible with the protection of the environment in terms of air and water quality, natural and cultural heritage, the quality of life of residents in the vicinity, and provides for appropriate site rehabilitation'.

The NPF also states that the 'planning process will play a key role in realising the potential of the extractive industries sector by identifying and protecting important reserves of aggregates and minerals from development that might prejudice their utilisation'.

County Louth contains a variety of natural resources such as raw materials critical to the construction industry in the form of sand, gravel and stone reserves, with substantial building sand reserves in the Cooley area.

The Council acknowledges the need for extractive industries in terms of supply of aggregate materials for the construction sector. The continual supply of aggregates, including recycled construction and demolition material is necessary for continual economic growth; which is an integral requirement for the implementation of the NPF and private sector development.

Reserves of suitable material are finite and extraction can only take place where these reserves are found. However, the potential for conflict in the operation of these industries with wider environmental issues needs careful consideration.

Quarry extraction works and ancillary activities have the potential to impact on the environment (e.g. noise, dust, vibration, visual intrusion, hydrological disruption, water pollution, loss or fragmentation of habitat, traffic generation, adverse impact on road network and archaeological impacts). In certain instances quarries can also be beneficial to the environment, particularly at the decommissioning phase when opportunities for habitat creation and alternative uses can arise.

Louth County Council acknowledges that a satisfactory balance is required between the needs of the building industry and the need to protect the environment. *Section 261A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended),* afforded Local Authorities an opportunity to regularise the quarry industry, with regard to compliance with Planning Legislation, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and the Habitats Directives. A total of 12 quarries have been registered in County Louth.

The suitability of any extraction enterprise shall be assessed on the basis of the sensitivity of the local environment to such impacts, the scale of the development proposed and the capacity of the road network in the area to accommodate associated traffic.

It is Council policy to ensure that those extractions which would result in a reduction of the visual amenity of areas of high amenity or damage to areas of scientific importance or of geological, botanical, zoological and other natural significance including all designated European Sites shall not be permitted.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) Aggregate Potential Mapping illustrates potential crushed rock and sand and gravel deposits. The areas of high to very high potential for crushed rock deposits are generally focused on the Cooley peninsula, however, an area from Collon to Clogherhead is also identified as having high potential.

Louth County Council recognises the unique importance of these areas (particularly the Cooley Peninsula and Monasterboice) in terms of environmental, archaeological and historical value. Applications for mineral extraction will, therefore, be considered on their merits in terms of potential for impacts on the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. As part of the assessment process, due regard will be given to the Department of Environment Heritage Local Government (DEHLG) publication *"Quarry and Ancillary Activity Guidelines" (2004).* In addition, proposals will be screened for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with current best practice and guidance documents.

Policy Objective	
ENV 41	To ensure that all existing and proposed quarries comply with the requirements of the document *Quarry and Ancillary Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (DECLG) 2004* or any replacement document and to promote a whole of life plan for an extractive location, including a post-closure remediation plan.

Policy Objective	
ENV 42	To facilitate adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the County and the wider region while addressing key environmental, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation.

Policy Objective	
ENV 43	To prevent development that would hinder the efficient or effective recovery of the County's aggregate resources.

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

Policy Objective	
ENV 45	To ensure that the extraction of stone and mineral materials is carried out in a manner that is sustainable and does not significantly impact on the following areas: • Existing and proposed European Sites; • Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna; • Areas of significant archaeological potential; • In the vicinity of a recorded monument; • County Geological Site (CGS); • Sensitive Landscapes; • World Heritage Sites; or • Tentative World Heritage Sites.

Policy Objective	
ENV 46	To ensure that developments associated with the extractive industry minimise adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the full cost of road improvements, including during operations and at time of closure which were necessary to facilitate such development are borne by the extractive industry.

Policy Objective	
ENV 47	To refer any application for development to the Geological Survey of Ireland, where it relates to mineral extraction, quarrying developments/extensions and any development involving excavations greater than 50,000m³ in volume or one hectare in area.

11.5 THE COAST

11.5.1 Introduction

County Louth's coastline extends in excess of 70 kilometres from Drogheda Port in the south of the County to the coastline of Carlingford and Omeath along Carlingford Lough.

In general, Ireland's coastline is of great importance not only for its striking natural beauty, but also in terms of its scientific interest, its wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities. The coast is of great economic value and is the location of ports and many of our major urban areas and industries.

Society continues to place considerable demands on coastal areas. In addition to man's influence the coastline is also subject to continual change resulting from dynamic natural processes.

Louth's coastline is of high intrinsic and special amenity value and is home to a variety of natural habitats, with Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) designations covering much of the coastline. The Coastal Zone is generally defined as the area between Mean High Water Mark and the nearest continuous road.

The natural assets of the coastline including beaches are important economic assets particularly for tourism. They are also valuable amenity resources with significant recreational importance and public health benefits. Port/Lurganboy, Clogherhead, and Shellinghill/Templetown are high value Blue Flag beaches, which have considerable tourism potential. Seapoint beach, Termonfeckin also achieved a Green Coast award in 2020 in recognition of its high environmental quality.



The coastline also contains economically significant sites, which include the ports at Drogheda, Greenore, Dundalk and Clogherhead. Drogheda Port is one of Ireland's premier multi modal ports strategically located on the east coast with direct motorway access to the country's key industrial and commercial centres.

The coastal waters off County Louth provide an important resource, supporting and generating employment and recreational activities.

But this coastline is susceptible to pressure for development, which has the potential to encroach on sensitive sites and cause pollution.

11.5.2 Changing Coast & Coastal Protection

In June 2019 the Government launched a *draft Marine Planning Policy Statement (MPPS).* The MPPS outlines a programme of legislative reform to modernise the Irish marine planning system. The aim of the legislative reform is to rationalise the planning process for the marine area and provide an appropriate planning system for the sustainable development of the marine environment.

The present planning process is quite convoluted and requires permissions from a number of different bodies. Much of the marine planning reform is being driven by the *European Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (Directive 2014/89/EU)* which sets March 2021 as the date by which member states must have in place a Marine Spatial Plan (MSP). As per Section 5.10 of this Plan, following the preparation of the Marine Spatial Plan the Council will ensure that there is alignment and consistency between land use and ocean based planning. The proposed programme for reform includes the *Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2019*. The *Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2019* represents a significant change to the consenting process for marine based developments.

The Bill will amend the existing Foreshore Act and create a new regulatory area and a new single state consent regime for the entire maritime area. The development management process will expand to cover the whole of Ireland's exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

The Bill will also establish a legal basis for An Bord Pleanála and coastal local authorities to consent to development in the maritime area, while retaining existing foreshore and planning permission provisions for aquaculture and sea fisheries related development. The Bill provides for a single Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and a single Appropriate Assessment (AA), where applicable.

The 2019 Bill will:

- Empower the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to issue statutory marine planning guidelines (parallel to the statutory planning guidelines issued under *Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act (as amended)*);
- Provide an improved statutory basis for marine forward planning; introduce a single State consent system for the maritime area for certain types of projects;
- Eliminate the duplication that presently occurs where some types of developments (e.g. wind farms) are assessed under both the foreshore and the planning systems; and
- Introduce a single development management process for certain project types (including offshore renewable energy development).

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

Policy Objective	
ENV 49	To support and accommodate any change to the marine spatial planning system which is proposed under the *Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2019* (or any subsequent Bill) once enacted into law.

11.5.2.1 - Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

ICZM provides a tool for the integrated management of all policy processes affecting the coastal zone, addressing the land-sea interactions of coastal activities in a coordinated way with a view to ensuring the sustainable development of coastal and marine areas. ICZM will address issues such as coastal tourism development, the fishing industry, coastal settlement patterns, transport, coastal erosion, habitat destruction, protection of coastal zone SACs and SPAs and prevention of pollution.

11.5.3 Coastal Protection and Flooding

By its very nature, the coastal environment is dynamic and is subject to the continuous natural processes of erosion and deposition. While erosion is a normal occurrence in coastal areas, rates of erosion may be accelerated due to storm action, inappropriate development, pressures from leisure or recreational activities or the presence of man-made protection works.



Shifting weather patterns along the Irish coastline have been compounding the issue of coastal erosion in recent times. The intensity and frequency of winter storms has been rapidly increasing.

These storms not only erode the coastline, but cost millions of euro worth of structural damage, flooding, and damage to fishing vessels and operations. Coastline changes, based on satellite data, produced by the European Commission (Maritime Affairs) indicates that large strands of the Louth coastline have been experiencing coastal erosion. Figure 11.3 illustrates the areas along the Louth coastline suffering from the effects of coastal erosion and provides a useful insight into one of the most obvious climate-change effects.

Flood management is a central theme within the *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024* for County Louth which has an overarching objective to manage the risk of flooding through a variety of responses.

At a National level, the *Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study* (ICPSS) was commissioned in 2003 by the OPW and has been updated on a number of occasions for the North-Eastern region. This study identifies locations along the north-east coast at risk of coastal flooding and coastal erosion.

With the realisation of the threat coastal erosion is posing to society and the economy, several preventative measures have been put into place.

These measures can be divided into two categories; hard and soft. Soft engineering generally utilises existing habitats and vegetation such as beaches, salt marshes, mudflats and sand-dunes to soften the land-sea interface while maintaining the integrity of the shoreline.

Hard engineering typically involves the construction of sea walls and/or groins. Sea walls act as a physically resistant barrier to wave and storm action, and can greatly reduce the threat to coastal areas.

However, sea walls are expensive to construct and are usually only put in places where the cost of construction is less than that of any potential property damage or losses. Sea walls also have the potential to create long-term issues, such as the reduction of accretion in other coastal areas by depriving them of sediments that would previously have been products of erosion.

Louth County Council intends to carry out coastal protection works at two locations within the Dundalk Bay area, at Seabank, approximately 2km east of Castlebellingham village and at Salterstown, approximately 2km southeast of Annagassan village.

These works will involve the placement of rock armour to form a sloped wall of interlocking rock armour as a form of sea defence.

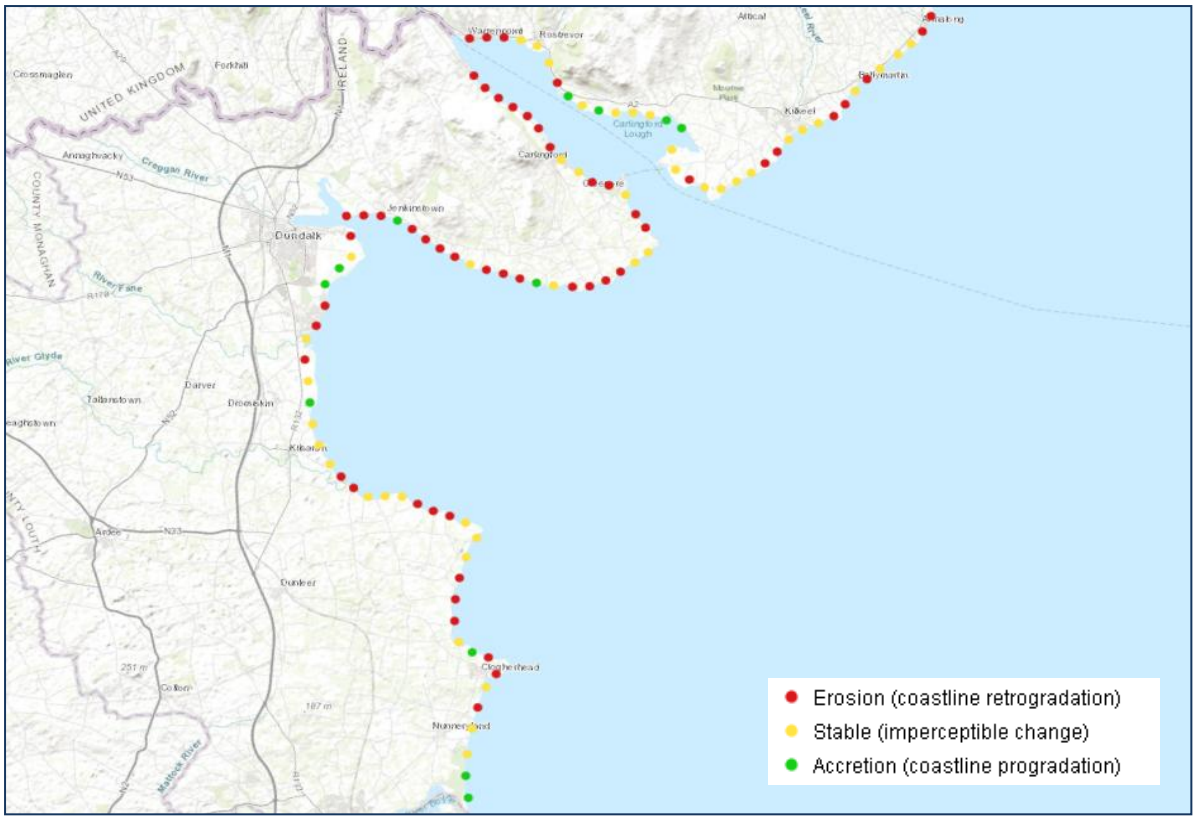
Coastal erosion is intrinsically linked with coastal flooding as the loss of natural coastal defences due to erosion can increase the risk of flooding in coastal areas.

Areas of County Louth are vulnerable to flooding and this vulnerability can be exacerbated by changes associated with global warming such as increased occurrences of severe rainfall events, sea level rise, increased storm frequency and associated flooding (Refer to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Maps in Volume 5).

Local conditions such as low-lying lands and slow surface water drainage increase the risk of flooding. This risk can also be increased by human actions including clearing of natural vegetation to make way for agriculture, draining/ rehabilitation of bog and wetland areas, the development of settlements in the flood plains of rivers and low lying or eroding coastlines as well as by changing weather patterns. Inadequately planned infrastructural development, forestry operations and urban development in the floodplain, for example, can also give rise to flooding hazards, coastal erosion/ flooding and loss of habitats.

The County Louth SFRA (Stage 1 SFRA including flood maps) contained within the supporting documents of this Plan, provides information on various flood risk indicators that occur within the County.

Figure 11.3: Coastal Erosion along the Louth Coastline



Source: European Atlas of the Seas (2019)

Policy Objective	
ENV 50	To require that all proposed developments within 100m of the coastline of Louth, outside the main settlements (Levels 1-4) submit a Coastal Erosion Assessment Report. New developments will be prohibited, unless it can be objectively established based on the best scientific information at the time of the application, that the likelihood of erosion at a specific location is minimal taking into account, inter alia, any impacts.

Policy Objective	
ENV 51	To recognise the concept of coastal evolution and fluvial flooding as part of our dynamic physical environment, and adopt an adaptive approach to working with these natural processes. The focus of a flood management strategy should not solely be driven by conservation of existing lands. It should recognise that marshes, mud flats and other associated eco-systems evolve and degenerate and appropriate consideration should be given to the realignment of defences and use of managed retreat and sacrificial flood protection lands to maintain such habitats as part of an overall strategy.

Policy Objective	
ENV 52	To ensure the County's natural coastal defences (beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands) are protected and to ensure they are not put at risk by inappropriate works or development.

Policy Objective	
ENV 53	To explore, where coastal erosion is considered a threat to existing properties, the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of coastal adaptation and coastal retreat management options.

Policy Objective	
ENV 54	To employ soft engineering techniques as an alternative to hard coastal defence works, wherever possible.

Policy Objective	
ENV 55	To identify, prioritise and implement necessary coastal protection works subject to the availability of resources, whilst ensuring a high level of protection for natural habitats and features, and ensure due regard is paid to visual and other environmental considerations in the design of any such coastal protection works.

11.5.4 Ports and Harbours

The *National Ports Policy 2013* prepared by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) provides a strategic reform policy and roadmap for the development of Irish ports. Drogheda Port is one of five Ports of Regional Significance, which are state owned and the policy notes that Drogheda Port Company retains an important role in regional freight distribution. Drogheda is the largest of the three commercial ports in County Louth.

Greenore is second largest port in the County. Greenore Port is privately owned.

The port handles cargo and is also the terminus for the Carlingford Ferry which provides a connection to Greencastle in Northern Ireland.

Dundalk Port is a general cargo port and forms part of the Dublin Port Company. Clogherhead is a fishing port owned by Louth County Council.

It is an important fishing port and the value of landings at Clogherhead amounted to €8 million in 2018. Further information and policy in relation to Ports and Harbours can be found within Chapter 5, Economy and Employment.

11.5.5 Development in Coastal Areas

Development proposals within coastal areas must take cognisance of the changing and dynamic nature of the coast. The Council acknowledges that hard engineering solutions are the most resource intensive and involve the highest level of interference with natural processes. Consequently, such solutions can only be used in exceptional circumstances.



As a general principle, development in coastal areas should be accommodated wherever possible in previously developed areas before consideration is given to development in greenfield sites.

Policy Objective	
ENV 56	To protect the special character of the coast by preventing inappropriate development, particularly on the seaward side of coastal roads. New development, wherever possible, shall be accommodated within existing developed areas and be climate resilient in their design.

Policy Objective	
ENV 57	To strictly control the nature and pattern of development within coastal areas and ensure that it is designed and landscaped to the highest standards, and sited appropriately so as not to detract from the visual amenity of the area. Development shall be prohibited where the development poses a significant or potential threat to coastal habitats or features, and/or where the development is likely to result in altered patterns of erosion or deposition elsewhere along the coast.

Policy Objective	
ENV 58	To prohibit development along the coast outside existing urban areas where such development is not adequately safeguarded over the lifetime of the development without the need to construct additional coastal defences.

11.5.6 Coastal Tourism and Recreation

Louth's coastline is a major asset in terms of tourism, recreation and marine leisure activities. Marine leisure facilities should be sited, designed and managed to avoid the visual intrusion, pollution, and conflicts with other uses with which they can otherwise be associated.



It is the policy of Council to maintain its beaches to a high standard and develop their recreational potential as publicly accessible seaside amenity facilities.

Designated bathing areas, Blue Flag beaches and other high quality beaches within the County, are significant local amenities and are also important from a tourism and economic development perspective.

As noted earlier, Port/Lurganboy, Clogherhead, and Shellinghill/Templetown are high value beaches which have considerable tourism potential. Each of these beaches was awarded Blue Flag status in 2020 while Seapoint beach achieved a Green Coast award in 2020 in recognition of its high environmental quality.

Identified bathing waters within the County at all of the aforementioned locations have achieved 'Excellent' water quality status for each of the last 4 years. The EPA Bathing Water Quality in Ireland report commented that 'bathing waters in Co. Louth continue to be of a very high quality with few pollution sources having been identified'.

The coast is a natural amenity for leisure and recreation. The coastal areas of County Louth have significant potential for the tourist sector and help to generate sustainable local employment within coastal communities. At a regional level, the tourism value of the coast is acknowledged in the emerging initiative of the 'Irish Sea Way'. It is considered that this initiative will further enhance the tourism value of Louth's coastline and the Council will work with the relevant stakeholders to support this initiative once it is launched. Carlingford is an example of an area within the County, which has seen great benefits from its coastal amenities.

These include land based activities such as walking and cycling on the Carlingford Greenway and water based activities such as bathing, canoeing, paddle boarding, surfing and angling. There is potential for such activities right along the Louth coast. The infrastructure associated with such activities can often conflict with the sensitive nature of the coast, the various environmental designations and the built heritage along the coastline. It will be necessary to identify locations on the coast where these activities can be catered for without being in conflict with other objectives or contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The Council recognises that these activities require a coastal location, but need to be controlled and directed appropriately in view of the sensitive nature of the coast.

Policy Objective	
ENV 59	To protect the excellent status classification of identified bathing water areas within County Louth.

Policy Objective	
ENV 60	To encourage proposals that promote sustainable development of water-based sports and marine recreation in coastal areas and on river systems across the County providing there is no cause of significant adverse impacts on the environment, visual amenity and heritage.

Policy Objective	
ENV 61	To support proposals that improve access to marine and coastal resources for tourism activities and sport and recreation, where appropriate, at the applicable scale.

Policy Objective	
ENV 62	To facilitate sustainable tourism and recreation activities where appropriate, particularly where this creates diversification or additional utilisation of related facilities beyond typical usage patterns.

Policy Objective	
ENV 63	To require that new developments take into account the potential for impact on tourism in the area and demonstrate how potential negative impacts to tourism in communities have been minimised. This must include assessment of how the benefits of what is proposed are not outweighed by potential negative impacts identified.

Policy Objective	
ENV 64	To support proposals for sustainable tourism development that seek to optimise facilities and use space whilst minimising environmental impact by taking a cross-sectoral development approach that provides for multiple activities.

Policy Objective	
ENV 65	To resist development along the coast which would detract from its visual appearance or conflict with its recreational and leisure functions.

11.5.7 Shellfish Waters

There are two areas along the County Louth coastline that are identified as Designated Shellfish Waters:

- Carlingford Lough and
- Dundalk Bay.

In order to protect existing shellfish waters and to ensure the future protection of these areas, the European Union introduced the *Shellfish Waters Directive* (2006/113/EC). The purpose of this Directive is to put in place concrete measures to protect waters, including shellfish waters, against pollution and to safeguard certain shellfish populations from harmful consequences, resulting from the discharge of pollutants into the sea. The Directive applies to the aquatic habitat of bivalve and gastropod molluscs only (includes oysters, mussels, cockles, scallops and clams).



Policy Objective	
ENV 66	To continue to work with local communities, relevant stakeholders and with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine to ensure the proper and successful implementation of the Shellfish Waters Directive along County Louth's coastline.

Policy Objective	
ENV 67	To protect the quality of designated shellfish waters off the Louth coast.

11.5.8 Aquaculture

Aquaculture includes the culture or farming of fish, aquatic invertebrates, aquatic plants or any aquatic form of food suitable for the nutrition of fish. The vast majority of aquaculture activity takes place in the marine environment on the foreshore. The latest BIM Aquaculture Survey indicates that Irish Aquaculture directly employs 87 people within the County with a production value of over €5.3m annually.

The survey also confirms that there are 7 production units within County Louth, largely comprising of mussel and oyster aquaculture activity.



Commercial fishing and aquaculture represent an important economic activity in rural coastal areas. This Plan supports the provision of appropriate harbour infrastructure that facilitates a modern and innovative fishing industry.

The Council recognises and will continue to support the sustainable development of the aquaculture industry in order to maximise its contribution to employment and the economy. This Plan also recognises the important role aquaculture can play in the diversification of rural areas.

Policy Objective	
ENV 68	To support the use of existing port facilities for the catching and processing of fish as an economic activity that contributes to the food industry in the County.

Policy Objective	
ENV 69	To ensure that proposals for economic development associated with the marine sector reflect the environmental sensitivities of the Louth coastline and are considered accordingly.

Policy Objective	
ENV 70	To seek that non-aquaculture proposals in aquaculture production areas demonstrate consideration of and compatibility with aquaculture production and the environment.



Chapter 12

Climate Action

"To promote, support and direct effective climate action policies and objectives that seek to improve climate outcomes across the settlement areas and communities of County Louth helping to successfully contribute and deliver on the obligations of the State to transition to low carbon and climate resilient society through the encouragement and integration of appropriate mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures into all development."

12 CLIMATE ACTION

12.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the approach to climate adaptation and mitigation which has been taken in this Plan. One of the strategic objectives of the Plan is to transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County through a combination of mitigation and adaptation measures in response to climate change.

Section 10(2)(n) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 Act (as amended)* requires Plans to include objectives that promote measures to reduce the overall quantity of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and to address the necessity of adaptation to climate change.

12.2 WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Climate Change is a long-term shift in global or regional climate patterns and may also be referred to as 'global warming'. Climate is described as the average weather prevailing in an area over a period of time. Climate Change is a significant change in weather patterns such as rainfall, temperature, and / or wind, which continue over an extended period of time (i.e. over decades or longer). The Earth's climate is constantly changing. Climatic fluctuations are known to occur from natural causes including the Earth's orbit and tilt, volcanic eruptions and variations in solar energy. However, in more recent times, there are growing concerns that natural fluctuations in climate are being overtaken by rapid human-related activities which are negatively influencing climate variability and giving rise to serious implications for the rate of global warming.

The scale of the challenge presented by climate change is evident across the globe through the devastating, destructive and extreme weather events linked as effects to global warming.

There is a strong level of awareness and understanding of the need to take urgent and radical climate action through a combination of mitigation and adaptation measures.

Ireland's climate is changing in line with global trends and the impacts of this change are expected to continue and intensify into the near future.

Climate Change Mitigation is defined as 'a human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases' (IPCC, 2014), i.e. tackling the cause of climate change. Climate Change Adaptation is defined as 'the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects' (IPCC, 2014) i.e. dealing with the inevitable effects and impacts of climate change.

Louth County Council acknowledges the global understanding that the lives we currently live are not sustainable. The catastrophic cost the world is suffering as a result of climate change is jeopardising future generations.

By signing up to the Climate Action Charter (part of Ireland's Climate Action Plan) on 29th October 2019, Louth County Council has agreed to play its part at a local level in guiding communities, businesses and developers in mitigating and adapting the way we live and work to create a more sustainable, climate resilient and carbon neutral existence.

Spatial planning plays a crucial and central role in both short-term and long-term climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

12.3 Statutory Context

12.3.1 Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Section 10(2)(n) of the Act refers to compulsory objectives in a development plan for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to:

- Reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources;
- Reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Address the necessity of adaptation to climate change, in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.

12.4 International Legislation and Policy Context

12.4.1 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) (1992)

This was an international environment treaty adopted on 9th May 1992 and entered into force on 21st March 1994 following ratification. It acknowledged that change in the earth's climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind and its ultimate objective summarised is the stabilisation of greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

It asked those industrialised countries to adopt policies and measures on mitigation and to report periodically.

12.4.2 Kyoto Protocol 1997

This protocol which was adopted on 11th December 1997 and owing to complex ratification didn't enter into force until 16th February 2005, operationalises the principles of the United Nations Framework Climate Change Convention by mandating industrialised nations (developed countries) to limit and reduce their GHG emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. Under the principle "common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities," the protocol recognised the developed nations being the main contributors to the release of carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other GHG into the atmosphere. Developing nations were asked to voluntarily comply.

12.4.3 The Paris Agreement 2015

This legally binding agreement which has 195 signatories was agreed on 12th December 2015 and came into force on 4th November 2016. It includes commitments from all major emitting countries to keep global temperature rise this century to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing ways to limit the increase to 1.5°C. The treaty also creates a framework for the transparent monitoring, reporting, efforts and contributions of countries' individual and collective climate goals to lessen global warming.

The agreement also aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change.

The Katowice package adopted at the UN climate conference (COP24) in December 2018 contains common and detailed rules, procedures and guidelines that operationalise the Paris Agreement.

Figure 12.1 UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015



12.4.4 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015

The 17 SDGs at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development address the environmental, economic, and social challenges that the world needs to tackle by 2030. Adopted by all United Nation Member States in 2015, SDG 13 refers to climate action and the need to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Ireland supports initiatives both within the Paris Agreement and the UN SDGs, to support less developed countries in achieving these objectives.

12.4.5 The 2013 EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change

Welcomed by EU member states, this strategy aims to make Europe more climate-resilient focusing on 3 key objectives:

- Promoting action by Member States and supporting adaptation in cities through the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy initiative (CMCE created following the adoption of the 2020 EU Climate and Energy Package);
- 'Climate-proofing' action at EU level; and
- Better informed decision-making.



12.4.6 EU 2020 and 2030 Climate & Energy Framework

The 2020 climate and energy package are a set of binding legislation to ensure the EU meets its targets for the year 2020. These targets included:

- 20% reduction of GHG emissions (from 1990 levels);
- 20% of EU energy from renewables (Under EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC, Ireland is committed to produce from renewable sources at least 16% of all energy consumed by 2020); and
- 20% improvement in energy efficiency.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI - the official source of energy date for Ireland) published its 2020 update for Renewable Energy in Ireland Report on 19th April 2020. Using 2018 data, it suggests Ireland is not on track to meet its 2020 renewable energy target of 16% as only 11% of energy came from renewable sources and a projected 13% by 2020. On the 5th March 2020, the SEAI published its Energy-Related CO_2 Emissions in Ireland report. The report showed that energy-related CO_2 emissions declined slightly in 2018, even as energy use increased. This was due to changes in the mix of fuels used - more renewable energy and less coal used. However, the overall reduction was not enough to keep Ireland on track to meet long term decarbonisation goals. The 2019 National Projections Report also reported that on the current trajectory, Ireland's energy efficiency achievement in 2020 is likely to be 16%, compared to the binding 20% energy savings target by the EU. The SEAI reports however use 2018 data that pre-dates the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019, which has the potential to turn the trends around and get Ireland back on track for 2030 – 2050.

The 2030 framework includes EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period 2021-2030 which include:

- At least 40% cuts in GHG (from 1990 levels);
- At least 32% share for renewable energy; and
- At least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency.

12.4.7 The European Green Deal (EGD)

Presented on 11th December 2019, the deal sets out how to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, boosting the economy, improving people's quality of life, caring for nature and leaving no one behind. It sets out a roadmap with actions to boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean, circular economy, restore biodiversity and cut pollution.

It outlines investments required financing tools available, and explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition.

In order to meet the goal to become climate neutral by 2050 as part of the European Green Deal, the European Union (EU) Commission proposed on 4th March 2020 to bring about the first European Climate Law and legally bind the target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The Climate Law also addresses several necessary steps to achieve the 2050 target 2 as follows:

- Based on a comprehensive impact assessment, the Commission will propose a new EU target for 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reductions. This part of the Law will be amended once the impact assessment is completed.
- The Commission proposes the adoption of a 2030-2050 EU-wide trajectory for greenhouse gas emission reductions, to measure progress and give predictability to public authorities, businesses and citizens.

The aim of this law is to ensure all EU policies contribute to this goal and that all sectors of the economy and society play their part. The target would then also be incorporated later through sectoral legislative proposals.

12.5 National, Regional and Local Policy Context

The following sets out the relevant policy documents at a National, Regional and Local level.

12.5.1 National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2012)

This non-statutory framework was Ireland's first climate change adaptation framework, providing a strategic policy focus aimed to reduce Ireland's vulnerability to climate change, by ensuring adaptation actions were taken across key sectors at national and at a local level. Twelve sectors were identified in which adaptation climate change plans were to be prepared.

This framework also recognises the importance of the role of planning and development with full engagement of key stakeholders to deliver the climate change objectives and adaptation action at a local level.

12.5.2 National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development 2015

This policy establishes the fundamental national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. Published in April 2014, it provides an advanced policy direction from NCCAF for the Government to adopt and implement plans to enable Ireland to move to a lower carbon economy by 2050. The National Policy Position envisages that policy development will be guided by a long-term vision based on:

- An aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and
- In parallel, an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.

The National Policy Objective underlines the need to take a long-term view, having regard inter alia to current and future obligations under EU or international agreements, as well as the economic imperative for early and cost-effective action.

12.5.3 2015 Energy White Paper

The White Paper, published in 2015, on Energy Policy - 'Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030' sets out a framework to guide energy policy in the period to 2030. In order to meet national, EU and international targets, this paper recognises the thorough transformation the Irish energy system requires.

12.5.4 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015

This Act was a national landmark in the development of climate change policy in Ireland. It provides the statutory basis for the national objective laid out in the National Policy Position to move towards and achieve a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. It brought about the compulsory need to produce and submit for approval, to the Government, a series of successive National Adaptation Frameworks (NAFs) which will guide policy in relation to the reduction of GHG emissions and climate change adaptation.

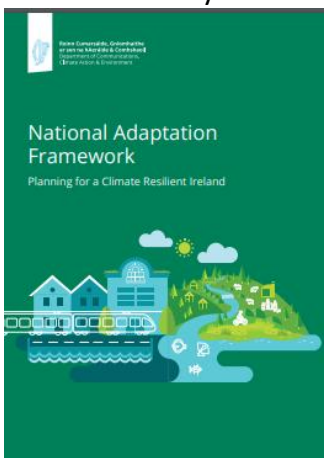
In accordance with Section 8 of the Act, the 18th January 2016 saw the establishment of a Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) which is independent in performance function, provides advice and recommendations as well as reporting of progress to meeting the national objective.

These plans and frameworks must also ensure that the national objective is achieved by the implementation of measures that are cost effective.

12.5.5 National Adaptation Framework (NAF 2018)

Developed under the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015* and adopted on 19th January 2018, this is Ireland's 1st statutory national adaptation strategy that builds on the work carried out under NCCAF 2012, outlining a whole of Government and society approach to climate change adaptation in Ireland.

The NAF aims to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects that may occur.



Several Government departments will be responsible for preparing sectoral adaptation plans, for example the *'Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Built and Archaeological Heritage' (2019)*. Local authorities are also tasked with addressing climate change at a local level through the preparation of their local climate change adaptation strategies. Like the NMP, the NAF will be reviewed every 5 years.

In accordance with Action 8 of the NAF and Action 9 NMP, 4 Local Authority Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) were established in 2018 to drive climate action at regional and local level in Ireland. They are each operated by a Local Authority and support the preparation of local adaptation strategies.

12.5.6 Climate Action Plan (CAP)

The *Climate Action Plan* is a Government plan which was published 17th June 2019 and designed to enable Ireland to meet its EU climate change commitments, through carbon proofing government policies and establishing carbon budgets. It provides 183 individual policy actions over 12 sectors to tackle climate change along with timelines for delivery, to reduce carbon emissions by 30% between 2021 and 2030 and towards achieving zero emissions by 2050. Detailed progress reports are published quarterly to ensure delivery and accountability.

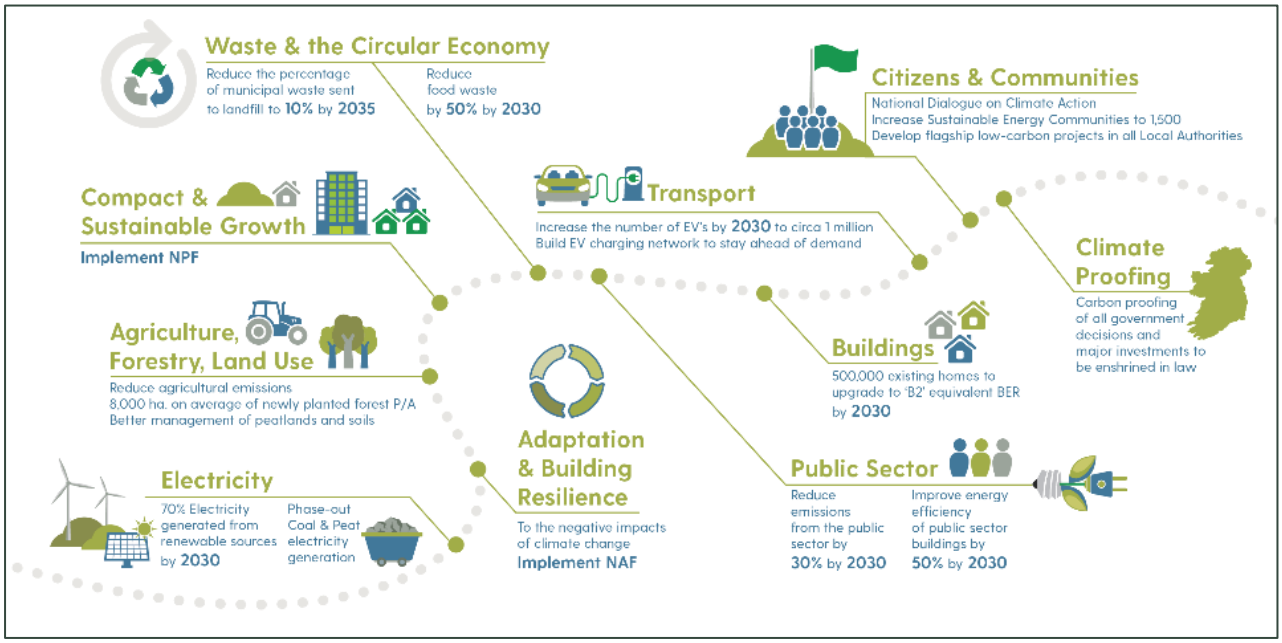
The Climate Action Delivery Board led by the Department of an Taoiseach will monitor progress and identify areas of concerns and challenges. The actions in this plan, if implemented, places Ireland in a better and more confident position in realising and meeting their 2030 and 2050 targets.

This key document also places Ireland at the forefront of international efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 13 – the need to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Several key measures identified in the plan have already been delivered including the signing up of all 31 Local Authorities in Ireland to the Climate Action Charter.

On 19th December 2019, the Government approved the publication of the General Scheme for the *Climate Action (Amendment) Bill 2019*. The Bill aims to enshrine in law the approach outlined in the CAP.

Figure 12.2 Climate Action Plan – to tackle Climate Breakdown



Source: Eastern and Midland Climate Action Regional Office (CARO)

12.5.7 Climate Action Charter (CAC)

The *Climate Action Charter* for Louth was signed in 2019. The charter acknowledges that Climate Change is happening and that actions must be taken to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate. We as a Nation must be more sustainable in our actions and ensure that Climate Action is at the heart of all our national, regional and local strategies, policies, plans and decisions. Each Chapter in this County Development Plan must be read with this *Climate Action Charter* at its core. We must plan and develop our County with climate action including adaptation, mitigation and improvement at its core. As a nation and County we must reduce negative climate impacts and promote climate improvement/mitigation and be climate resilient in our planning. The actions detailed in the Charter underpin all policies, objectives, goals and strategies of this plan and all other strategic plans whether they are local, regional or national.

12.5.8 Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 (CCAS)

This *Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024* forms part of the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) which was published in response to the provisions of the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015*. Louth's CCAS has been developed in line with the Department for Communities Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE) *Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines* and was adopted by Louth County Council elected members on 16th September 2019. It is a collaborative approach to climate change across the Eastern and Midlands Region.

It sets out Louth's measures to adapting and protecting its functional area and citizens from the current and future effects of climate change and is based around 6 thematic areas.

NSO 8 is also in line with the Sustainable Development Goal on climate change:
"To realise the NSOs that include compact growth, sustainable mobility and transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society, Project Ireland 2040 has dedicated a Climate Action fund and a ten-year capital investment plan."

They are supported by specific objectives and adaptation actions to achieve their desired outcomes. The CCAS seeks to inform or 'climate proof' existing plans and policies produced and implemented by Louth County Council.

12.5.9 Project Ireland 2040 (National Planning Framework - NPF)

This is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. This framework recognises the importance of climate action and the link with the planning process, which provides an established means through which to implement and integrate climate change objectives, including adaptation at a local level.

It sets out a single vision, a shared set of goals in the form of 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) of which no. 8 identifies the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Adaptation Framework.

New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewable-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.

12.5.10 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) – Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)

The RSES recognises the global challenge that is climate change and EMRA is committed to the region becoming a low-carbon, circular and climate resilient region. The RSES supports the implementation of the NPF (Project Ireland 2040) through the provision of appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives (RPO). The RSES sets out 16 Regional Strategic Objectives (RSOs) which are aligned with international, EU and national policy. The RSOs are sorted into 3 categories namely Economic Opportunity, Healthy Placemaking and Climate Action.

Under Climate Action the RSES identifies 6 RSOs:
RSO 6 – Integrated Transport and Land Use;
RSO 7 – Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources;
RSO 8 – Build on Climate Resilience,
RSO 9 – Support the Transition to Low Carbon and Clean Energy;
RSO 10 – Enhanced Green Infrastructure; and
RSO 11 – Biodiversity and Natural Heritage.

European and National funding provision will assist in the realisation of the RSES RSOs. EMRA will also work closely with the newly appointed Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) who shall ensure coherence and coordination with the RSES when formulating regional climate change adaptation plans.

The RSES also sets out 5 specific Climate Change RPOs for the Eastern and Midlands Region (RPO 7.30 – RPO 7.34).

Key features of the programme include:

- Commitment to supporting the European Green Deal;
- Offshore Wind Sector;
- Town Centres First;
- Transition to a low carbon future;
- Climate Governance;
- Increased emphasis on protection of Biodiversity and natural heritage; and
- Accelerating the electrification of the transport system.

12.5.11 Programme for Government 2020

The Programme for Government places significant emphasis on climate action and places climate action at the heart of the incoming Government's ambitions. Central to the programme is a commitment to an average 7% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021-2030.

The programme commits to a 10-fold increase in the national retrofitting programme, with the target of bringing at least 500,000 Irish homes up to a minimum B2 standard this decade.

The climate action brief within the Programme for Government is wide ranging and touches on virtually every aspect of society and the economy.

One of the keys aspects is a commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 enshrined in a new Climate Action Bill.

There is also a commitment to update the *Climate Action Plan* annually and report progress quarterly.

The Programme for Government targets a review of renewable energy legislation with a view to accelerating the process for onshore wind, solar and offshore wind, while legislation is also being brought in to actively curb carbon intensive industries including gas extraction, shale gas importation, LPG gas storage and turf extraction.

12.6 Climate Action Strategic Objectives

Climate action mitigation and adaptation strategies have been integrated into the Policies of the Plan. The following Policy Objectives support the overarching Strategic Objectives.

Policy Objective	
CA 1	To promote, support and direct effective climate action policies and objectives that seek to improve climate outcomes across the settlement areas and communities of County Louth helping to successfully contribute and deliver on the obligations of the State to transition to low carbon and climate resilient society through the encouragement and integration of appropriate mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures into all development.

Policy Objective	
CA 2	Work to translate, support and implement strategic objectives of the *National Planning Framework* and the *Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* to create an enabling local development framework that: • Promotes and integrates important climate considerations in local development and planning decisions; • Supports national climate policy and targets of the Climate Action Plan (as revised and updated) and the delivery of the national transition objective.

Policy Objective	
CA 3	Actively implement policies that support and encourage sustainable compact growth and settlement patterns, integrate land use and transportation, and maximise opportunities through development location, form, layout and design to secure climate resilience and reduce carbon dioxide and greenhouse emissions.

Policy Objective	
CA 4	Support the work of Louth County Council in: • Developing a robust comprehension of the key risks and vulnerabilities of the County to the negative impacts of climate change; • The implementation of adaptation and mitigation actions of the strategy aimed at building climate resilience across local communities;and • Promoting the integration of effective adaptation and mitigation considerations into decision making processes.

Policy Objective	
CA 5	To actively promote and encourage nature-based approaches and green infrastructure solutions as viable mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and optimize the multifaceted benefits through: • Conservation, promotion and restoration of the natural environment; • Integrating an ecosystem services approach and promote healthy living environments through enhanced connection with nature and recreation/amenity; • Enhancing biodiversity in urban and rural settings; • Assist with water and flood risk management; and • Carbon storage or sequestration.

Policy Objective	
CA 6	To capitalise on the economic opportunities for County Louth that arise in association with the environmental and technological advances required to support the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy and in particular, opportunities arising from the implementation and translation of the European Green Deal and the post COVID-19 recovery plan Next Generation EU, to national policy.

Policy Objective	
CA 7	Promote and encourage positive community led climate action initiatives and projects that seek to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, enhance green infrastructure and encourage awareness on climate change issues.

Policy Objective	
CA 8	To seek to identify projects or initiatives that will assist in meeting national climate and energy targets and to seek funding or support any funding applications for the implementation of these initiatives from available sources including the Department of Environment, Climate & Communications Climate Action Fund.

12.7 Climate Action Mitigation and Adaptation

Climate action mitigation and adaptation are distinct but complementary activities.

12.7.1 Climate Change Mitigation

Climate Change Mitigation is defined as 'a human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases' (IPCC, 2014) i.e. tackling the cause of climate change.

There is an onus on each of us to mitigate the magnitude of long-term climate change by taking actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to increase the capacity of carbon sinks such as forests.

Climate mitigation is to the forefront of this Plan with the aim of achieving a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions across the key sectors. Climate mitigation has the capacity to provide significant health and economic benefits such as improved health, new 'green' jobs, improved competitiveness, cleaner air and more efficient public transport systems in cities, new technologies, energy-efficient buildings and secure supplies of indigenous energy.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Volume 5 of this Plan appraises the likely significant environmental effects of this Plan and the reasonable alternatives considered.

The climate change mitigation pathways presented in Chapter 4 of the Climate Action Plan 2019 entail a coherent set of abatement measures across the five sectors that contribute most to our greenhouse gas emissions: Agriculture, Transport, Electricity, Built Environment, and Industry/Enterprise.

This section of the Plan identifies each of the policy objectives, which contribute towards achieving each of the targets set for the aforementioned sectors.

Separate to the policies which align with the targets set down for the five sectors, the Plan contains a specific policy objective to support the implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2019 and to consider a variation to the Plan should this be required in future.

Policy Objective	
CS 6	To support the implementation of the EU Green Deal, National Climate Action Plan 2019, Programme for Government 2020, Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and the Climate Action Charter through the Plan and to consider, if appropriate, a variation of the development plan to ensure the consistency with the approach to climate action recommended in any revised Development Plan Guidelines as adopted.

12.7.1.1 Electricity

As noted within the *Climate Action Plan 2019*, electricity accounted for 19.3% of Ireland's greenhouse gases in 2017 and it is therefore important that we decarbonise the electricity that we consume by harnessing our significant renewable energy resources. Such development will reduce dependence on fossil fuels and external sources, improve energy mix and provide a secure and resilient supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions creating environmental benefits and protect against climate change.

The Council recognises the range of new and developing technologies that can contribute to minimising greenhouse gas emissions, providing a secure and stable energy supply and securing a greater proportion of our energy from renewable sources.

The Council recognises the significant contribution that wind, solar and biomass energy can make as a clean sustainable solution to energy requirements and its vital role in helping achieve national targets in relation to fossil fuel reductions and consequently greenhouse gas emissions.

The policy objectives contained within the Plan and which contribute to achieving the Climate Action Plan targets on Electricity are set out in Table 12.1 at the end of this chapter.

12.7.1.2 Built Environment

The built environment is broadly defined as the artificial, man-made structures in which we live, work and play. All artificial surfaces, including buildings, roads, pavements etc. come under the heading of the built environment. The built environment accounted for 12.7% of Ireland's greenhouse gases in 2017 *(Climate Action Plan 2019).*

New buildings only account for a small percentage of the built environment and a strategy for bringing older existing buildings up to correct standards has become a key focus of the *Climate Action Plan 2019*. The policy objectives contained within the Plan and which contribute to achieving the Climate Action Plan targets regarding the Built Environment are set out in Table 12.2.

12.7.1.3 Transport

The transport sector accounted for 19.8% of Ireland's greenhouse gases in 2017. The dispersed settlement pattern and low population density evident across much of the country, has contributed to a high proportion of journeys being made by private car and has created a barrier to sustainable public transport provision. In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the transport sector, there is a requirement to drive more compact, connected development and to migrate towards low emission vehicles.

As well as contributing to the production of greenhouses gases, air pollution emitted from transportation contributes to poor local air quality, in the form of increased micro-particulates and nitrogen oxides, which reduces people's quality of life and harms their health.

The Census 2016 confirmed that the car remains the dominant mode of transport in County Louth with over 63% of workers driving to work and over 50% of students travelling to school or college by car. Mitigation policies (set out in Table 12.3 at the end of this chapter) have therefore been incorporated into the Plan to ensure that the transportation sector is addressed within the overall climate action strategy and alignment with the Climate Action Plan 2019 targets.

The Plan supports the target for increased Electric Vehicles (EV's) in Ireland within the Development Management Guidelines laid out in Chapter 13. These guidelines require that in all car parking areas provision shall be made for charging points for Electric Vehicles, including the necessary wiring and ducting.

12.7.1.4 Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use

Agriculture generates a third of Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions and is the single largest contributor to Ireland's overall Greenhouse Gas emissions, accounting for over 30% of the total. Ireland's production systems are already at the higher end of efficiencies in terms of efficiency per unit production. This highlights the challenges faced by the sector to identify further cost-effective measures to limit emissions.

The Development Plan has a key role to play in terms of land use and the interaction with climate action.

Deforestation is one of the major contributors to climate change, and currently accounts for 17% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Conversely, forestry provides a range of opportunities to mitigate rises in greenhouse gas levels:

- afforestation/reforestation;
- forest management;
- reduced deforestation (land use change from to forest to non-forest);
- increased use of wood products;
- Use of forest products for bioenergy to replace fossil fuel use; and
- Support anaerobic digestion to reduce the anthropogenic climate warming impact of agricultural waste and produce biogas, which is not considered a fossil fuel.

The total carbon reservoir in Irish forests currently exceeds one billion tonnes of carbon dioxide. Most of this is in the soil. Table 12.4 sets out the specific targets contained within the Climate Action Plan 2019 and the corresponding policy objectives within this Plan which will contribute to achieving these national targets.

12.7.1.5 Enterprise

The largest share of enterprise emissions comes from the manufacturing sector, mostly chemicals, food processing, beverages, and cement, but it is a relatively small sector in Ireland with 74 companies. These are covered by the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). The EU ETS focuses on emissions that can be measured, reported and verified with a high level of accuracy and covers carbon dioxide (CO2), nitrous oxide (N2O) and perfluorocarbons (PFCs). Emissions from enterprise that fall outside the EU ETS are highly diverse, with a large proportion arising from Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). There are various options available to reduce emissions within the sector.

These include increase in the uptake of low-carbon and energy efficient technology, and a transition to low carbon energy supplies. The policy objectives contained within the Plan and which contribute to achieving the Climate Action Plan targets on Enterprise are set out in Table 12.5 at the end of this chapter.

12.7.2 Climate Change Adaptation

Climate Change Adaptation is defined as 'the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects' (IPCC, 2014), i.e. dealing with the inevitable effects and impacts of climate change.

The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming concluded that the impacts and costs 1.5°C of global warming will be far greater than expected. The past decade has increased ferocity and frequency of storms, forest fires, droughts, coral bleaching, heat waves, and floods around the world with just 1°C of global warming. The IPCC reported that 1.5°C could be reached in as little as 11 years and almost certainly within 20 years without major cuts in CO_2 emissions. Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5°C and will increase further if we reach 2°C.

At a local level, Met Éireann projections indicate an increase of 1°C –1.6°C in mean annual temperatures, with the largest increases seen in the east of the country.

Highest daytime temperatures are projected to rise by 0.7°C–2.6°C in summer and lowest night-time temperatures are projected to rise by 1.1°C–3°C in winter.

Met Éireann's down-scaled simulations show significant projected decreases in mean annual, spring and summer precipitation amounts by mid-century. The projected decreases are largest for summer, with reductions ranging from 0% to 13% and from 3% to 20% for the medium-to-low and high emission scenarios, respectively. The frequencies of heavy precipitation events show notable increases of approximately 20% during the winter and autumn months. The number of extended dry periods is projected to increase substantially by mid-century during autumn and summer.

The projected increases in dry periods are largest for summer, with values ranging from 12% to 40% for both emission scenarios.[1]

Louth County Council has compiled a Climate Risk Register as part of the County Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024. This register outlines specific impacts of climate change resulting from various climate hazard events such as heat wave conditions, extreme precipitation, extreme wind events and extreme cold and/or snow events. A summary of these risks are outlined in Figure 12.3.

[1] https://www.met.ie/climate/climate-change

Figure 12.3 – Climate Risk Register Summary

Electricity		• Damage to underground utility services located under or adjacent to roads during extreme cold or snow events; • Increased frequency of fallen power and communication overhead lines caused by storm activity.
Built Environment		• Requirement to re-house families impacted by flooding during periods of extreme precipitation; • Increased frequency of damage to council housing stock by storm activity; • Damage to housing stock such as burst pipes caused by freezing conditions.
Transport		• Deterioration of road surfaces due to prolonged exposure to high temperatures during heat wave conditions; • Increased deterioration of roads as a result of ground movement/shrinkage during heat wave conditions; • Increase in damage to transport infrastructure including flooding of roads and damage to bridge structures and potential landslides during periods of extreme precipitation; • Increase in river levels bursting banks and causing flooding of roads & footpaths, or rivers so high so as to prevent surface water drainage freely flowing away from road surfaces during periods of extreme precipitation; • Increased frequency of road blockages caused by fallen trees and power lines and damage to road signage, street furniture and public lighting during storm conditions; • Increased frequency of roads closed by snow; and • Increased road and bridge infrastructure deterioration due to freeze/thaw conditions.

Agriculture, Forestry & Land Use		• Increase in frequency and intensity of fires in forested areas, upland areas, gorse and bog areas and amenity/ recreational areas during heat wave conditions; and • Reduced availability of water sources to combat fires during heat wave conditions.
Natural Environment		• Wild fires in areas of high biodiversity and habitat value during heat wave events and drought conditions; • Increased demand for bathing waters during heat wave events and drought conditions; • Reduced flow in rivers and streams during heat wave events and drought conditions • Increase in Invasive species best suited to higher temperatures and drier conditions; • Increased surface run-off resulting in nutrients being washed into rivers, streams, and lakes during extreme precipitation events; • Changes to river morphology (e.g. bank erosion) caused by increased flow rates during extreme precipitation events; • Loss of biodiversity and habitats in flooded areas caused by extreme precipitation events; and • Low temperatures will result in an increase in polluting carbon sources being burned, which will have a consequence for air quality and public health.

12.7.3 Adapting to Climate Change within Louth

12.7.3.1 Integrated Land Use Planning

Spatial planning land use policy has a crucial role to play in ensuring compact and sustainable growth of our cities, towns, and villages. Integrated land use planning and transportation are fundamental to reducing car dependency and achieving reductions in carbon emissions.

This is a particular focus in this Plan whereby climate action is embedded in the land use planning and transport policies.

The Core Strategy focuses on delivering upon the overriding objective of both the NPF and the RSES in achieving compact growth in urban areas.

An analysis of appropriate brownfield and infill sites with potential capacity to deliver new homes was completed for Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee and Dunleer and the remaining Level 3 settlements. Delivering compact growth is acknowledged as being a crucial aspect in achieving a greater uptake of sustainable modes of transport.

This reduces the reliance on the car by facilitating easier access to public transport corridors and encourages cycling and walking.

Policy within the Plan is particularly focused on prioritising targeted population and economic growth to the designated Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

The aim is to promote their continued sustainable and compact growth as regional drivers to city scale, with a target population of 50,000 by 2031 supported by improvements to sustainable transport links and the requisite infrastructure to enable the towns grow to their full potential.

The Core Strategy encourages higher densities and increased building heights in areas close to public transport routes.

The need to reduce one off rural housing in the countryside is key to ensuring settlement patters align with climate action principles.

The Plan acknowledges that as we strive to mitigate against the impacts of climate change it is important that future development patterns reduce our carbon footprint, protects our environment and promotes more sustainable ways of living. To this end the Plan directs rural generated housing demand to rural villages in the first instance.

12.7.3.2 Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure has a significant role to play in transitioning to a low-carbon society and economy and to mitigate the significant risks associated with rising energy costs and climate change adaptation. Green Infrastructure can include a number of facets such as uplands, wetlands, woodlands, rivers, lakes, and coastal areas, all of which have a pivotal role in terms of climate adaptation.

The Council has in place a comprehensive Green Infrastructure Strategy, which aims to strengthen and/or create wildlife corridors between interconnecting core areas for the benefit of biodiversity, enhanced outdoor recreational opportunities, visual amenity and general wellbeing.

The Council recognises the important role green infrastructure such as greenways play in climate mitigation and adaptation.

The principles of a green infrastructure approach to land use planning has been embedded as a cross cutting theme in the policies and objectives of this Plan.

The Plan supports the existing green infrastructure network of County Louth and includes a noteworthy policy to prepare specific Green Infrastructure Strategies for the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

12.7.3.3 Greenways

The Council has invested significantly in Greenways. The Great Eastern Greenway is a 7 kilometre trail that runs from Carlingford to Omeath along the southern shore of Carlingford Lough. It is proposed to further extend this greenway to Newry and Dundalk and increase the length of the trail to approximately 55 kilometres.

To the south of the County phase one of the Boyne Greenway, in Drogheda, has been completed. This stretch of greenway runs from Dominic's Park on the south bank of the River Boyne to the Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre at Oldbridge. Future phases of this Greenway include an extension from Drogheda to Mornington. It is anticipated that the extended route will pass through Drogheda and follow the southern edge of the Boyne east of the town and out to Mornington.

Most recently, Louth County Council has secured €200,000 worth of funding to improve the Northside Greenway at Mell in Drogheda. The funding has been allocated under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, a joint initiative between the Department of Rural and Community Development and Fáilte Ireland.

12.7.3.4 Flood Risk Management

Flooding is the most common natural hazard and third most damaging globally after storms and earthquakes. Climate change is expected to increase flood risk through more frequent heavy precipitation, increased catchment wetness and sea level rise.

Spatial planning aims to reduce the harmful effects of flooding by limiting the impact of a flood on human health and economic infrastructure. This is accomplished by planning appropriate land use of floodplains. The role of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is pivotal in this regard in informing the policy objectives and land use zoning objectives of the Plan.

The Plan is informed by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (contained within Volume 5) and guided by robust policies and objectives in relation to Flood Risk Management, designed to ensure that future development, in areas at risk of flooding shall conform to 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2009). The baseline for the SFRA has been derived from the Office of Public Works (OPW) catchment and Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) data, the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Management (PFRAM) data and the Areas of Further Assessment (AFA).

The SFRA acknowledges that with climate change, the frequency, pattern and severity of flooding is expected to change and become more damaging, so the likely impact of climate change on fluvial and coastal flood extents has also been appraised. The strategic land-use planning decisions taken within this Plan have been have fully informed by the findings of the SFRA.

Louth County Council has been working closely with the OPW with regard to planned flood relief schemes within the County.

These schemes require significant capital investment. Having been allocated funding, the Council is seeking to deliver on the Drogheda & Baltray Flood Relief Scheme, Dundalk, Blackrock & Ardee Flood Relief Scheme and the Carlingford & Greenore Flood Relief Scheme over the lifetime of this Plan.

12.7.3.5 Urban and Rural Regeneration

Urban and rural regeneration has the potential to greatly enhance the climate resilience of towns and villages. Regeneration projects can help to inject new life into declining urban and rural areas, stimulating both social and economic regeneration.

Urban regeneration in particular focuses on reorganising and upgrading the existing built environment instead of planning new greenfield development. The valuable contribution made by urban and rural regeneration projects is reflected in the Governments Rural & Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

A key requirement for eligibility under both schemes is the contribution a project will make in assisting the transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

The Plan emphasises the importance of regeneration areas within the County and identifies a number of regeneration areas in Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee. The areas identified have the potential to deliver sustainable compact growth while achieving a transition to a competitive, low carbon and climate-resilient economy.

Louth County Council has also successfully secured funding for the following regeneration projects to date; and

- Ardee Regeneration & Ardee Castle;
- Westgate Vision Drogheda;
- Long Walk Quarter;
- Living in Carlingford-Visiting Carlingford.

Each of these schemes will contribute to creating climate resilient development and enhance their respective town and village centres.

The Plan acknowledges the important role played by urban and rural regeneration projects with regards climate action and this is reflected in specific regeneration policies and zoning objectives.

12.7.3.6 Renewable Energy

Louth County Council has been proactive in promoting renewable energy within the County. The Council has also sought to lead by example in utilising renewable energy resources. In 2017 PV panels were installed on a section of roof of the Council office building in Dundalk. The PV panels generate 11KW of electricity and are expected to generate some 8,500KW hrs of electricity or some 3% of the annual energy use within the building.

The Council was also a key partner in the Dundalk 2020 Project and has participated in the EU Funded Concerto Project as a result. Dundalk was Ireland's first sustainable energy community under SEAI's Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) Programme.

Dundalk 2020 involved collaboration between local authorities, agencies, professional organisations, businesses and local community groups, with the aim of reducing energy use, achieving energy-efficiency targets and installing renewable energy where feasible. Dundalk 2020 is regarded as an exemplar project for future similar projects across Ireland.

The Council acknowledges the role of the Plan in developing renewable energy projects within the County. Since the adoption of the *Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021*, the Council has granted planning permission for a number of solar farms within the County. These include Solar PV Energy Developments at Dunleer, Willville and Beaulieu House Estate, Drogheda.

The Council recognises the range of new and developing technologies that can contribute to minimising greenhouse gas emissions, providing a secure and stable energy supply and securing a greater proportion of our energy from renewable sources.

In particular, the Council recognises the significant contribution that wind energy can make as a clean sustainable solution to energy requirements and its vital role in helping achieve national targets in relation to fossil fuel reductions and consequently greenhouse gas emissions. The Council will also support and facilitate the development of solar energy, encourage passive solar design, solar PV, and solar water heating in new buildings and in retrofitting buildings.

The policy objectives set out within this Plan support the key renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and bioenergy, subject to environmental considerations.

Table 12.1 – National Climate Action Plan Targets versus Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 Policy Objectives – Electricity

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Reduce CO2 eq. emissions from the sector by 50 –55% relative to 2030 Pre-NDP projections. **Deliver an early and complete phase-out of coal- and peat-fired electricity generation.** **Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70%, indicatively comprised of:** • **at least 3.5 GW of offshore renewable energy** • **up to 1.5 GW of grid-scale solar energy** • **up to 8.2 GW total of increased onshore wind capacity.**	**IU 56**	To encourage the development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and guidance and the 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines' (2006) or any revisions thereof which may be issued during the lifetime of the Plan.
	IU 60	To support the development of off shore windfarm developments subject to normal planning considerations, including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.
	IU 64	To support the development of solar energy infrastructure in the County including commercial scale ground mounted solar PV "Solar Farms" subject to environmental safeguards and the protection of natural and built heritage features, biodiversity and views and prospects.
	IU 49	To support international, national and County initiatives for limiting and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, utilising the natural resources of the County, in an environmentally acceptable manner subject to normal proper planning considerations including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.
	IU 50	To co-operate with the appropriate authorities both north and south of the border in the provision of all-island renewable energy.
	IU 51	To support initiatives aimed at reducing the level of energy consumption within the County.
	IU 52	To produce a Renewable Energy Strategy for County Louth within one year of adoption of the Revised Wind Energy Guidelines. This strategy shall have regard to 'A Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies', (SEAI) and shall be compliant with the requirements of the SEA & Habitats Directives.
	IU 53	To support the identification, in conjunction with EMRA, of Strategic Energy Zones, areas suitable to accommodate large energy generating projects within the Eastern and Midland Region.

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Reduce CO2 eq. emissions from the sector by 50 –55% relative to 2030 Pre-NDP projections. **Deliver an early and complete phase-out of coal- and peat-fired electricity generation.** **Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70%, indicatively comprised of:** • **at least 3.5 GW of offshore renewable energy** • **up to 1.5 GW of grid-scale solar energy** • **up to 8.2 GW total of increased onshore wind capacity.**	**IU 55**	To support the implementation of the EU Green Deal, Climate Action Plan 2019 (or any subsequent plan), Programme for Government 2020, Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for County Louth and the Climate Action Charter and facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
	IU 69	To support and promote the development of bio-gas production and networking technologies at suitable locations and subject to normal planning and environmental considerations.
	IU 70	Facilitate and promote District Heating installation where practical through the County, while protecting residential amenity.
	HOU 30	To encourage building design and layout that maximises daylight and natural ventilation and incorporates energy efficiency and conservation measures that will improve the environmental performance of buildings in line with best practice.
	IU 73	To support the sustainable development of hydroelectric projects on rivers and lakes where they do not have an ecological impact on any sites of EU or national designation and/or impact negatively on freshwater species and the free passage of fish.
	IU 74	To support the development of wave and tidal energy in suitable waters off the coast of County Louth subject to the protection of important marine habitats and acceptable visual and environmental considerations.
	IU 75	To promote and facilitate the development of small scale electricity generation installations and green technologies which do not negatively impact on environmental quality, landscape, wildlife and habitats and residential amenities.
	IU 78	To support and facilitate the reinforcement and development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the County and Region. This will include the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements facilitating linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid, in a sustainable and timely manner, subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

Table 12.2 – National Climate Action Plan Targets versus Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 Policy Objectives – Built Environment

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Reduce CO2 eq. emissions from the sector by 40–45% relative to 2030 pre-NDP projections. **Sharply reduce fossil fuel use, given the current heavy reliance on gas, oil, coal and peat in the sector.** **Increase the number of Sustainable Energy Communities to 1,500.** **Complete the rollout of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH), including support for biomass and anaerobic digestion heating systems.**	**IU 54**	To support Sustainable Energy Communities and Local Community Group Initiatives to develop clean energy opportunities within the County.
	IU 84	To support the implementation of National and County initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases by incorporating energy efficiency measures into the design of new buildings and retrofitting of existing buildings.
	IU 85	To ensure that all new buildings in the County achieve the Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) standard in line with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and having regard to the Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings.
	IU 87	To promote innovative new building design and retrofitting of existing buildings where possible, and encourage the design and construction of buildings that are functionally adaptable, to improve building energy efficiency, energy conservation and the use of renewable energy sources, in accordance with national policy and guidance.
	CS 2	To achieve compact growth through the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes in urban areas within the existing built up footprint of settlements, by developing infill, brownfield and regeneration sites and redeveloping underutilised land in preference to greenfield sites.
	CS 5	To support the implementation of the EU Green Deal, National Climate Action Plan 2019, Programme for Government 2020, Louth Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and the Climate Action Charter through the Plan and to consider, if appropriate, a variation of the development plan to ensure the consistency with the approach to climate action recommended in any revised Development Plan Guidelines as adopted.
	CS 20	To direct rural generated housing demand to rural villages and rural nodes in the first instance and ensure that one off housing in the open countryside is only permitted where there is demonstrable compliance with the criteria for rural housing as provided for in the Development Plan.
	SS 5 & SS 22	To support increased building heights at appropriate locations in Drogheda and Dundalk, subject to the design and scale of any building making a positive contribution to its surrounding environment and streetscape.

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Reduce CO2 eq. emissions from the sector by 40–45% relative to 2030 pre-NDP projections. **Sharply reduce fossil fuel use, given the current heavy reliance on gas, oil, coal and peat in the sector.** **Increase the number of Sustainable Energy Communities to 1,500.** **Complete the rollout of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH), including support for biomass and anaerobic digestion heating systems.**	**HOU 10**	To continue to support the creation of sustainable communities throughout the County for people across all the life stages by facilitating the creation of attractive neighbourhoods where there are strong links and connections to local services, community facilities and employment areas and where walking, cycling, and public transport is prioritised.
	HOU 15	To promote development that facilitates a higher, sustainable density that supports compact growth and the consolidation of urban areas, which will be appropriate to the local context and enhance the local environment in which it is located.
	HOU 16	To support increased building heights in appropriate locations in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.
	HOU 36	To discourage urban generated housing in rural areas and direct proposals for such housing to the towns and villages in Settlement Levels 1-4 in the County as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy in Table 2.4.
	TOU 21	To seek best-practice environmental management and climate proofing of tourism related developments and activities to include the circular economy, energy efficiency, waste management, procurement and recycling.
	IU 59	To favourably consider small scale wind energy development for auto-consumption purposes, that accord with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area including residential amenity, heritage, environmental and landscape impacts.
	IU 65	To encourage and support the development of solar energy infrastructure for on-site energy use, including solar PV, solar thermal and seasonal storage technologies.
	IU 66	To encourage and support the development and promote the use of heat pumps for heating domestic, commercial and recreational buildings and water subject to normal planning and environmental considerations.
	IU 67	To support and promote the development of projects that convert biomass to energy subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.
	IU 91	To encourage and support the utilisation of siting and landscape design features to minimise energy requirements.

Table 12.3 – National Climate Action Plan Targets versus Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 Policy Objectives – Transport

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Reduce CO2 eq. emissions from the sector by 45–50% relative to 2030 pre-NDP projections. **Increase the number of EVs to 936,000.** **Build the EV charging network to support the growth of EVs at the rate required, and develop our fast-charging infrastructure to stay ahead of demand.**	**MOV 10**	To facilitate the switch to Electric Vehicles through the roll-out of additional electric charging points at appropriate locations within the County in association with relevant agencies and stakeholders.
	MOV 11	To facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in the Development Management Guidelines in Chapter 13.
	NBG 51	To require the integration of climate change mitigation measures in any future spatial plans and climate change adaptation measures in proposed developments.
	MOV 1	To work with national transport agencies in supporting the delivery of a high quality, climate resilient and sustainable transport network in the County.
	MOV 2	To support the implementation of the 'National Climate Action Plan' 2019, and any subsequent plans, and in particular the measures included that will assist in achieving the target of CO2 emissions reduction by 2030 in the transport sector as set out in Section 10.2 of the 'Climate Action Plan'.
	MOV 3	To facilitate the integration of land use with sustainable transportation infrastructure in accordance with the requirements of RPO 8.1 in the RSES by supporting the creation of a critical mass of population and employment related development that would maximise investment in public transport infrastructure and create compact, sustainable settlements.
	MOV 4	To promote sustainable higher density development along public transport corridors.
	MOV 9	To support investment in sustainable transport infrastructure that will make walking, cycling or public transport more attractive and appealing, and facilitates accessibility for all, regardless of age, physical mobility, or social disadvantage.
	MOV 14	To encourage a modal shift from use of the private car towards more sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, and public transport.
	SS 13	To support investment in public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services in Drogheda including the progression of the DART Expansion Programme which includes the electrification of the rail line and the extension of DART services to Drogheda.

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Reduce CO2 eq. emissions from the sector by 45–50% relative to 2030 pre-NDP projections. **Increase the number of EVs to 936,000.** **Build the EV charging network to support the growth of EVs at the rate required, and develop our fast-charging infrastructure to stay ahead of demand.**	**SS 17**	To work with the NTA, local landowners, and developers to implement an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Drogheda, recognising the highest priority to be given to cycling and walking over other modes of transport.
	SS 18	To develop a network of green areas throughout the town including the delivery of a greenway along the north and southern banks of the River Boyne stretching from Townley Hall to Baltray and Oldbridge to Mornington in County Meath while maintaining the integrity of the Boyne Natura 2000 sites.
	SS 21 & SS 4	To support sustainable high density development, particularly in centrally located areas and along public transport corridors and require a minimum density of 50 units/ha in these locations.
	SS 31	To work with the NTA, local landowners and developers to implement an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Dundalk.
	SS 32	To develop a network of green areas throughout the town, building on existing green infrastructure, and advancing the delivery of the Great Eastern Greenway along the coast incorporating the delivery of greenway and pedestrian infrastructure on both sides of the Castletown River, while maintaining the integrity of the Dundalk Bay Natura 2000 sites.
	HOU 22	To require residential developments to prioritise and facilitate walking, cycling, and public transport and to include provision for links and connections to existing facilities and public transport nodes in the wider neighbourhood.
	MOV 16	To support the DART Expansion Programme including new infrastructure and the electrification of existing lines along the northern rail line to Drogheda.
	MOV 28	To promote walking and cycling as a safe, convenient, healthy, efficient, and environmentally friendly mode of transport for all age groups.
	MOV 30	To provide, where possible traffic free pedestrian and cyclist routes particularly where such routes would provide a more direct, safer, and more attractive alternative to the car.
	NBG 46	To develop linear parks, particularly along waterways, and to link existing parks and open spaces in order to provide green chains that promote permeability for pedestrians and cyclists in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

Table 12.4 – National Climate Action Plan Targets versus Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 Policy Objectives – Agriculture, Forestry & Land Use

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Deliver 16.5-18.5 MtCO2eq. cumulative abatement. **Achieve 26.8 MtCO2eq. abatement through LULUCF actions over the period 2021 to 2030, comprised of:** • **an average of 8,000 ha per annum of newly planted forest, and sustainable forest management of existing forests (21 MtCO2eq. cumulative abatement) at least 40,000 ha per annum of reduced management intensity of grasslands on drained organic soils (4.4 MtCO2eq. cumulative abatement)** • **better management of grasslands, tillage land and non-agricultural wetlands (1.4 MtCO2eq. cumulative abatement)**	**ENV 40**	In accordance with the National Climate Action Plan 2019 (or any subsequent Plan) Louth County Council shall promote sustainable forestry development of appropriate scale within the County in order to address climate action directly through carbon sequestration and indirectly through the displacement of fossil fuel.
	ENV 33	To encourage forestry and forestry related development, as a means of diversifying from traditional agriculture activity with a preference for native species.
	ENV 31	To support national policy in relation to forestry in order to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society, subject to normal planning criteria.
	ENV 38	To retain and protect significant stands of existing trees/ hedgerows/woodlands, and seek increased planting of native trees, where appropriate, in new developments.
	ENV 32	To encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on European sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.
	EE 61	To facilitate the diversification of the agricultural sector by supporting alternative farm enterprises subject to the nature and use of any enterprise being compatible with the environment in which it is located.
	HOU 38	To reserve as decarbonisation zones, agricultural, open space, or recreational use, lands immediately surrounding or in the immediate vicinity of the development boundary of towns and villages in the County in order to prevent sprawl and a linear pattern of development, and to ensure there is a distinction between built up areas and the open countryside.
	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.

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Deliver 16.5-18.5 MtCO2eq. cumulative abatement. **Achieve 26.8 MtCO2eq. abatement through LULUCF actions over the period 2021 to 2030, comprised of:** • **an average of 8,000 ha per annum of newly planted forest, and sustainable forest management of existing forests (21 MtCO2eq. cumulative abatement) at least 40,000 ha per annum of reduced management intensity of grasslands on drained organic soils (4.4 MtCO2eq. cumulative abatement)** • **better management of grasslands, tillage land and non-agricultural wetlands (1.4 MtCO2eq. cumulative abatement)**	**NBG 19**	To ensure that an appropriate level of ecological assessment is carried out for proposals involving drainage, infill or reclamation of wetland habitats.
	NBG 20	To protect and enhance wetland sites that have been rated A (International), B (National), C+ (County), C and D importance in the Louth Wetland Surveys and any subsequent versions thereof.
	NBG 21	To support the implementation of recommendations included in the Louth Wetland Survey and any subsequent versions thereof.
	NBG 33	To assess the implications of proposed development on significant trees and hedgerows located on lands that are being considered for development, seeking their incorporation into design proposals where appropriate and in compliance with procedures detailed in Appendix 6.
	NBG 34	To increase native tree coverage in the County to also act as carbon sinks by promoting the planting of suitable native trees and hedgerows along public roads, residential streets, parks and other areas of open space.
	NBG 35	To encourage initiatives supporting private and community driven native tree and woodland planting schemes throughout the County, utilising available funding schemes.
	NBG 51	To require the integration of climate change mitigation measures in any future spatial plans and climate change adaptation measures in proposed developments.
	IU 31	To contribute towards the improvement and/or restoration of the natural flood risk management functions of flood plains subject to compliance with the environmental legislation and availability of resources.
	IU 32	To ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.

Table 12.5 – National Climate Action Plan Targets versus Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 Policy Objectives – Enterprise

Climate Action Plan 2019: Targets	Louth County Development Plan Policy Objectives	
Reduce Ireland's ETS industry emissions by 10-15% by 2030, relative to 2030 projections. **Enterprise must contribute to the more ambitious targets for buildings (20-25%) and transport (45-50%).**	**EE 23**	To support the provision of co-working facilities and digital hubs that promote flexible working arrangements for established businesses, self-employed persons, and start up enterprises.
	IU 38	To secure the rollout of high quality broadband and telecommunication infrastructure throughout the County and facilitate its expansion in remote rural areas, in the interest of promoting economic growth, competitiveness and social inclusion.
	IU 37	To support the delivery and implementation of the National Broadband Plan.
	IU 84	To support the implementation of National and County initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases by incorporating energy efficiency measures into the design of new buildings and retrofitting of existing buildings.
	IU 85	To ensure that all new buildings in the County achieve the Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) standard in line with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and having regard to the Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings.
	EE 63	To ensure that all applications for industrial and enterprise development submit a carbon footprint calculation and demonstrates how the new buildings and processes/activities will seek to achieve the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan 2019 or any amendments to targets.



Chapter 13

Development Management Guidelines

"To achieve high standards in design and to build sustainable, healthy communities where people can enjoy a high quality of life."

13 – Development Management Guidelines

13.1 Introduction

This Chapter sets out the standards and guidelines which will be applied in the assessment of development proposals. The land use zoning categories and associated objectives and guidance are also provided.

Applications will be assessed against the policy objectives in the preceding chapters, the Settlement Statements in Volume 2 and the qualitative and quantitative standards set out in this Chapter. Qualitative standards include design, layout, permeability and built form, whilst the quantitative standards include density, plot ratio and traffic standards.

The fundamental aim is to achieve high standards in design and to build sustainable, healthy communities where people can enjoy a high quality of life.

In addition to these standards, more detailed guidance has been published by government Departments and agencies including the:

- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- Department of Education;
- Department of Transport,;
- Environmental Protection Agency;
- National Transport Authority; and
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

Any guidance published by Departments and agencies shall be considered in conjunction with the standards and guidance in this chapter.

13.2 Pre-planning

Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) sets out the formal procedures for pre-planning. The Planning Authority encourages applicants to engage in pre-planning discussions and will endeavour to facilitate such discussions as required.

13.3 Environmental Assessments

13.3.1 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The *Birds and Habitats Directives* set out procedures and obligations in relation to nature conservation management in European Sites and the habitats and species therein. This includes a requirement to consider the potential nature conservation implications of any plan or project on the Natura 2000 site network.

The process by which the possible effects of a plan or project, in combination with other plans and projects, on the Natura 2000 network are considered is known as Appropriate Assessment. The obligation to undertake Appropriate Assessment is set out in *Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive*.

Further details on Appropriate Assessment are available in the 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities'.

13.3.2 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has its origins in European Directives. It is the process of examining the potential effects of a proposed project on the receiving environment. *Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive* sets out the list of projects for which EIA is required. The Annex I and Annex II projects have been transposed into *Section 5 (Parts 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).*

Projects listed in Part 1 of the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)* require EIA if the stated threshold has been met or exceeded or if no thresholds are set. Projects listed in Part 2 also require EIA if the stated threshold has been met or exceeded or if no thresholds are set. Sub-threshold developments listed in Part 2 require screening for EIA.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is required to be prepared by the developer for developments for which EIA is required. This report is required to be examined, evaluated, and assessed by the competent authority.

Further guidance on EIA is set out in the 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment'. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' in 2017. At the time of writing, these Guidelines were at Draft stage.

13.3.3 Flood Risk Assessment

Where a risk of flooding may be an issue for a development, a Flood Risk Assessment appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and the risks arising will normally be required.

The detailed Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment should quantify the risks and effects of any necessary mitigation, together with the measures needed or proposed to manage residual risks.

13.4 Cross Cutting Themes

The principles of sustainable design and the creation of healthy, attractive and sustainable communities are a cross cutting theme of this Plan. These principles will be a central element of the assessment of planning applications. Developers, homeowners and designers should consider these principles in the design of new or extensions to existing buildings, streets and communities. This includes embracing the principles of Universal Design in order to ensure homes and buildings are adaptable for people as they get older, making buildings more energy efficient and resilient to the potential impacts of climate change and providing for the integration of new developments with established areas to improve connectivity and permeability. Proposals for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) shall also be incorporated into the design of public spaces, where appropriate.

13.5 MASTERPLANS

The purpose of a Masterplan is to provide a vision and conceptual guide for the long-term development of a large and/or strategically located area of land, where there is a co-ordinated framework for the planning, phasing and construction of the lands.

Masterplans can be particularly useful in circumstances where lands are in multiple ownership, as it can enable a common approach for the development area to be agreed.

The design and construction of a development area in accordance with an agreed Masterplan will ensure that ad hoc and piecemeal development is avoided and that the required infrastructure, services, and facilities are delivered in tandem with any residential, commercial or employment development.



Masterplans shall be prepared by landowners/developers and agreed with the Planning Authority. Depending on the size of the land parcel, the land use zoning(s) and infrastructural requirements, the level of detail required in a Masterplan will vary. The following information shall be included:

- Masterplan area in hectares and a breakdown of land use of each land use zoning by area;
- Details of landowners in the Masterplan area;
- Conceptual layout and design brief;
- Key challenges in the development of the Masterplan area;
- Building types and design (approximate unit numbers for residential development and commercial floor space/building heights in a mixed use development);
- Connectivity and permeability including pedestrian, vehicular and cycle access;
- Service arrangements including water, waste water and surface water;
- Any potential upgrades to infrastructure required to facilitate the development of the Masterplan area;
- Any potential environmental constraints such as flooding, archaeology, or the location of the Masterplan within or in proximity to a European Site;
- The proposed phasing arrangements for the development of the Masterplan area including the provision of necessary community or physical infrastructure in tandem with residential or commercial development;
- Proposals for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) shall be incorporated into the Masterplan area; and
- Any other information considered necessary.

The Planning Authority will endeavour to work closely with key stakeholders including landowners, developers and infrastructure agencies to progress Masterplans and secure the development of the Masterplan area.

In the larger settlements of the County, there are large parcels of undeveloped lands zoned for residential and employment uses. A Masterplan will normally be required to be agreed on these land blocks, to ensure there is a framework in place setting out how the area will be developed.

This includes access points, internal road layouts, sustainable transport provision, connectivity and permeability with surrounding areas, water services infrastructure, open space provision and the design and layout of buildings.

The written agreement of all landowners in a Masterplan area is normally required. Where this cannot be achieved consideration may be given to the preparation of a Masterplan in a specific location within the overall land parcel of the Masterplan area. This will only be considered where a clear rationale is provided explaining the reasons why the Masterplan for the entire land parcel cannot be considered. This rationale would have to demonstrate to the Council that this approach would not undermine the development of the wider Masterplan area. This may not be feasible in Masterplan areas where there are multiple land use zoning objectives and the build out of the lands requires the provision of a range of infrastructure e.g. social, community, transport or water services infrastructure in tandem with employment and/or residential development.

Any Masterplan that is specific to a location within the overall land parcel of the Masterplan area shall be required to demonstrate the relationship of the subject lands with the wider lands in the overall Masterplan area and shall clearly set out future access points (vehicular, cycling and pedestrian), and service and utilities provision and connections in order to ensure a co-ordinated and holistic approach is taken to the future development of the lands.

There may be instances where Section 28 guidance that is referenced in Masterplans or Framework Plans is superseded by updated guidance. Additional Section 28 guidance may also be published that is relevant to specific Masterplans or Framework Plans. When this situation arises, the most up to date guidance shall be used in the preparation and assessment of planning applications relevant to the Masterplan or Framework Plan area.

Landowners or developers shall engage with the Planning Authority at the early stage of the design process to determine if a Masterplan is required. The larger Masterplan areas in the County are outlined in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1: Masterplan Areas

Master Plan Number	Settlement	General Description	Status
1	Dundalk	Mullagharlin Framework Plan – this consists of c.450 hectares of land situated between the M1 and the eastern edge of the Dublin Road c.2km south of Dundalk town centre. Approximately 116 hectares of these lands have been built out. The implementation of the Framework Plan is ongoing at the time of writing, with a range of businesses and educational uses situated within the Framework Plan Area including in the IDA Park, Xerox Business Park, and DkIT campus. Any future development taking place within the Framework Plan Area shall comply with the requirements of this Framework Plan or any updated Plan.	Agreed in 2008
2	Dundalk	Mount Avenue Masterplan – this consists of an area of c.38 hectares of land to the north-west of Dundalk town centre with frontage onto Mount Avenue, Greyacres Road and Castletown Road. The lands are zoned for residential and open space uses with a Local Archaeological Heritage Site of national importance also located within the Masterplan area. The key principles of any Masterplan will be to establish a coordinated approach to the development of the lands that will include a mix of housing options that will support a sustainable community, the provision of a linear park, the provision of education facilities and local neighbourhood and community facilities. The Masterplan shall include provision for the delivery of new/upgraded road infrastructure including new Link Roads within the Masterplan area and shall demonstrate how this road will tie in with the alignment of link roads outside of the Masterplan area.	Under preparation 2020
3	Drogheda	Northern Environs Masterplan – this Masterplan was agreed in 2006 and consists of an extensive land bank of c.254 hectares to the north of the town centre. The Masterplan provides for a wide range of uses including residential a, open space, employment, neighbourhood and community facilities. A linear park and sport and recreation facilities were also to be provided. The development of this Masterplan area is dependent on the construction of the Port Access Northern Cross Route and water services infrastructure. To date small pockets of the Masterplan area have been developed.	Agreed 2006

Master Plan Number	Settlement	General Description	Status
4	Ardee	North-East Masterplan – this consists of residential and employment lands to the north east of the town centre. This Masterplan sets out details of the access and internal road layout of the lands in addition to a conceptual layout of the residential areas.	Agreed 2008
5	Dunleer	Lands East of town centre – these lands have been identified as an expansion area of the town centre with potential to accommodate a mix of commercial activity and ancillary residential development.	Awaiting preparation
6	Dunleer	South-West employment area – these lands have been identified for employment uses.	Awaiting preparation
7	Dundalk	These lands form an extension to the Mullagharlin Framework Plan and will provide opportunities for continued economic investment and employment generating development in Dundalk. The development of these lands shall be closely aligned to the design and layout of the adjacent lands to the south as agreed under the Mullagharlin Framework Plan, particularly with regard to access, and construction and delivery of services, and also delivering a high level of connectivity and permeability between the lands. The proposed Masterplan shall include details of the design and layout of any buildings, how any potential environmental or land use constraints will be addressed, how the amenities of local properties and services will be preserved, and the proposed phasing for the build out of the lands. Particular consideration shall be given to the potential impacts of any development of the lands on Killally Graveyard and the access to same, with appropriate landscaping and buffer zones integrated into any layout to protect their character and setting. The Masterplan shall also examine opportunities for and the feasibility of the restoration of the former quarry, together with any future intended uses of the former quarry.	Awaiting Preparation

13.6 SPOT OBJECTIVES

The land use zoning maps include Spot Objectives in the following locations in the County.

Table 13.2: Spot Objectives

Spot Objective Number	Location	Objective
1	Dundalk	To preserve the ecological character and biodiversity value of the Nature Conservation Area.
2	Dundalk	To preserve the ecological value and character of the lands and to provide appropriate recreational and amenity facilities.
3	Dundalk	To require the preparation of a Masterplan. See Masterplan 7 in Table 13.1 for further details.
4	Ardee	To provide a public park with a minimum area of 12 acres (4.9 hectares) as part of a residential development.
5	Ardee	To provide for the development of housing for older persons, specifically designed for flexibility and adaptability to accommodate the physical and cognitive needs of residents as they develop over time.
6	Drogheda	To provide a minimum of 40% of public open space as part of any residential development on these lands.
7	Drogheda	To provide a mixed use development which will reinvigorate this underutilised site and deliver significant physical, economic, social, and conservation benefits. Any planning application on these lands shall include proposals for the reuse and restoration of the Protected Structures on the site. The total number of residential units on these lands shall not exceed 80. Any application for residential development shall include proposals for the restoration of the Protected Structures, which shall take place in a timely manner alongside the delivery of any residential development.
8	Ardee	Provision of a Masterplan for the development of the lands.
9	Carlingford	To support any proposal for a community or recreational facility on these lands subject to any development being of a high quality architectural design, scale and layout that will support the preservation and enhancement of the environmental quality of this sensitive landscape.
10	Clogherhead	To support the redevelopment of these lands for residential development in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner subject to compliance with the relevant standards and guidance set out in the County Development Plan.
11	Dundalk	To provide for a mixture of higher order business uses supported by cafes/restaurants, community facilities, office, health care, residential, and business units. Individual shops in excess of 350m² gross floorspace or warehousing and distribution will not be considered appropriate.

Spot Objective Number	Location	Objective
12	Dundalk	Any planning application on these lands shall include an ecological assessment of existing wetlands in this location. This ecological assessment shall include measures to protect and enhance any existing wetlands identified with these measures and any recommendations of the assessment incorporated into the design and development of the lands.
13	Dundalk	To provide for the development of a retirement village.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

The following Sections set out the key standards and guidance for different development types as follows:

- Management of Construction Sites
- Housing in Urban Areas
- Housing in the Open Countryside
- Temporary Residential Structures
- Pigeon Lofts
- Social and Community
- Employment
- Retail
- Tourism Development
- Transport
- Environment
- Energy and Telecommunications
- Heritage
- Water Services

13.7 MANAGEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION SITES

It will be a requirement of any major planning permission for residential, community, employment or infrastructure related development that a management plan be prepared for the construction of the development. This will ensure the orderly construction of the development.

The following details will be required:

- Hours of operation;
- Construction/phasing programme;
- Traffic Management Plan;
- Noise and dust mitigation measures;
- Details of any construction lighting; and
- The management of construction and demolition waste, which shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects (2006).

13.8 HOUSING IN URBAN AREAS

13.8.1 Introduction

This Section sets out the standards that will apply to developments relating to residential uses including single and multi-unit developments, mixed use developments, extensions and family flat extensions.

There are specific Sections in this Chapter that provide guidance on transport, including access and car parking (see Section 13.16), water services (see Section 13.20) and sustainable drainage (see Section 13.20.4). These should also be reviewed when preparing an application for a development relating to residential uses.

The following guidance documents should be consulted when designing a residential development:

i) The Guidelines on Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities, DEHLG, (2007);
ii) The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG, (2009);
iii) Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide, DEHLG, (2009);
iv) Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, DHPLG, (2018);
v) Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines, DHPLG, (2018);
vi) The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DTTAS and DECLG, (2013 and updated in 2019); and
vii) Permeability Best Practice Guide, NTA, (2015).

13.8.2 Multi-Unit Residential Developments

All multi-unit residential developments shall be designed and constructed in a way that supports community development, social interaction, as well as active and healthy lifestyles.

13.8.3 Context

At the preliminary design stage, a contextual analysis shall be carried out assessing the relationship of the development with surrounding land uses in terms of design, scale and layout. This will assist in assessing how the development will integrate into the surrounding environment.

13.8.4 Density and Plot Ratio

The standard method of calculating density is carried out by dividing the number of units by the gross site area, which gives the number of units per hectare.

Appendix A of the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns and Villages), 2009* provides more detailed provisions in this regard.

For developments where there is a mixture of apartments and houses, the plot ratio would be a more applicable method, as this is more reflective of the range of unit sizes.

The plot ratio is calculated by dividing the total floor area of a development with the site area. The recommended density and plot ratios are set out in Table 13.3.

In the Self-Sustaining Towns and Small Towns and Villages, the density and plot ratio of a development will be reflective of the character of the settlement and the existing pattern of development in the area.

In designing a development, it is important that a higher density does not reduce the quality of the development.

If there are site constraints such as topography or the shape of the site that compromise the quality of a development, the density/number of units may have to be reduced.

Table 13.3: Recommended Density and Plot Ratio

Settlement Category	Recommended Minimum Density per Hectare		Plot Ratio	
	Town/Village Centre	Edge of settlement	Town/Village Centre	Edge of settlement
Regional Growth Centres	50	35	2	1
Dundalk and Drogheda				
Self-Sustaining Growth Town	35	25	1	0.5
Ardee and Dunleer				

13.8.5 Site Coverage

Site coverage relates to the percentage of the development site covered by buildings and structures (excluding public roads and footpaths) and is calculated by dividing the total area of ground covered by buildings by the total ground area within the site. This is a useful calculation in determining the ratio of the ground floor area of the building relative to the total site area.

13.8.6 Building Heights

The '*Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines' (2018)* support increased building heights in urban areas as part of the strategy of strengthening urban areas and creating more compact settlements.

Proposals for higher buildings in urban areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis. One of the key considerations will be the contribution the building of height will make to the local environment in which it will be located.

A design statement shall be included with any application setting out details of the concept of the development, the scale, massing and built form of the building(s) and any impacts the development would have on the character of the neighbourhood in which it is located.

Any potential impacts of the development on the microclimate such as wind patterns, daylight, air temperatures and humidity shall also be considered.

13.8.7 Layout

The layout of residential developments shall consist of permeable, well connected streets and neighbourhoods where open spaces are functional, accessible, and centrally located and where walking and cycling are prioritised. Where feasible, new developments are encouraged to include pedestrian and cycle links to adjacent residential areas/commercial developments. Public transport access and any associated bus turning shall be incorporated into the design of any development where required.

Consideration shall be given to existing street patterns and established building lines. In some instances, there may be a requirement to follow established patterns of development.

However, there may be instances where a deviation from such patterns would create variety in the street scene or improve the quality of a development.

The front elevation of buildings shall normally be orientated towards the street to create an active street frontage that would ensure the passive surveillance of open spaces and footpaths. Any buildings on corner sites are encouraged to have a dual aspect, particularly at the entrance to a development.

Roads and streets in residential areas shall be designed to reduce speeds, promote connectivity and permeability, and ensure there is a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Measures to reduce vehicle speeds shall be included in the initial designs rather than requiring the installation of traffic calming measures retrospectively. This can include horizontal and vertical deflections, shared surfaces, on-street parking, tighter corner radii, and on-street parking. All roads and streets shall be designed in accordance with the requirements of the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019).*

13.8.8 Design Statement

A Design Statement shall be required for any development in excess of 10 residential units and shall include the following:

i) The design principles and concept;
ii) Demonstrate how the development will accord with the 12 criteria set out in the *Urban Design Manual*; and
iii) Outline how the development is in accordance with the Development Plan policy objectives and standards.

Applicants may wish to include photomontages and sketches to support their application.

13.8.9 Residential Amenity

13.8.9.1 Privacy

Residential developments shall be designed to take account of the amenities of existing residents in the locality of a development area, in addition to the amenities of future residents of the development. Whilst some degree of overlooking between properties is likely to occur in urban areas, efforts shall be made to minimise the extent of this overlooking where this is possible. A minimum of 22 metres separation between directly opposing first floor habitable rooms in residential properties shall generally be observed. This separation distance is not required for windows in non-habitable rooms such as bathrooms, stairwells or landings.

There may be instances where a reduction in separation distances may be acceptable. This is dependent on the orientation, location, and internal layout of the development and its relationship with any surrounding buildings. Any applications for such developments will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Where the front elevation of new properties in urban locations are close to or abut the public footpath, consideration shall be given to providing some form of buffer such as a planting strip between the property and the footpath where this is feasible.

13.8.10 Daylight and Sunlight

Care shall be taken in the design of residential developments to ensure adequate levels of natural light can be achieved in new dwellings and unacceptable impacts on light to nearby properties are avoided.

The Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines *'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice (2011)*** and *BS 8206-2008 – 'Lighting for Buildings – Part 2: Code of Practice for Daylighting'* - provide useful guidance on avoiding unacceptable loss of light and ensuring developments provide minimum standards of daylight for new units. Section 6.7 of the *'Apartment Guidelines'* states that where a proposal may not be able to fully meet all the requirements of the daylight provisions, this must be clearly identified and a rationale for any alternative, compensatory design solution must be set out, in respect of which the planning authority should apply their discretion, having regard to local factors including site specific constraints and the balancing of that assessment against the desirability of achieving wider planning objectives.

13.8.11 Boundary Treatment

Boundary treatments in residential developments shall consist of the following:

i) The rear boundary shall consist of a 2 metre high block wall;
ii) Side boundaries between properties shall be 2 metres in height. If timber boundaries are to be used they must be bonded and supported by concrete posts;
iii) Walls bounding any public areas shall be rendered and capped on both sides; and
iv) Front boundaries along the estate road and between properties shall be agreed as part of the planning application. They can be open plan, planted, consist of a low-level wall or railing, or as otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority.

13.8.12 Landscaping

Landscaping proposals shall be included with all applications. This includes a full schedule of all planting to be carried out and a timescale for planting. If any trees or hedgerows are to be retained this shall be clearly detailed on drawings.

Where existing trees are required to be removed to facilitate a development, replacement native trees at a ratio of 5:1 shall be planted in Drogheda and Dundalk, with a requirement of 10:1 in the County area. Any planting shall consist of native species (trees, hedgerow, shrubs, and wildflowers) and low maintenance pollinator friendly perennials.

13.8.13 Dwelling Design, Size and Mix

To support a variety of household types and tenures, new residential developments, and in particular larger schemes in excess of 25 units shall endeavour to provide an appropriate mix of residential accommodation.

Greater consideration shall be given to providing suitable accommodation for older persons and people with a disability. This includes adaptable homes that can be altered to meet the needs of residents through the different stages of life.

Developments in excess of 50 units are encouraged to provide single storey units to meet the needs of older persons.

Residential developments in excess of 100 units will be required to provide at least one single storey unit for every 100 residential units unless it can be demonstrated by an appropriately qualified professional that there is no demand for this type of accommodation.

All residential developments shall be designed to a high standard.

Modern and innovative designs that have a positive impact on the surrounding streetscape are encouraged.

In order to create variety in the streetscape a mixture of building types, heights and finishes are encouraged, particularly in larger developments. This could include minor variations such as projections or canopies to avoid a repetitive streetscape. A full schedule of external finishes shall be provided.

13.8.14 Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

Buildings that are designed to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change such as flooding or increased temperatures in addition to improving energy efficiency are encouraged. Such designs will result in a more resilient and adaptable building stock that will support more sustainable communities and lifestyles.

13.8.15 Public Open Space

The provision of quality public open spaces in a residential environment can have multiple benefits to a local neighbourhood.

These open spaces can add to the attractiveness of an area by creating a sense of place.

If designed and located appropriately, they can become an integral part of a development that promotes social interaction and physical activity, whilst also providing important links and connections within the development and to surrounding neighbourhoods. They can also be used to support and improve biodiversity in neighbourhoods.

Open space can include passive areas of green space that consist of landscaped areas that soften the streetscape and more active areas where children can play and adults can walk.

In order to maximise the potential use of areas of open space they should be functional, conveniently located, easily accessable and passively overlooked in order to provide safety and security.

Public open space within a development shall normally equate to 15% of the total site area. In developments where the standard of the open space is of a high quality due to its location, functionality and any additional detailing proposed e.g. paving, landscaping or surfaced play areas and equipment, a reduced rate of open space may be acceptable. Such a reduction will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

For residential developments of up to five dwelling units where the layout is of a high quality and includes private open space in excess of the minimum area recommended there shall be no requirement to provide public open space.

13.8.16 Play Facilities in Residential Developments

Children should have access to safe and secure outdoor play opportunities that are accessible from their homes. Children's play areas include traditional playgrounds with formal play equipment and natural play spaces with natural features that promote informal children's play.

Developments of 50 units or more shall include proposals for the provision of a dedicated children's play area designed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

13.8.17 Private Open Space

An area of functional private open space is an important aspect of creating a quality residential environment that provides a safe and secure outdoor area for children and adults. New dwellings and apartments shall be provided with a functional area of private open space as set out in Table 13.4.

Table 13.4: Private Open Space Requirements

Unit Type	Town Centre and Infill / Brownfield Locations	Greenfield / Suburban locations
Dwelling	Minimum private open space requirement (m^2)	Minimum private open space requirement (m^2)
1-2 Bedroom	50	60
3 or More Bedrooms	60	80
Apartments and Duplexes	See table 13.5	

13.8.18 Car and Cycle Parking

The car and cycle parking requirements for residential properties are set out in Tables 13.11 and 13.12 in this chapter.

In new housing areas, car parking is normally provided to the front of properties creating a linear streetscape dominated by hard surfacing. Consideration should be given to breaking these parking areas up by altering the car parking layout in certain locations e.g. on corner sites to facilitate the provision of a front garden area parking could be provided up the side of a property. This would reduce the dominance of parking areas and introduce variety to the street scene.

Any areas of communal parking shall be appropriately designed and conveniently located for residents with suitable lighting provided.

In communal parking areas the necessary ducting and wiring to facilitate the installation of Electric Vehicle charging points shall be provided at a rate of 20% of total spaces. (See section 13.16.9 for further details).

A secure and conveniently located cycle parking area shall be provided in apartment developments. This cycle parking area shall be covered.

There may be cases where a reduced car parking requirement may be appropriate including in the following circumstances:

- There is sufficient parking available in the vicinity of the development to cater for any shortfall;
- The nature of the development is such that existing parking spaces in the vicinity could facilitate the dual use of parking spaces, particularly if the development operated at off-peak times;
- The public transport links available would reduce the demand for car parking; and
- The central location of the development is such that the customers/residents/users of the development would be likely to walk or cycle.

A Transport Mobility Management Plan supporting any reduction in car parking would be required with any application where the quantum of parking is significantly below that set out in the Car Parking Standards.

In addition to the above, a reduction in the parking requirement will be facilitated where there would be a conflict between the conservation objectives of the Protected Structure or the Architectural Conservation Area and the car parking requirement, subject to the shortfall in parking being met by on-street parking in the vicinity.

13.8.19 Bin Storage

Provision shall be made for the storage, segregation and recycling of waste in residential developments. Where communal bin facilities are being provided they shall be conveniently located, screened, and well ventilated.

13.8.20 Public Art

Public Art in a development can positively contribute to the design quality of a development and assist in creating a sense of place. In residential developments in excess of 100 units, developers will be encouraged to include proposals for a piece of art that reflects the heritage of the area.

13.8.21 Naming of Developments

It shall be a condition of planning permission for new residential schemes that the developer will submit a scheme for the naming and numbering of the development prior to the commencement of development. The name of the development is required to reflect the local or historical context in which it is located and will be required to get the approval of the Council's Place Names Committee. The name of the development shall be clearly identified at the entrance.

13.8.22 Lighting

All public lighting in new residential developments shall be high performance low energy LED lanterns or any upgraded lantern as agreed with the Planning Authority.

13.8.23 Gated Communities

Gated communities are communities or developments where access to the public is not readily available. They will generally not be permitted, as they do not promote permeability or integration with the surrounding neighbourhood.

13.8.24 Taking in Charge

The policy and procedures for the Taking in Charge of Housing Estates is set out in the Council policy document: *Taking in Charge Policy/Release of bond for completed Private Housing Developments.*

13.8.25 Schools and New Residential Development

Any application for a development in excess of 200 residential units shall include a report identifying the demand for school places likely to be generated by the development and the demand for existing schools in the area to cater for this demand.

13.8.26 Childcare Facilities in New Residential Developments

The *Guidelines on Childcare Facilities (2001)* recommend that in larger residential developments that one childcare facility (with a capacity of 20 child places) is provided for every 75 residential units.

These childcare facilities shall be centrally located within a development where there are pedestrian and cycle links in addition to a set down/drop off area for parents using a private car.

The requirement for a crèche facility will take account of existing facilities in the area, local demographics, and the likely demand to be generated by the development.

Input will also be received from the County Childcare Committee. Any application for a development that does not include a crèche will require the preparation of an evidence based report prepared in consultation with the County Childcare Committee clearly demonstrating that there is sufficient childcare facilities available in the area.

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

13.8.27 Apartments

Apartment developments can provide a mix of unit sizes and types that can meet the residential needs of a wide range of the population. They can also deliver higher density developments that support the delivery of more compact settlements. In order to make apartment living more appealing, the design, layout and setting of apartments need to be of a high quality.

The suitability of a specific site for the development of apartments will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will take account of the location, the prevailing pattern of development of the area, the proximity to local amenities and services, and the scale of development proposed.

Apartments shall generally be located in central urban areas within a reasonable walking distance (up to 15 minutes) of town centres, public transport, or employment areas. Outside of the central areas of towns, apartments are more likely to form part of a larger residential scheme than be a standalone development.

However, there may be opportunities to provide smaller apartment schemes on infill or brownfield lands in these locations.

13.8.28 Design Standards for New Apartments

The Design Standards for New Apartments (2018) set out the design criteria for apartment developments. All applications for apartments are required to demonstrate compliance with these Guidelines and the Specific Planning Policy Requirements. Details of the following design criteria are set out in the Guidelines:

- Location;
- Apartment mix;
- Internal space and floor areas;
- Dual aspect ratios;
- Floor to ceiling height;
- Apartments to stair/lift core ratios;
- Storage spaces;
- Amenity spaces; and
- Car parking.

For ease of reference, some of the key requirements of the Guidelines are as follows[1]:

- A minimum of 33% of apartments in any development shall be dual aspect;
- A minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.7 metres is required on the ground floor;

[1] Please refer to the Design Standards for full details of the requirements.

- Private amenity space shall primarily be accessible from the main living area in the form of balconies/ terraces. Where feasible covered balconies or 'Winter Gardens' shall be considered in apartments for older persons;
- Communal amenity space shall be provided; and
- For apartment schemes of 10 or more units, the majority of apartments must exceed the minimum floor area standard for any combination of the relevant 1, 2, or 3 bedroom unit types, by a minimum of 10%.

The minimum standards for floor areas, private open space, and storage provision that shall be required are set out in Table 13.5.

Table 13.5: Standards for Apartments

Apartment Unit Type	Floor Area	Storage	Private Open Space
Studio	37m²	3 m²	4 m²
One bedroom	45 m²	3 m²	5 m²
Two bedroom (3 person)	63 m²	5 m²	6 m²
Two bedroom (4 person)	73 m²	6 m²	7 m²
Three bedroom	90 m²	9 m²	9 m²

13.8.29 Design Schedule

Any application for an apartment development or a mixed-use development including apartments shall include a schedule that provides the following information:

- The number and type of apartments and associated individual unit floor areas;
- Details of apartment aspect (dual or single) and orientation;
- Principle dimensions of each room as well as the aggregate floor areas;
- Details of internal and external storage space;
- Quantum of proposed private amenity space;
- Communal open space; and
- Storage and collection of waste materials.

There may be cases where the requirements of these standards cannot be met. Subject to the design quality of the development, these standards may be relaxed in part. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

A supporting statement outlining why the development should be positively considered shall be included with any application that does not meet all the requirements of the standards.

13.8.30 General

In order to reduce the maintenance requirements of apartment developments, careful consideration should be made to the design and finishes of the building(s).

To prevent demands for the installation of numerous satellite dishes, provision should be made for locating communal or individual dishes on less visible parts of the building such as roof level.

13.8.31 Mixed Use Development

In considering proposals for mixed-use developments, minimising any potential conflict between uses, preserving, and protecting amenity will be key considerations. This includes issues such as air quality, noise and security.

All commercial developments shall include measures to control the extraction of fumes and odours. The design of new mixed-use buildings shall include provision for internal ducting or flues so that ground floor units have the potential for fumes to be extracted to and discharged at roof level.

13.8.32 Infill and Backland Development in Urban Areas

An infill site is a vacant or under-used area of land between existing buildings whilst a backland site is an area of land to the rear of existing buildings.

The development of infill and backland sites support the principles of compact growth and the consolidation of development in existing built up areas.

When developing such lands it is important to maintain a balance between preserving existing amenities and neighbourhood character, and implementing a policy of compact development. Where opportunities arise for infill or backland development, the following considerations shall be taken into account:

- The prevailing density and pattern of development in the immediate area including plot sizes, building heights, and the proportions of buildings;
- The design of the building(s) shall be of a high quality and make a positive contribution to the local streetscape and character. Innovative and contemporary designs will be acceptable if it is demonstrated such designs would positively benefit the built environment;
- Impact on the residential amenities of surrounding properties such as the potential loss of daylight or new/increased overlooking;
- Private open space for existing and proposed properties;
- Car parking for existing and proposed residential units shall be in accordance with the car parking standards set out in Table 13.11 in this chapter. Adequate circulation for the parking and turning of vehicles within the curtilage of sites should be provided; and
- The location and orientation of any building(s) and windows in such building(s) shall take cognisance of the potential of adjacent infill/backland sites being developed and shall not prejudice the development potential of such lands.

Whilst infill and backland development will normally be required to comply with Development Plan standards there may be circumstances where these standards can be relaxed, particularly if it will result in the development of vacant or under-utilised lands in central areas of towns and villages. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

13.8.33 Sub-division of Dwellings

The sub-division of an existing dwelling into self-contained units or apartments will be considered based on the location of the property, the potential impact the development would have on the character of the area and the amenities of surrounding properties, and the quality of accommodation to be provided for future occupants. Existing and proposed car parking provision will also be considered.

The sub-division of dwellings will normally be required to comply with Development Plan Standards and the Design Standards for Apartments.

However, there may be circumstances where these standards can be relaxed due to the design and layout of the existing building or if the development would bring vacant or underutilised properties back into use. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with consideration given to the quality of the development.

13.8.34 Town Centre Living

As part of the strategy of promoting town centre living and improving the vibrancy and diversity of uses in town and village centres, there will generally be a presumption in favour of providing residential accommodation in the upper floors of buildings in town and village centres. Residential development may be considered at ground floor level in certain circumstances or locations where there has been a sustained level of vacancy over a prolonged period.

This will normally be on lands outside the Core Retail Area of town centres. The provision of such accommodation will only be facilitated in circumstances where it is demonstrated the development would complement the role of the town centre as a 'destination' for commercial, social or cultural activities.

Whilst proposals for the redevelopment of the buildings will normally be required to meet the Development Plan Standards set out in this Plan and the Design Standards for New Apartments, it is recognised that in some cases it may be difficult to retrofit older buildings to bring them up to current residential standards. Taking this into account, and subject to the design quality of the development, there may be circumstances where the design standards can be relaxed in part.

This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. A supporting statement outlining why the development should be positively considered shall be included with any application that does not meet all the requirements of the Guidelines.

13.8.35 House Extensions

The extension or renovation of dwellings is generally encouraged and supported as it results in the upgrade and/or improvement to an existing building, maximises the existing building stock, and is often more sustainable than the construction of a new dwelling unit.

There is a broad range in the type and scale of extensions applied for in the County. This is often dependent on the location of the property (e.g. in an urban or rural environment), the house type of the subject property, and the plot size of the property. Some of the extensions applied for include porches, sunrooms, installation of dormer windows, increase in roof height, side, ground floor and first floor extensions.

Any application for the extension to or renovation of a property shall consider the following:

- **Scale** – The scale of the extension shall normally be ancillary to the main dwelling. There are, however, circumstances where an existing property is limited in size (e.g. a single bedroom cottage) and a large extension is required to allow it to be brought up to modern living standards. Such developments will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will require a sensitive design to ensure that the proposal will not dominate the local streetscape and has a plot size that can absorb the development.
- **Design** – Whilst the design of extensions shall normally reflect the character of the existing property, contemporary and innovative designs that would make a positive contribution to the local streetscape will be considered.

- **Privacy** – Extensions shall not result in any new opportunities for overlooking into properties where no previous overlooking existed unless appropriate separation distances can be achieved and the extent of overlooking from an existing property will not be significantly increased because of the extension.
- **Daylight** – Extensions shall not result in a significant decrease in daylight or sunlight entering a property. There may be instances where a daylight and sunlight assessment will be required. This shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the BRE Guidance *'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight': A Guide to Good Practice (2011).*
- **Private Open Space** – An adequate area of functional private open space shall be retained.
- **Car Parking** – Any loss of on-site car parking shall not result in a requirement for vehicular parking on the public road, particularly in locations where there is no or limited additional on street parking available.
- **Services** – If the property is served by an individual on-site wastewater treatment system this system must have the capacity to accommodate any additional loading in accordance with the requirements of the *EPA Code of Practice: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (p.e. ≤10) (2021*). This may result in the requirement for existing on-site systems to be upgraded to the current standards.

13.8.36 Family Flat / Independent Living Unit

A family flat or independent living unit is a separate unit of living accommodation on the site of an existing dwelling unit used to accommodate an immediate family member of the main household on the site. The construction of an extension or conversion of part of an existing house or garage/outbuilding to a family flat or independent living unit, shall comply with the following requirements:

- **Rationale** – The need for the development must be clearly set out.
- **Scale** – The family flat shall be ancillary to the main dwelling and shall be modest in size and scale with a floor space that shall generally not exceed 50m².
- **Integration** – If attached to the main dwelling an internal link shall be provided.
- **Ownership** – It shall not be sold or let as an independent unit and shall remain in the same ownership as the main dwelling on the site.
- **Access** – It shall not have a separate vehicular access.
- **Services** – If the property is served by an individual onsite wastewater treatment system this system must have the capacity to accommodate any additional loading in accordance with the requirements of the *EPA Code of Practice: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (p.e. ≤10) (2021*). This may result in the requirement for existing on-site systems to be upgraded to the current standards.

13.8.37 Domestic Garages and Outbuildings

The purpose of garages and outbuildings within the curtilage of residential properties is normally for storage and needs that are incidental to the dwelling on site. Whilst there has been an increasing demand for larger garages, it is important that any garage is proportionate to the existing property so that it will integrate into the local environment. Garages will normally be positioned to the side or rear of the dwelling and will be designed and finished in materials that match the dwelling.

The uses of garages will be strictly controlled to uses incidental to the residential property. The Planning Authority will not normally grant planning permission for a garage or outbuilding of a design or scale that is not in proportion or in keeping with the existing dwelling.

Any application for such a development would require a clear rationale setting out the reasons for the development, the intended use of the garage/building, and how it would integrate into the local environment. These applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

13.9 HOUSING IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

13.9.1 Context

The countryside in Louth is a valuable resource that provides a scenic landscape enjoyed by residents and visitors, and farmland that delivers high quality agricultural produce.

Whilst this Plan acknowledges the desire of local residents to live in the rural area, the provision of one-off housing in the open countryside must be carefully managed in order to protect the landscape and countryside for future generations to work in and enjoy.

As we transition towards a low carbon economy, we must also consider how the dispersed pattern of development associated with one off housing impacts on climate change and how rural communities can reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to a more sustainable way of living.

The following sections will set out the key criteria to be considered when choosing a site and designing a dwelling in the open countryside.

13.9.2 Louth Countryside

Louth has a diverse topography and varied landscape that includes an extensive coastline, upland, drumlin, and mountainous areas, lake areas, river systems and lands that are more low-lying. The Council's Landscape Character Assessment, details of which are set out in Chapter 8 Natural Heritage, Biodiversity, and Green Infrastructure describes nine distinct landscapes as follows:

1. Cooley Lowlands and Coastal Areas - relatively flat sloping to the sea;
2. Carlingford Lough and Mountains (including West Feede Uplands and Slieve Gullion) - mountainous area and open moorland;
3. Lower Faughart, Castletown and Flurry Bridge River Basins - landscapes dictated by landform and drainage areas;
4. Louth Drumlins and Lake Areas - contains the familiar rounded and smooth hills associated with a drumlin landscape;
5. Muirhevna Plain - a large plain occupying the midland region and containing the most fertile agricultural farmland;

6. Dundalk Bay (includes the salt marshes and mudflats) - landform is quite flat and extends from Dundalk to Dunany Point;
7. Dunany, Boyne and Estuary Coast - flat landscape with the exception of the head at Clogherhead and Castlecoo Hill;
8. Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice - an elevated plateau rich in archaeological monuments; and
9. Boyne and Mattock Valley - slopes gradually down from Monasterboice and Collon with a lot of tree cover and mature hedgerows concealing the landform of the area.

More detailed information on these unique areas can be accessed here.

In addition to the landscape character areas there are also parts of the County designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ) by reason of their unspoilt natural landscape and scenic quality. The location of these designated areas are set out in Tables 13.6 and 13.7.

Table 13.6: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Reference	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
AONB 1	Carlingford and Feede Mountains
AONB 2	Clogherhead and Port Oriel

At the preliminary stages of identifying a site, the Landscape Character Assessment should be consulted to identify any sensitivities or distinct features and characteristics associated with the landscape in which the site is located. It should also be determined if the site lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Area of High Scenic Quality.

Table 13.7: Areas of High Scenic Quality

Reference	Area of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ)
AHSQ 1	Feede Mountains and Cooley Area
AHSQ 2	Monasterboice
AHSQ 3	Boyne Valley/King Williams Glen
AHSQ 4	Collon Uplands
AHSQ 5	Dunany
AHSQ 6	Ardee Bog

13.9.3 Criteria for Development in Areas of Significant Cultural Value

Section 13.19.9 sets out specific criteria that is required to be considered for developments that are in proximity to the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the Battle of the Boyne Battlefield Sites.

13.9.4 Site Selection

When identifying a site for a rural dwelling, it is recommended that an appraisal of the subject site and its surroundings be carried out. This includes the physical features such as the topography of the site and surrounding area, soils, existing boundaries, prevailing wind direction and proximity to water bodies.

Other considerations include the presence of any ecology or heritage features, how the site will be accessed, the extent and distance to which the development might be seen from public vantage points (short and long distance views) and if the site is located along any listed views and prospects (see Chapter 8 Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure).

When choosing a site careful consideration should be given as to how a dwelling in the chosen location would integrate into the surrounding landscape.

If the site is elevated or exposed with no natural features to provide screening or a backdrop, it may be difficult to design a dwelling that would integrate into the local landscape and therefore the site may not be suitable for development.

In addition to integration, the ability of the landscape to absorb further development of one-off housing should also be taken into account.

If there is an existing proliferation of one-off houses in the area, the local landscape may be at a point where any further development would completely erode the rural character of the area.

Evidence of over proliferation of housing includes the number of existing dwellings in the area, the extent of intermittent views of dwellings, and the capacity of the local road network to accommodate further development.

Areas of the County where the character of the countryside is under severe pressure or being extensively eroded will generally not be suitable for any further development of one-off housing.

13.9.5 Ribbon Development

Ribbon development is a prevalent issue in the County that is having a detrimental impact on the character of the rural landscape.

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines define ribbon development as five or more houses on any one side of a given 250 metres of road frontage. Ribbon development does not necessarily have to be served by individual accesses nor have a continuous or uniform building line.

Buildings sited back, staggered, or at angles and with gaps between them can still represent ribbon development, if they have a common frontage or they are visually linked.

In cases where a development would create or extend ribbon development, the proposal will not be considered favourably.

13.9.6 Backland Development

The Planning Authority will not generally favour proposals which involve development located to the rear of established buildings, located along a private lane off public roads and which introduce a piecemeal form of backland development.

This type of development results in a scattered arrangement of housing or clustered to the rear of existing properties and often long laneways to reach the properties.

It is not respectful of the traditional settlement pattern, creates a built-up appearance thereby eroding the rural character and further fragmenting agricultural lands, reduces residential amenity standards and can have an impact on traffic safety.

Backland Development will only be considered in Rural Policy Zones 1 and 2 where the applicants' site has been owned by the family for at least 15 years and the landholding is at least 1.5 hectares. Only one dwelling will be permitted per landowner (as defined above). Any backland development should be accompanied by a deed of right of way to the proposed dwelling and must not have a negative impact on traffic safety.

13.9.7 Visual Impact Assessments

In some instances, the Planning Authority may request the preparation of a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) particularly for proposals within sensitive/prominent areas including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Areas of High Scenic Quality, or along scenic routes, or development that may infringe upon listed views and/or prospects (see Chapter 8 Natural Heritage, Biodiversity, and Green Infrastructure).

A Visual Impact Assessment will be required to include the following:

- A full appraisal of the proposed visibility and prominence of the development within its immediate surroundings from short and long distance vantage points and any changes in character of existing views or the local landscape as a result of the development. Photomontages of the development from surrounding vantage points shall be included with any Visual Impact Assessment; and
- Full assessment of any impacts the proposal may have on listed views or heritage sites and consideration of the surrounding land/vegetation cover.

13.9.8 House Design – New Build

The design, scale, and form of a dwelling (and any associated garage or outbuildings) shall be sensitive to the landscape in which it is located. Any building that is a prominent or obtrusive feature in the landscape will not be considered favourably.

Local traditional house builds are fine examples of how best to integrate buildings into the landscape.

These houses were mainly of a small, plain and simple construction, built without the benefit of any formal plan, drawing or written specification.

Topography, materials and climate, as well as the style of their community influenced their design and construction. They were practical, simple in shape and form, occupied a smaller holding and sat low key in the landform.

Contemporary buildings, finished and designed appropriately, will be considered if it can be demonstrated the development would integrate into and make a positive contribution to the local landscape.

13.9.9 Design, Detailing and Material Finishes

It is important that traditional form, detailing and material finishes are respected in new houses in the countryside. Due regard shall be given to the following:

- The form and proportions of a new build are key elements in the design and strongly influence its visual impact on the landscape;
  Forms which incorporate a simple plan of modest scale and vertical emphasis to gables work best;
- A new dwelling shall respect the character and appearance of the land through appropriate design and working with the site's natural features, contours and ecology;
- The scale of a new dwelling shall be appropriate to its setting. Large houses may require a well screened site and be subdivided into smaller elements of traditional form to secure a less bulky design and better integration with their surroundings; and

- Where the site can suitably accommodate and absorb the design, contemporary re-interpretations of traditional form are welcomed. Successful contemporary designs have incorporated linear form, often broken up into smaller elements, including the one-room deep concept, traditional materials, pitched or curve barrel vaulted roofs and small lean-tos;
- The size and shape of the windows and door openings, which dictate the solid/void ratio. The design shall entail a greater wall surface area than windows or door openings, and openings shall have a simple, vertical and symmetrical arrangement;
- Fenestration details, including window openings, shall be appropriately designed to be in proportion to the development and complement the style of the building. They shall be sensitively designed and positioned to maximise on natural lighting and solar gain;
- Dormer windows where proposed, should be limited and shall extend up from the façade of the dwelling as opposed to protruding from the roof slope;
- A traditional roof form with a pitch of 30 to 40 degrees will be encouraged;
- Relative simplicity of design and discretion in the use of materials, texture and colour will greatly enhance the appearance of a new building;
- Materials used on new dwellings shall be guided by the finishes on local traditional buildings, which complement the rural area. Non-traditional finishes shall be avoided. Where stone is proposed, this shall be a natural stone and sourced locally where possible;
- Where contemporary materials are proposed, these shall complement and work well with those traditionally used. These materials may not be suitable for every locality and in particularly sensitive and scenic areas;
- Chimneys shall normally be centrally located on the ridge with vertical proportion. Chimneys at gable ends shall normally be flush with the gable;
- Porches and conservatories shall be simple in design and in proportion to the dwelling;
- Fussy detailing, decorative fascia's, ornamentation and mock designs shall be avoided; and
- Consideration shall be given to incorporating the 'Universal Design' concept into the design of dwellings to make them safe and accessible for everyone regardless of age, disability or status in life. They shall also allow for extension or adaptation to cater for people with disabilities.

13.9.10 Garages and Outbuildings

The purpose of garages and outbuildings within the curtilage of residential properties is normally for storage and needs that are incidental to the dwelling on site.

Garages will normally be positioned to the side or rear of the dwelling and will be designed and finished in materials that match the dwelling. The design and scale of any garage shall be proportionate to the dwelling.

Outbuildings that will have a use incidental to the dwelling will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be dependent on the location, the nature of the use and the design and scale of the building.

13.9.11 Restoration and Replacement

Traditional vernacular dwellings make an important contribution to the character and appearance of our local rural landscapes. However, there has been a tendency to replace rather than upgrade older rural traditional dwellings, which is depleting our vernacular dwelling and building stock.

The Planning Authority will therefore encourage the preservation and upkeep of a vernacular dwelling through careful restoration or adaptation over its demolition and replacement. The same applies for the reuse of vernacular buildings which exist within the Louth countryside such as former schoolhouses, churches, older traditional farm and outbuildings.

The Planning Authority will also encourage the restoration or adaptation of these buildings to dwellings as opposed to their demolition. Consideration may also be given to the reuse and adaptation of these buildings to non-residential uses.

Where a new building is necessary and deemed acceptable, consideration should be given to retaining and incorporating any vernacular and historic building, which occupies the site, into the design proposal.

13.9.12 Refurbishment of Existing Vernacular Dwellings and Buildings

The following criteria shall be considered as part of the assessment of any application to refurbish or extend a vernacular dwelling or building:

- The structural integrity of the building. A building survey or Engineer's report from a suitably qualified professional shall be included with any application confirming that all external structural walls and internal walls are substantially intact and the building is capable of being renovated/ refurbished without demolition;
- Any extension/alteration to the building respects the character and setting of the building and is complementary to the character of the existing building; and
- The design and scale of any extension is sympathetic to the scale, massing, and architectural style of the existing building.

A construction management plan prepared by an appropriately qualified professional shall be included with any application setting out how the building will be protected from collapse during the renovation and refurbishment of the building.

13.9.13 Replacement Dwellings

Consideration will be given to the replacement of existing habitable dwellings where the dwelling to be replaced is not considered to be a vernacular building or does not make an important contribution to local heritage.

In cases where a dwelling has recently been destroyed by a fire, consideration will be given for a replacement dwelling.

The following criteria shall be considered as part of the assessment of any application for a replacement dwelling:

- The original structure was last used as a dwelling and that its roof, internal and external walls are generally intact;
- In the assessment of whether a house which it is proposed to replace is habitable or not, the Planning Authority will rely on the definition of a "habitable house" as defined in Section 2 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended);*
- The new dwelling shall not have a visual impact significantly greater than the dwelling to be replaced;
- The new dwelling shall be located within the curtilage of the dwelling to be replaced and shall generally be located on the footprint of the dwelling to be replaced, unless it can be demonstrated that an alternative position would provide visual, environmental, public health or traffic safety benefits;
- Where an existing access to a dwelling to be replaced does not meet current road safety standards consideration shall be given to improving the design of the access in the interests of road safety. See Section 13.16.17 for further details; and
- All necessary services shall be capable of being provided without creating significant adverse impact on the local landscape or environment.

13.9.14 Access

When designing an access for a rural dwelling the following factors shall be taken into account:

- The road network serving the site shall be capable and of a suitable quality to accommodate the additional access and traffc that would be attracted to the site.
- Applications must demonstrate that a safe access and egress to and from the site on to the public road can be achieved.

  The design of accesses including required visibility standards for new entrances are set out in the Development Management Standards for Roads (Section 13.16.17). There are restrictions on accesses to National and Protected Regional Roads in order to maintain the efficiency and functionality of the National and Regional Road Network.
- Further details on these restrictions and exemptions are set out in Table 7.9 and 7.10 of the Movement Chapter. Section 13.16.5 in the Development Management Guidelines Chapter provides further details regarding accesses onto national and regional roads.
- Sites shall preferably be accessed off existing laneways where possible or by a shared entrance rather than providing a new access/creating a proliferation of accesses directly onto the public road;
- The entrance shall be carefully considered to achieve the required sight lines with limited removal of existing hedgerow. Sites where a safe access can only be accommodated by removing a large stretch of roadside hedgerow/ditch/stone boundaries should be avoided;

- New entrances, driveways and surfaced areas shall as far as practicable, be sensitively located to run unobtrusively alongside existing hedgerows, ditches or wall lines and respect site contours and cross them gently. Sweeping driveways shall be avoided; and
- The design and detailing of entrance pillars and gates shall be in keeping with the rural setting. Entrance furniture shall be kept to a minimum.

13.9.15 Boundary Treatments

Sites which have existing natural boundaries of a high quality are at an advantage in enabling a suitably designed dwelling to blend into the landscape. These boundaries shall be retained and augmented where necessary to assist integration. Boundary treatments shall be sensitive to the area in which the dwelling is located and shall be designed to assist its integration into the local landscape.

Landscaping consisting of compatible native species hedgerow or other suitable planting shall normally take place along all site boundaries.

Other suitable boundary treatments include appropriately sized natural stone walls, or a post and rail fence to the rear of any planting. Inappropriate boundary treatments can be out of character and visually obtrusive in the landscape and shall be avoided.

13.9.16 Landscaping

Detailed landscaping proposals shall be included with all applications. This includes a full schedule of all planting works to be carried out and a timescale for planting. Where trees or hedgerows are to be retained these shall be clearly annotated on the drawings.

Planting shall be carried out during the first available planting season following commencement of the development. Any planting which fails during the first season shall be replaced in the next planting season with a similar species.

Where feasible, any existing mature trees or hedgerow of value shall be retained. New hedging shall consist of native and local species. Common species include Hornbeam, Beech, Holly, Common Hawthorn, Privet, Field Maple, Crab Apple, Elder, Spindle and Willow.

The soil condition, exposure and local planting patterns will determine the appropriate species for the area.

New hedges integrate better into the wider landscape character if they are also inter-planted with native deciduous trees that are appropriate to that area in terms of soil type, exposure and local planting patterns. Common native trees include Oak, Ash, Hazel, Birch, Scots Pine, Rowan and Willow.

A condition requiring the lodgement of a financial bond will be included in any grant of permission to ensure the satisfactory landscaping of the site. This bond will be returned upon completion of the landscaping to the site.

13.9.17 Wastewater Treatment and Water Supply

Wastewater treatment systems should be located, constructed and maintained to the highest standards to ensure minimal impacts on water quality. Applicants must satisfy the Planning Authority that the method of disposing of wastewater is fully in compliance with the guidelines and requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) '*Code of Practice; Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10)* or other subsequent standards in addition to the policy objectives and criteria set out in Chapter 10 of this Plan.

Applicants shall provide details of the source of the proposed water supply in any application. Details of the location of any private well or connection to a mains water supply shall be indicated on a site layout plan.

13.9.18 Surface Water

Surface water from the site shall be disposed of within the boundaries of the site and shall not discharge onto the public road or adjoining property. Surface water attenuation and disposal details, plans and specifications shall be included with any application.

13.9.19 Rural Generated Housing Need

Applicants for one-off rural housing will be required to demonstrate compliance with the criteria relevant to the specific Rural Policy Zone in which the application site is to be located. The qualifying criteria for each policy zone is outlined in Section 3.17.4 of Chapter 3 'Housing'.

13.9.20 Residential Extensions

Extending or altering dwellings provides a means to cater for changing circumstances, upgrading or bringing older dwellings up to modern standards. However, these types of works can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the existing house and local environment if not appropriately designed, sited and finished. Applications for residential extensions should therefore take into the following:

- **The scale, massing, design and external finishes:** – these shall be sympathetic with the built form and appearance of the existing property. However, they need not necessarily replicate or imitate the design and finish of the existing dwelling. Contemporary and innovative designs will be considered where they would make a positive contribution to the landscape.
- **Neighbouring residents:** - Their privacy or amenities shall not be unduly affected by way of overlooking, overshadowing and/or by way of dominance.
- **Recreational and domestic purposes:** – There should be sufficient space remaining within the curtilage of the property for amenity, parking and the manoeuvring of vehicles.
- **Services:** – If the property is served by an individual on-site wastewater treatment system, this system must have the capacity to accommodate any additional loading in accordance with the requirements of the EPA '*Code of Practice; Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (p.e ≤10).* This may result in the requirement for existing on-site systems to be upgraded to the current standards. Social and Community.

13.9.21 Family Flat/ Independent Living Unit

A family flat or independent living unit is a separate unit of living accommodation on the site of an existing dwelling unit used to accommodate an immediate family member of the main household on the site. The construction of an extension or conversion of part of an existing house or garage/outbuilding to a family flat or independent living unit, shall comply with the following requirements:

- **Rationale** – The need for the development must be clearly set out.
- **Scale** – The family flat shall be ancillary to the main dwelling and shall be modest in size and scale with a floor space that shall generally not exceed 50m².

- **Integration** – If attached to the main dwelling an internal link shall be provided.
- **Ownership** – It shall not be sold or let as an independent unit and shall remain in the same ownership as the main dwelling on the site.
- **Access** – It shall not have a separate vehicular access.
- **Services** – If the property is served by an individual onsite wastewater treatment system this system must have the capacity to accommodate any additional loading in accordance with the requirements of the *EPA Code of Practice: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (p.e. ≤10) (2021*). This may result in the requirement for existing on-site systems to be upgraded to the current standards.

13.10 Temporary Residential Structures

Temporary residential structures such as mobile homes, portacabins and caravans are considered to represent a substandard and haphazard form of accommodation. Permission will generally not be granted for such structures.

Where an application is received for such accommodation on a site where permission has been granted for a residential property the Planning Authority may grant temporary permission for a temporary residential structure on the site such as a mobile home. As part of any permission for such a development, the temporary structure will be required to be removed from the site upon occupation of the dwelling.

13.11 Pigeon Lofts

The development of pigeon lofts will be required to take account of the potential impact of the development on the amenities of any surrounding properties and, in particular, any noise or odour related impacts.

Any development of pigeon lofts shall consider the following:

- Lofts should be located as far as possible from neighbouring properties and should not normally be within 5 metres of a boundary abutting an adjacent property; and
- The position and design of pigeon lofts shall strive to minimise and avoid any adverse impact on the amenities of surrounding properties.

13.12 Social and Community

This section provides guidance in relation to social and community developments.

13.12.1 Childcare

Childcare includes full day care, session facilities and services for pre-school children and school going children during out of school hours. Access to good quality childcare facilities contributes to the social, emotional and educational development of children. In addition, childcare has an important role to play in fostering economic development particularly at local level.

The Planning Authority will seek to facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations throughout the County, such as areas of concentrated employment and within new residential developments.

Applicants are recommended to seek the advice of the Louth County Childcare Committee, Tusla, HSE, and other relevant bodies in the design of childcare facilities prior to the submission of a planning application.

All childcare facilities shall be provided in accordance with the *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG) (2001).*

In assessing individual planning applications for childcare facilities, the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:

- Suitability of the site for the type and size of facility proposed;
- Adequate sleeping/rest facilities;
- Adequate availability of indoor and outdoor play space;
- Convenience to public transport nodes;
- Safe access and convenient off-street car parking and/or suitable drop-off and collection points for customers and staff;
- Local traffic conditions;
- Number of such facilities in the area. In this regard, the applicant shall submit a map showing locations of childcare facilities within the vicinity of the subject site and demonstrate the need for an additional facility at that location; and
- Intended hours of operation.

For new residential schemes, one childcare facility will be required to cater for 20 places in developments of 75 houses. Having regard to the guidelines, the Planning Authority 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 Planning Authority, developers will be required to provide in lieu, other community benefits by way of direct provision or financial contribution.

The car parking requirements for childcare facilities are set out in the Parking Standards in Table 13.11 in this Chapter.

13.12.2 Places of Worship

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

Development proposals for the use of a building as a place of public worship or religious instruction will be considered in the context of the land use zoning, the compatibility of the use with surrounding established uses, the potential capacity of the building, the potential traffic and parking requirements, and the potential impact on residential amenity.

Planning applications for places of worship should be accompanied by details of:

- The capacity of the facility (e.g. seating capacity);
- A traffic assessment (including details of the proposed parking provision); and
- Intended hours of operation.

Extensions to existing places of worship will be considered where they do not create unacceptable traffic congestion or car parking difficulties or cause a nuisance to existing residents or businesses.

13.12.3 Educational Facilities

The Planning Authority will consider primary and secondary educational developments having regard to specific requirements of the Department of Education and guidance set out within *'The Provision of Schools and the Planning System, A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities, the Department of Education and Science, and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008'.*

The need for new educational facilities or expansion of facilities at existing schools will be guided by the Department of Education.

In assessing individual planning applications for new schools and/or redevelopment/extensions of existing schools, consideration will be given to the following:

- Overall need in terms of necessity, deficiency, and opportunity to enhance or develop schools;
- Site location, proximity of school to catchment area, size of site relative to outdoor space requirements and the future needs of the school (i.e. sufficient space provided for future expansion);
- Traffic and transport impact on the surrounding road network;
- Good, safe accessible pedestrian and cyclist routes to and from the school from nearby residential and commercial areas;
- Safe access and adequate car parking layout to facilitate drop off/pick up;
- Adequate signage, lighting and boundary treatments;
- Impact on local amenities and out of school hours uses/dual functioning of school facilities;
- Conformity with land use zoning objectives; and
- Conformity with Technical Guidance Document, TGD 025 (or any such updated document), in respect of primary schools and Technical Guidance Document TGD 027 (or any such updated document) in respect of post primary schools.

Planning applications for substantial residential developments (over 200 dwellings) shall be accompanied by a report identifying the demand for school places likely to be generated and the capacity of existing schools in the vicinity to cater for such demand.

Temporary classrooms will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be accepted for a period not exceeding five years.

Such classrooms should not interfere with onsite car/cycle parking spaces or unduly impact the functionality of outdoor play/sports facilities.

Extensions to schools will generally be accepted where they will replace existing temporary classroom structures on site.

School extensions should be located having regard to adjoining amenities and amenities within the school site.

Dual function of sports facilities/halls etc. outside of school hours will be encouraged where the use of such facilities will be of a benefit to the wider community. However, any out of hours usage of the school should not be to the detriment of adjoining residential amenities.

Where feasible and practicable to do so, full details of all anticipated uses outside of school hours should accompany the planning application. All such uses outside of school hours shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to occupation of the proposed development.

13.13 EMPLOYMENT

All employment related developments are required to be developed to a high standard. This will assist in creating an attractive environment for people to work and businesses to invest. Any planning application for business and enterprise development shall take account of the standards set out below.

In addition there are specific sections in this Chapter that provide guidance on transport, including access and car parking (Section 13.16), water services (Section 13.20) and sustainable drainage (Section 13.20.4).

These should also be reviewed when preparing an application for an employment related development.

13.13.1 Business Parks and Industrial Estates

The design and layout of business parks and industrial estates shall create a functional and attractive working environment where building design is of a high quality and pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles can easily navigate around.

A Masterplan will be required to be prepared for any expansive areas of undeveloped employment lands to ensure the access and internal roads, services, infrastructure requirements and phasing can be agreed in order to ensure the development of the lands can be appropriately managed and co-ordinated thus avoiding ad-hoc, piecemeal development.

13.13.2 Layout

The layout of buildings shall be of a high quality that incorporates design principles including connectivity and permeability with landscaping used to soften the visual appearance and reduce the dominance of buildings.

Pedestrian, cyclist, and public transport access (including any associated bus turning, where required) shall be a consideration in the layout of any individual employment building or a group of buildings in a business park or industrial estate.

New buildings shall generally respect established building lines and shall include an appropriate set back from any roads or footpaths, that takes account of the nature of the use, the scale of the building and the existing pattern of development in the area.

13.13.3 Design and Scale

The design and scale of any building shall be appropriate for the intended use. The visual impact of larger buildings shall be reduced by incorporating a suitable mix of finishes and architectural treatment that breaks the building up, particularly on the front elevation. Contemporary building design will be encouraged.

Landmark buildings of notable design will be encouraged at strategic locations in settlements or within business/industrial parks.

Where residential areas are adjacent to industrial and business parks or employment lands, consideration shall be given to having reduced heights where these land uses meet so as to minimise the contrast and impact between the two areas.

Roof mounted equipment such as extractor fans or antenna shall be designed to integrate into the building and shall be appropriately screened where possible.

13.13.4 Plot Ratio

The scale and intensity of employment related developments will be measured by plot ratio and site coverage. The standards, as set out in Table 13.8 will normally apply.

Table 13.8 Plot Ratio & Site Coverage for Employment Buildings

	Site Coverage	Maximum Plot Ratio
Offices	60%	2:1
Manufacturing	60%	1.5:1
Distribution / Warehousing	60%	1.5:1

13.13.5 Parking and Loading

A functional parking and set down/loading area shall be provided in accordance with the parking standards set out in Table 13.11 in this Chapter.

Adequate turning areas for delivery vehicles shall be provided within the curtilage of a site unless an alternative arrangement is agreed. This may require the preparation of an 'auto-track' analysis.

Cyclist parking shall be provided in a safe, convenient location close to the main entrance of buildings.

Parking areas shall be constructed using permeable materials and incorporate the principles of SuDS (Sustainable Drainage System).

13.13.6 Workplace Travel Plan

Any proposal for a large scale employment generating development that will generate significant demand in trips such as offices, technology, and service-based developments will normally require the preparation of a Workplace Travel Plan.

The objective of a Workplace Travel Plan is to support the implementation of sustainable transport objectives and reduce the dependence on the private car. It has benefits for both businesses and employees.

The following information should be provided with any Workplace Travel Plan:

- Details of the vehicular and cyclist parking provision;
- Links between the development and public transport;
- Cyclist and pedestrian facilities;
- How the needs of people with impaired mobility will be met; and
- How people will be encouraged to use sustainable modes of transport.

13.13.7 Landscaping and Boundary Treatments

A full schedule of proposed planting (including a list of species and a timescale for planting) and boundary treatments shall be included with any application. Any planting shall consist of native species (trees, hedgerow, shrubs and wildflowers) and low maintenance pollinator friendly perennials.

The visual impact of a development shall be softened by the inclusion of landscaping along roads, boundaries and parking areas.

Where existing trees are required to be removed to facilitate a development, replacement native trees at a ratio of 5:1 shall be planted in Drogheda and Dundalk, with a requirement of 10:1 in the County area.

The front roadside boundaries shall be of a high quality. To provide continuity within a business park/industrial estate, where possible, the front roadside boundary shall be consistent with adjacent buildings. Palisade fencing along front boundaries will not be permitted.

13.13.8 Storage/Recycling Areas

Storage areas shall generally be to the rear and side of buildings and shall be suitably screened by appropriate landscaping and boundary treatment where required.

All waste and recycling areas shall normally be covered and screened from public view.

13.13.9 Noise, Lighting and Emissions

As part of the design and layout of any development, consideration must be given to the impact of the development on surrounding properties and residents in relation to air quality, excessive noise, and lighting.

External lighting shall be designed to have minimal spillage or pollution into the surrounding environment or residential areas.

Developments shall be designed to minimise noise levels. Where it is considered that a development is likely to generate excessive noise, a condition may be attached to a planning permission relating to the level of noise generation.

13.13.10 Signage

Details of all signage and any associated lighting shall be agreed as part of the planning application. The number and location of signs on an individual building and within a business park or industrial estate shall avoid a situation that would result in clutter or the over-proliferation of signage.

13.13.11 Employment Development in Rural Areas

Any planning application for an enterprise or employment related development in the open countryside will require a supporting statement setting out a rationale why the open countryside is the most appropriate location for the development. An assessment of traffic movements and in particular large vehicles such as HGVs, tractors, and vans, associated with any development and its potential impact on the local road network taking account of the width and alignment of the road will be required to be included with any application.

If it cannot be demonstrated that there is capacity in the road network to facilitate a development, it is unlikely that planning permission will be granted. Any application shall also take cognisance of the restrictions on new or intensification of existing accesses onto National and protected Regional Roads if the development is to be accessed off a Protected Road. Further details are set out in Tables 7.9 and 7.10 of the Movement Chapter.

13.13.11.1 Design, Layout and Scale

All buildings and structures in a rural area shall be designed and constructed to a high standard. The design, scale, layout, and location shall ensure the development will integrate into the surrounding environment.

Whilst traditional building styles and materials will be encouraged, contemporary designs will also be considered. The design shall ensure the buildings will be unobtrusive in the landscape.

13.13.11.2 Landscaping and Boundary Treatment

Landscaping shall be carried out as part of any development with detailed landscaping proposals included with any application setting out the type and number of species to be planted in addition to a timescale for any planting. Existing native hedgerows shall be preserved where possible.

Where existing trees are required to be removed to facilitate a development, replacement native trees at a ratio of 5:1 shall be planted in Drogheda and Dundalk, with a requirement of 10:1 in the County area.

Any boundary walls shall be unobtrusive and shall be constructed using natural stone. Block or brick walls will not be permitted.

13.13.11.3 Parking and Storage

A functional parking and set down/loading area shall be provided in accordance with the parking standards set out in Table 13.11 in this Chapter. Adequate turning areas for delivery vehicles should be provided within the curtilage of a site unless an alternative arrangement is agreed.

Storage areas shall generally be to the rear and side of buildings and shall be suitably screened by appropriate landscaping and boundary treatment where required.

13.13.11.4 Residential Amenity

The design and scale of any development shall take account of the potential impact on the amenities of surrounding properties with regard to noise, lighting, air quality and general disturbance.

13.13.11.5 Services

Any employment related development in a rural location will be required to have adequate water and wastewater facilities to meet the anticipated needs of the development.

13.13.11.6 Re-use of Vernacular Rural Buildings

The re-use of existing vacant, redundant, or abandoned vernacular buildings in the rural area is encouraged in order to preserve the architectural heritage value of such buildings. Any extensions to such buildings shall complement the original structure in terms of scale, materials and design. Modern or contemporary extensions based on these principles may be considered.

13.13.11.7 Agricultural Enterprises and Buildings

As farming practices evolve and continue to modernise, the design, scale and layout of farm buildings and farmyards has changed. Depending on the farming enterprise e.g. beef, dairying, pigs, poultry, organic or tillage, the type of housing, livestock numbers and storage facilities will vary.

Different farming types and enterprises will result in the criteria for assessing applications focusing on different issues such as visual impact, traffic, residential amenity and public health. Each application will be assessed on its individual merit and will take account of the ability of the local landscape to absorb the development, the capacity of the local infrastructure including roads, water and waste water infrastructure to accommodate any additional loading and traffic movements, and any possible impacts on the amenities of residents living in the vicinity of the development.

To assist in the assessment of planning applications for agricultural buildings and in particular new farm enterprises on an undeveloped landholding, a business plan setting out the requirement for the development will be required.

This shall include full details of the land holding, livestock number and herd number (if applicable).

New buildings shall be designed to maximise efficiency, address any pollution control requirements (e.g. collect soiled water and farm waste management), provide additional feed and machinery storage areas, and improve livestock welfare.

It is acknowledged that the scale of agricultural buildings are such that they will be visible from surrounding roads and public viewpoints.

However, new buildings shall be positioned and designed so they are as unobtrusive as possible.

When designing a building particular attention shall be given to the sensitivity of the landscape in which it will be located. If the scale and height of the building is particularly large, the reasons for a building of the particular size shall be set out. Wherever possible, new buildings shall be clustered with existing buildings in the yard.

Finishes to buildings will normally include rendered/block walls and dark coloured panels to the side and roof of buildings such as dark green, red, or grey. Landscaping can assist in the integration of new buildings into the landscape. Any planting shall include native species only.

Details of how any effluent and run-off associated with the development will be collected and stored within the farmyard shall be provided.

13.13.12 Home Based Economic Activity

Proposals for home based economic activities, in urban and rural areas, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. These activities shall be ancillary to the primary use of the property as residential accommodation. The impact of the activity on the residential amenities of surrounding properties will be a key consideration.

The scale and nature of the home based activity will be such that it will be compatible with the area in which it is located and will have minimal impact on surrounding residents with regard to noise, traffic movements, odours, and general disturbance. There shall also be adequate parking facilities to accommodate the intended use.

13.14 RETAIL

It is important that new retail developments are of a high design quality and at an appropriate scale to the centre in which they are located. All retail development proposals shall take the following standards into account, in addition to the guidance contained in the '*Retail Planning Guidelines'* and associated *'Retail Design Manual' (2012).*

13.14.1 General Design Considerations

The design and layout of buildings shall be of a high quality that provides an ease of circulation for pedestrians and vehicles. Landmark buildings of notable design will be encouraged at strategic locations in settlements. The design and scale of buildings shall take account of their context and surrounding land uses and shall endeavour to make a positive contribution to the area in which they are located.

For larger developments or higher buildings, a design statement setting out the rationale for the design approach taken may be required.

Service yards shall be located to the rear of buildings and appropriately screened and landscaped.

Roof mounted equipment such as extractor fans or antenna shall be designed to integrate into the building and shall be appropriately screened where possible.

13.14.2 Loading Areas

A functional parking and set down/loading area shall be provided in accordance with the parking standards set out in Table 13.11 in this Chapter.

13.14.3 Parking

Car parking shall be provided in accordance with the parking standards set out in Table 13.11 in this Chapter. Surface parking areas shall be constructed using permeable materials and shall incorporate the principles of SuDS.

Provision of secure cycle storage facilities is essential for supporting the promotion and development of cycling as a more sustainable mode of transport. Bicycle parking for all new retail developments shall be provided in accordance with the standards set out in Table 13.12 in this Chapter.

13.14.4 Residential Amenity

As part of the design and layout of any development, consideration must be given to the impact of the development on surrounding properties and residents in relation to air quality, excessive noise, and lighting.

External lighting shall be designed to have minimal spillage or pollution into the surrounding environment or residential areas.

13.14.5 Service Stations and Retailing

Service Stations will be considered on appropriately zoned lands compatible with surrounding land uses where a safe access can be achieved and there would be no adverse impact created on the amenities of surrounding properties. They will generally not be encouraged within the core retail area of urban centres or in the open countryside.

Convenience shops are part of the normal ancillary services provided within Service Stations.

In smaller settlements, they can have a very important function as the local shop or small supermarket. In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, the net floorspace of the shop should not be in excess of 100m². Where permission in excess of 100m² net floorspace is sought, the sequential approach shall apply.

Minimal advertising will be permitted at Service Stations and generally shall be restricted to a single main pillar/totem pole sign structure.

Canopies should be appropriate to their setting in terms of height and design. Internal illumination of lighting shall preferably be in the form of individual backlit letters.

Proposals for on-line or off-line motorway service facilities will be assessed in accordance with the guidance set out in the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG (2012).*

13.14.6 Lower Order Retailing

In assessing planning applications for lower order retail uses including Off-Licences, Betting Shops, Amusement and Gaming Arcades, Casinos, Vaping Shops, Fast Food Outlets/Takeaways, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- The need to safeguard the vitality and viability of the defined retail area and to maintain a suitable mix of retail uses;
- The proliferation of such existing facilities in the area;
- The effect on the amenities in the area arising from noise, hours of operation and litter;
- Proposed façade design, the type and degree of any advertising/lighting and its integration with the character of the area;

- Location and appearance of vents and other external services and their impact on adjoining amenities in terms of noise/smell/disturbance/ visual impact;
- Careful consideration of the location of fast food outlets in the vicinity of sensitive locations such as schools and parks; and
- Fast food outlets/takeaways with proposed drive through facilities will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

13.14.7 Town Centre Living

As part of the approach of revitalising town centres, support will be given to uses that will allow town centres to become multi-functional destinations providing services, leisure, cultural, civic, and residential uses.

The use of the upper floors of commercial properties for residential accommodation will be encouraged and, in addition, consideration may be given to proposals for residential uses at ground floor level in certain circumstances or locations where there has been a sustained level of vacancy over a prolonged period. The provision of such accommodation will only be facilitated in circumstances where it is located outside the Core Retail Area and would complement the role of the town centre as a 'destination' for commercial, social or cultural activities.

13.14.8 Shopfronts

The primary function of a shopfront is to identify a retail premises within a street using a combination of name, sign and window displays. The towns and villages of County Louth contain numerous examples of traditional shopfront designs together with large numbers of more modern design, much of which reflects a certain amount of corporate harmonisation.

13.14.9 Shopfront Design and Signage

The Planning Authority will encourage the preservation of authentic, traditional shopfronts and the provision of good quality contemporary designs. The Council has produced *'Shopfront Design Guidelines'* in order to assist designers of shop fronts and signage. These Guidelines can be accessed from this link.

Use of the Irish language in business and shopfront signage is welcomed by the Council.

In assessing planning applications for works to any element of the shop front, the Planning Authority will be guided by the design principles set out in the *Shopfront Design Guidelines.*

13.14.10 Architectural Conservation Areas and Protected Structures

Any change of use, extension, or modification to a Protected Structure or building in an Architectural Conservation Area for a commercial/retail use shall be sensitive to the character of the area in which it is located. Particular care shall be given to the location of equipment such as extractor fans.

The *Shopfront Design Guidelines* provide specific advice for signage in ACAs and Protected Structures.

13.14.11 Free-Standing Advertisement Displays

Free standing advertising displays (including digital) will be considered in certain locations such as pedestrian precincts of shopping centres and other areas of retail/commercial activity such as town centres.

The location of these advertising displays shall not interfere or impede pedestrian movement or more vulnerable road users, and shall not be a distraction for motorists.

Any proposal for a digital display will have regard to the area in which it is to be located and any possible impacts it may have on visual or residential amenities.

The height of the structures shall be sympathetic to its surroundings and shall not be unduly prominent in the streetscape. The proliferation of this signage shall be avoided.

13.14.12 Retail Park Signage

The provision of signage at a retail park is essential to provide details regarding the nature and location of the units located therein. To avoid visual clutter only one such sign incorporating a number of uniform individual advertisements will be permitted at the entrance to the development.

Any sign or associated structure should not create an obstruction to pedestrian or cyclist movement or create a traffic hazard.

13.15 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

This section sets out the standards that will apply to developments relating to specific tourism related uses.

The Planning Authority will seek:

• To facilitate, where appropriate, proposals to improve access for all at existing tourism sites and facilities, and to require all new tourism related developments to ensure the development is accessible to everyone, regardless of their age or ability.

• To support the provision of accessible tourism; and

• To ensure all projects and improvements will adopt the principles of Universal Design.

13.15.1 Hotels, B&B's and Guest Houses

In determining planning applications for both new and for change of use to bed and breakfast, guesthouse, hotel or hostel in residential areas, the Planning Authority will have regard to the following:

- Size and nature of facility;
- The compatibility with its surrounding area and land uses;
- The standard of accommodation for the intended occupiers of the premises;
- The availability of adequate, safe and convenient arrangements for car parking and servicing;
- The type of advertising proposed;
- The potential impact on the local streetscape and built heritage;
- The impact on the amenity of residents in the locality ;and
- The number of existing facilities in the area.

Car parking shall be provided in accordance with the requirements set out in Table 13.11 of this of Chapter.

13.15.2 Tourism Activities

Any proposal for a tourism related activity or development shall include a supporting business and design statement outlining the following:

- An overview of the proposal setting out how the concept for the project was initiated and why it is suited for the location chosen;
- Projected growth of the facility in the short, medium, and long term;
- How the design and scale of the development will integrate into the landscape;
- How the proposal would complement the natural and cultural heritage of the area;

- The potential impacts of the proposal on local infrastructure in particular roads and water services;
- Anticipated modes of transport to the facility;
- Any signage required; and
- How the development would complement established tourism complexes and facilities in the County.

13.15.3 Caravan and Camping Sites

Any proposed caravan or camping sites shall have regard, in scale and layout design, to the existing character of the area in which they are proposed to be located. They shall generally be located within the development boundary of established settlements meeting the highest quality and standards applicable.

Consideration will be given to small scale facilities in appropriate locations outside of towns and villages subject to a demand and need for the facility being demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

This will require the preparation of a Business and Design Statement outlining why the chosen location is the most appropriate location for the facility. It will also be a requirement to demonstrate compliance with all other planning and environmental criteria including suitability of the location, design, scale, integration into the landscape, access and service arrangements, residential amenity, in addition to outlining the potential impact on natural heritage and the local environment.

13.16 TRANSPORT

This section sets out the transportation standards for development in the County. As part of the strategy of supporting the integration of land use and transportation and promoting a modal shift away from a dependence on the private car, new developments shall, as far as possible, include provision for sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

These standards should be read in conjunction with existing national guidance, which includes the following publications:

- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS);
- Roads Traffic Act, 1994 (as amended);
- Roads Traffic Act, 1994 (as amended)Traffic Signs Manual, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport;
- Road Traffic Regulations,1997-2012;
- DN-GEO-03030 - Guidance on Minor Improvements to National Roads;
- Traffic Management Guidelines;
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities;
- National Cycle Manual;
- Smarter Travel;
- TII Publications / Design Manual for Roads and Bridges;
- Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas;
- Spatial Planning and National Roads: Guidelines for Planning Authorities;
- TII Publication PE-DDV-02046 Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) Guidance Notes ;
- TII Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) Guidelines (2014);
- Road Safety Impact Assessment (RSIA), TII Publication PE-PMG-02001 Road Safety Impact Assessment;

- Road Safety Audit: TII Publications GE-STY-01024 Road Safety Audit;
- DNGEO-03084 Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on Urban Roads;
- Achieving Effective Workplace Travel Plans Guidance for Local Authorities;
- Workplace Travel Plans A Guide for Implementers; and
- Permeability Best Practice Guide.

13.16.1 Pedestrian and Cycling Facilities

The provision of quality and attractive walking and cycling facilities that are accessible, safe, and well connected to surrounding streets and neighbourhoods can lead to an increase in the number of people choosing to use these facilities. Walking and cycling facilities shall be a central element of the design of any new roads.

Footpaths shall be designed to allow pedestrians pass each other in comfort, shall have a minimum width of 2 metres, and shall accommodate people with mobility issues and those who are visually impaired.

Cycle paths shall be designed in accordance with the *Traffic Management Guidelines* and the *National Cycle Manual* and shall be provided on all new arterial/distributor roads and link roads unless a suitable alternative route is available.

Local roads shall be designed to reduce the speed of vehicles, making the road safer for other road users including cyclists. This provides opportunities to create a shared space for cyclists and motor vehicles.

Street lighting shall be provided along footpaths and cycle paths in accordance with the recommendations made in *'Site Development Works for Housing Areas' (DoEHLG)* and any subsequent publication or successor to this document.

13.16.2 Rail Network

Any development in the vicinity of existing rail lines shall comply with the setbacks and construction requirements of Iarnród Éireann, the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and any other relevant stakeholders.

13.16.3 Bus Network

Any new or upgrades to existing roads or the development of large scale residential and employment areas, shall include provision for bus infrastructure including bus stops, shelters, and lay-bys that would improve public transport provision.

The provision of these facilities shall be agreed in consultation with the Council and the National Transport Authority. The location of bus shelters shall meet the needs of the users but shall also strive to integrate into the local streetscape and shall not unduly interfere with pedestrian and cyclist movement along the footpath.

13.16.4 Park and Ride/ Park and Share Facilities

In addition to providing parking facilities, the design and layout of Park and Ride and Park and Share facilities shall include provision for a set down area for buses, a sheltered waiting area for customers, appropriate pedestrian and cycle connectivity within the facility and from the surrounding neighbourhoods, and bicycle parking.

Park and Ride and Park and Share Facilities shall be suitably lit to provide a degree of security and public safety.

13.16.5 Roads

The national, regional, and local roads in the County perform an important economic and social function keeping people and businesses connected.

13.16.5.1 National and Regional Roads

As set out in Section 7.10 of the Movement Chapter it is important that the number of new accesses and the intensification of existing accesses onto the National and Regional road network are restricted in order to maintain the functionality, safety and efficiency of the road network. Aside from the exemptions, set out in Tables 7.9 and 7.10, any new access off a National or Protected Regional road shall be restricted to locations within the 50km/h speed limit.

Accesses in locations where the speed limit is greater than 60km/h shall generally be avoided. In transitional zones where the speed limit is 60 km/h before reducing to 50km/h an access may be considered in limited circumstances, however, would require the preparation of a road safety audit in accordance with the requirements of TII or the Infrastructure Section of the Council.

Works on National and Regional Roads shall be carried out in accordance with the TII *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)* or *the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS),* whichever document is applicable.

13.16.5.2 Local Roads

The width, alignment, and speed of local roads varies between locations in the County. Any works to the local road network shall be designed and carried out in accordance with the requirements of the TII *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* or *the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.* These works include improvements to existing roads or the construction of new roads.[1]

[1] DMURS is applicable if the road/site is located within the 60km/h speed limit.

13.16.6 Car Parking

The method of transport people choose to use when travelling to and from a development is a determining factor in how many car parking spaces are required to service it. Whilst this Plan promotes a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable modes of transport, the car will continue to be an important mode of transport, and therefore there will normally be a requirement to provide car parking as part of a development.

Any on-site parking areas provided within developments shall be suitably lined and surfaced. Large parking areas, particularly those used by the public or visible from public viewpoints shall be broken up with soft landscaping. Any loading bays within a development shall be located so delivery vehicles do not interfere with the movement or circulation of traffic and do not encroach onto parking spaces.

13.16.7 Disabled Parking

Disabled parking spaces shall be generally applied at the rate of 5% of spaces for developments requiring 10 or more spaces, with a minimum of one no. space.

It is acknowledged that due to the nature of certain developments the number of disabled spaces required may be more than this figure.

The disabled parking requirements for such developments shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

13.16.8 Age Friendly Parking

In commercial developments open to the public or in residential developments with shared spaces, age friendly parking shall be provided where possible.

13.16.9 Charging Points for Electric Vehicles

In all car parking areas, provision shall be made for charging points for electric vehicles. This shall include the necessary wiring and ducting. Pending the publication of guidance on the minimum requirement of these spaces, an assessment shall be made on a case-by-case basis; however, applicants shall strive to provide these charging points in a minimum of 20% of the total spaces.

13.16.10 Dimensions of Parking Spaces

The dimensions of parking and loading spaces are set out in Table 13.9.

Table 13.9: Dimensions of Parking Spaces

Parking Space	Dimensions
Parking Space - perpendicular to kerb	5.0m x 2.5m
Parking Space - adjacent to a wall or other obstruction	5.0m x 2.75m
Parking Space - parallel to the kerb	6.0m x 2.5m
Accessible Parking Bay	5.0m x 2.5m plus 1.2m to the side and rear of each space
Loading Bay	6.0m x 3.0m
Circulation areas	6.0m in width

13.16.11 Parking Standards that Reflect the Demand and Location

It is considered appropriate that the car parking requirement in the towns and villages in the County should be reflective of the anticipated parking demand. In this regard, the County has been sub-divided into three Areas, with a specific set of standards applicable in each Area. These areas are set out in Table13.16.12.

Table 13.10: Parking Areas in the County

Area 1	Lands Located within town and settlement centres
Area 2	Lands located adjacent to high level public transport services or lands serving a local catchment area.
Area 3	All other areas

13.16.12 Car Parking Standards

Table 13.11: Car Parking Standards

Development Type	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Residential Dwelling	1 per unit	1 per unit	2 per unit
Apartment	1 apartment	1 per apartment	2 per apartment
Retail – Food Retail	1 per 20m²		
Retail Warehousing	1 per 40m²		
Cash and Carry	1 per 50m²		
Banks/Financial Institutions	1 per 30m²		
Restaurants, cafes, and takeaway	1 per 20m²		
Bars, Night Clubs, Lounges	1 per 20m²	1 per 10m²	1 per 5m²
Showrooms	1 per 50m²	1 per 50m²	1 per 50m²
Industry (light and general)	1 per 50m²	1 per 50m²	1 per 50m²
Warehouse	1 per 100m²	1 per 100m²	1 per 100m²
Offices	1 per 50m²	1 per 20m²	1 per 20m²
Church, theatre, cinema, and auditorium	1 per 20 seats		
Crèches	1 per 6 children		
Schools	1 per classroom	1 per classroom	1 per classroom
Third level facilities	To be determined by P.A.	To be determined by P.A.	To be determined by P.A.
Student accommodation	To be determined by P.A.	To be determined by P.A.	To be determined by P.A.
Hotel	1 per 2 bedrooms		
Clinics, surgeries, and group medical practices	2 spaces per consulting room	2 spaces per consulting room	3 spaces per consulting room
Nursing Homes	1 per employee and 0.5 per bed	1 per employee and 0.5 per bed	1 per employee and 0.5 per bed
Commercial leisure – play centres, bowling alleys, amusement centres etc.	1 per 100m² public space	1 per 100m² public space	1 per 30m² public space
Conference Centres	1 per 20 seats	1 per 20 seats	1 per 5 seats
Stadium	To Be Determined by the P.A.	To Be Determined by the P.A.	To Be Determined by the P.A.

A reduction in the car parking requirement may be acceptable where the Planning Authority is satisfied that:

- There is sufficient parking available in the vicinity of the development to cater for any shortfall;
- The nature of the development is such that existing parking spaces in the vicinity could facilitate the dual use of parking spaces, particularly if the development operated at off-peak times. Supporting documentation will be required demonstrating how the dual use will work;
- The public transport links available would reduce the demand for car parking;
- The central location of the development is such that the customers/residents/users of the development would be likely to walk or cycle; and
- There was no off street car parking provided with the existing/previous use of the property and the redevelopment of the property would not result in a significant increase in the car parking requirement.

A Transport Mobility Management Plan supporting any reduction in car parking shall be included with any application where the quantum of parking is significantly below that set out in the Car Parking Standards (Table 13.11).

Parking demand calculations shall be provided detailing the demand throughout the day from a database of similar types of development in similar circumstances.

13.16.13 Workplace Travel Plans

Workplace Travel Plans (which can also be referred to as Mobility Management Plans) seek to reduce the demand for the car by increasing the attractiveness of alternative modes of transport.

Developments that will generate significant trip demand such as new schools or developments with in excess of 100 employees shall require the preparation of a Workplace Travel Plan.

Other considerations which may trigger the requirement for these Plans include the location of the development e.g. town centre, the employment type, and the shift pattern associated with the development. The requirement for the preparation of a Workplace Travel Plan for such developments will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Workplace Travel Plan shall include measures to promote a modal shift towards public transport, walking, and cycling in addition to car sharing and flexible working if feasible. This can be achieved by providing facilities such as showers, locker rooms and cycle parking for walkers and cyclists, the promotion of car sharing between employees, and providing information in relation to public transport availability and walking and cycling routes.

The following information should be provided with any Workplace Travel Plan:

- Details of the parking vehicular and cyclist parking provision;
- Links between the development and public transport;
- Cyclist and pedestrian facilities;
- How the needs of people with impaired mobility will be met; and
- How people will be encouraged to use sustainable modes of transport.

13.16.14 Traffic and Transport Assessments

Traffic and Transport Assessments involve a comprehensive review of the potential transport impacts of a development on the existing transport network. This includes travel by car, commercial vehicle, cycling, walking, or public transport. Depending on the scale of a development and the associated trip demand, the Traffic and Transport Assessment may identify a requirement to change the road layout or public transport provision.

This Plan shall require the preparation of a Traffic and Transport Assessment in accordance with the *Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines 2014* (or any subsequent updated Guidelines), which set out the thresholds and sub-thresholds for the preparation of a Traffic and Transport Assessment. The Council may deem it appropriate to have a Traffic and Transport Assessment carried out on schemes with a value less than the thresholds if it is deemed sufficiently complex.

13.16.15 Road Safety Impact Assessment

A Road Safety Impact Assessment (RSIA) is described in the *EU Directive on Road Infrastructure Safety Management (EU RISM*) as a strategic assessment of the impact of different planning options for a new road, or for substantial modifications to an existing road, on the safety performance of the road network. A RSIA is required for such projects on the national road network. A RSIA is also recommended for similar schemes on local and regional roads. TII Publications describe the RSIA process under the standard TII PE-PMG-02001 Road Safety Impact Assessment.

A RSIA is a separate process to a Road Safety Audit (RSA). While a RSA examines the safety aspects within a scheme, a RSIA considers the safety impact of a scheme on the surrounding road network. A RSIA and a RSA both work to improve the safety performance of new roads and existing roads that require modifications.

The Council may deem it appropriate to have a RSIA carried out on schemes with a value less than the threshold for a Major Scheme if it is deemed sufficiently complex.

13.16.16 Cycle Parking

Secure cycle parking facilities shall be provided in new developments in accordance with the standards set out overleaf.

Where a modal share for cycling is outlined within a Mobility Management Plan for a development, cycle parking should be provided at a level sufficient to support this modal share or as outlined in Table 13.12, whichever is greater.

Secure bicycle racks shall be provided in all cases where bicycle parking is deemed to be necessary by the Planning Authority. Such racks should be within 25m of a destination for short-term parking (shops) and within 50m for long-term parking (school, college, office).

All long-term (more than three hours) cycle racks shall be protected from the weather.

All on-street stands or racks should be capable of performing the basic functions of supporting the bicycle and protecting it against theft or vandalism.

Off-street storage/parking facilities should provide adequate shelter, lighting, safety and security, ease of access and egress, and an appropriate level of supervision. As such, publicly accessible cycle parking should be of 'Sheffield' stand type; toaster racks or similar are not acceptable for publicly accessible cycle parking. Where high density cycle parking is provided, in a secure location, stacked cycle parking is acceptable provided it is easily used.

Visitor Parking Spaces: These are designed for ease of use by the public and visitors to a development and should strive to be within 25m from main entry points.

Such cycle parking spaces should be located in highly visible areas with good passive surveillance, which are easy to access and well lit.

Showers and Lockers facilities: In large scale commercial developments, which incorporate large amounts of cycle parking, showers and locker facilities shall be provided.

Apartments / Student Accommodation: Secure, covered communal parking should be provided at ground level as close as possible to the main entrances.

Table 13.12: Cycle Parking Standards

Development Type	Cycle Parking Requirement	
	Long term	Visitor/Short Stay
Apartment, Flat , Sheltered Housing	Minimum of 1 cycle space per bedroom. For Studio units at least 1 cycle space.	1 space per 2 units
Residential dwelling	1 space per unit	1 space per 5 units
Student accommodation	1 space per 2 bedrooms	1 space per 5 bedrooms
Shops	1 space per 5 Staff	1 space per 100m² Gross Floor Area (GFA)
Supermarkets/large stores	1 space per 5 Staff	1 space per 250m² GFA
Offices	1 space per 200m² GFA	1 space per 200m² GFA
Industry/warehousing	1 space per 5 Staff	To be determined by the Planning Authority
Theatre, cinema, church, stadium	1 space per 5 Staff	1 space per 10 Seats
Hotels, guest houses	1 space per 5 staff	1 space per 20 beds
Hostels	1 space per 5 staff	1 space per 10 beds
Lounge bars	1 space per 5 staff	1 space per 200m² Public Floor Area
Restaurants	1 space per 5 staff	1 space per 200m² Public Floor Area
Playing fields	1 space per 5 staff	12 spaces per ha.
Schools	1 space per 5 staff	1 space per 5 Students, with a minimum of 10 spaces
Nursing Homes	1 space per 10 residents	To be determined by the

Development Type	Cycle Parking Requirement	
	Long term	Visitor/Short Stay
	1 space per 5 Staff	Planning Authority
Hospitals	1 space per 5 Staff	1 space per 20 beds
Multi-Storey car parks	10% of car spaces minimum of 50 spaces	To be determined by the Planning Authority
Public Transport pick up points/interchanges	5% of daily borders at point/station, minimum of 10 spaces	To be determined by the Planning Authority
Cultural, community buildings	1 space per 5 Staff	1 space per 200m² GFA
Crèche	1 space per 5 Staff	1 space per 10 children
Third level college/further education	1 space per 5 Staff	1 space per 10 students
Student accommodation	1 space per 2 bedrooms	1 space per 5 bedrooms
Conference centres	To be determined by the Planning Authority	To be determined by the Planning Authority

13.16.17 Entrances and Sightlines

A well-designed access is important for the safety and convenience of all road users and should have regard to the design speed, function, and traffic volumes on the public road in addition to pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable road users.

All new entrances and junctions will require clear and unobstructed sight lines to be provided. These sight lines shall be selected using the applicable road design manual TII *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges' or* if the development is in towns and villages or where the speed limit is within the 60km/h zone the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets. Any development shall take the following criteria into consideration:

- The designation of the road, its function in the road hierarchy, and existing/projected volumes of traffic;
- The typical speed (not speed limit) of the road;
- The vertical and horizontal alignment of the road; and
- Any other factors that may be relevant to the location or included in the road design manual.

The design and location of an entrance shall ensure:

- There is sufficient forward visibility for vehicles travelling along the road to identify traffic stopping and turning off the road into the entrance. This 'safe stopping distance' shall ensure motorists have time to react and brake safely; and
- There is sufficient forward visibility for any vehicles turning right from the road into the entrance so as to not cause an obstruction or hazard to oncoming traffic. In some circumstances, right turning lanes may be required.

The following Design Manuals are relevant in the design of new entrances and junctions:

- Streets and Roads with a speed limit of 60km/h or less – (*The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets),* however on national roads in urban areas the TII publication *DNGEO-03084 Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on Urban Roads* will be applied in combination with DMURS principles; and
- All other roads – TII Publications (formerly) *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* (which has been subsumed into TII publications).

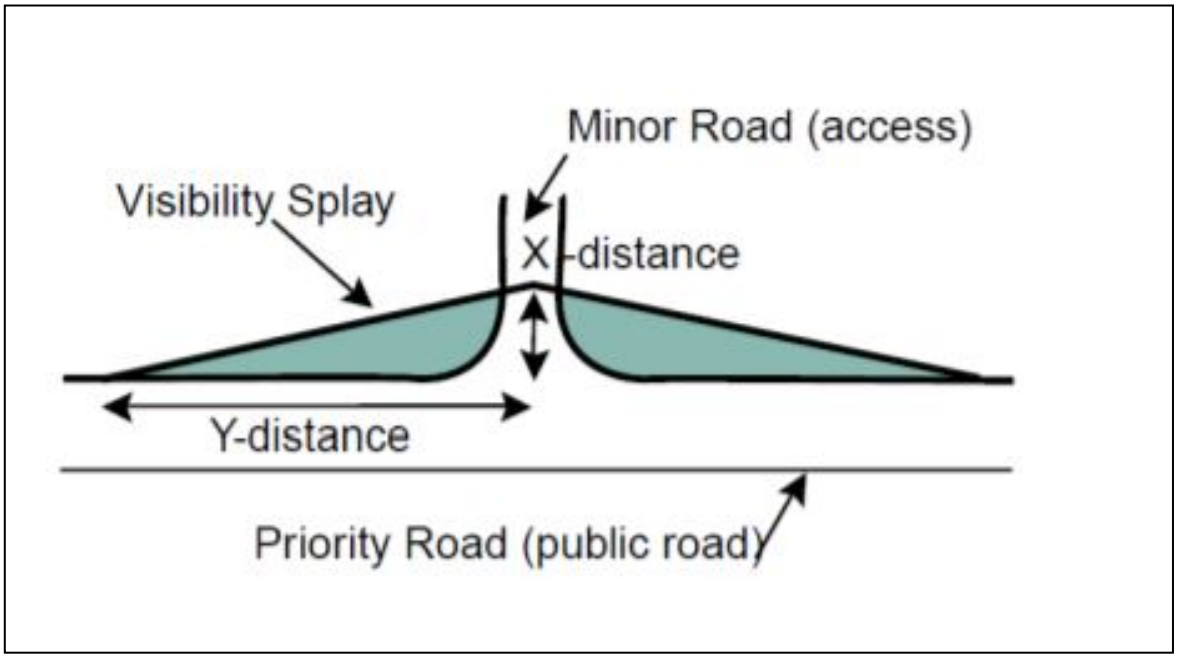
Table 13.13 sets out the minimum visibility standards for new entrances onto streets and roads where the speed limit is in excess of 60km/h and the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' is not applicable. These are minimum standards and the Authority can request greater standards depending on the characteristic of the road, observed traffic speeds, volume and type of vehicles etc.

Table 13.13: Minimum visibility standards for new entrances

Road Category	Sight distance (Y)	Visibility requirement over ground	Distance of the sight line from the edge of the carriageway (1 to 6 houses) (X distance)[2]	Distance of the sight line from the edge of the carriageway (7 houses or greater or non-domestic developments) (Y distance)[3]
National and Protected Regional Routes	215 metres	0.6-1.05 metres	3.0 metres	4.5 metres
Regional Road	125 metres	0.6-1.05 metres	3.0 metres	4.5 metres
Local Road	75 metres	0.6-1.05 metres	3.0 metres	4.5 metres
Cul-de-sac	75 metres	0.6-1.05 metres	3.0 metres	4.5 metres

[2]These standards do not apply to any new entrance where the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' is applicable. In certain circumstances a setback of 2.4 metres may be allowed.
[3] In certain circumstances a setback of 3.0 metres may be allowed.

Fig 13.1: Junction Visibility Splays



Notes:

1. Where the 85% percentile speed on a local class 2 or a local class 3 rural road is shown to be below 42 kilometres per hour, the minimum sight distance requirements **Y** contained in the document TII Publication *'Geometric Design of Junctions' DN-GEO-03060 June 2017* or as amended shall apply.
2. Topographical drawings shall be used in demonstrating visibility sightlines.
3. Where the creation of minimum visibility standards involve works on third party lands, the applicant must furnish evidence of a legal right to carry out such works. The applicant shall be requested to submit a formal legal agreement together with a map showing the extent of the lands so affected outside the site boundary and detailing the works required to comply with the visibility splay together with an undertaking from the landowner's solicitor that the agreement will be entered as a burden against the title of the land.

13.16.18 Access for Replacement Dwellings

Where an existing access to a replacement dwelling does not meet the current standards, consideration shall be given to improving the design of the access in the interests of road safety. There shall not be a presumption that such substandard accesses can be utilised in the absence of any improvements or alternative access being provided.

13.16.19 Road Gradients

A flat gradient of no more than 1:50 (2%) will generally be required at new junctions or entrances for the first 5 metres from the edge of the public road. In larger commercial or residential developments, this may increase to 15 metres or more to facilitate larger vehicles such as delivery vans and refuse trucks.

13.17 ENVIRONMENT

13.17.1 Extractive Industry

The development, continuation of use or diversification of activities relating to the extractive industry will be assessed having regard to the following:

- *Quarrying and Ancillary Activities (DEHLG 2004), (*or any subsequent Guidelines);
- *Guidelines for Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry (EPA, 2006)*;
- *Guidance on Biodiversity in the Extractive Industry (NPWS)*;
- *GSI's Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry (2008)*;
- The *Archaeological Code of Practice (2009);*
- The *Irish Concrete Federation Environmental Code (2005)* and any other relevant policy guidance;
- The requirements of Section 261 and Section 261A of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)* where applicable;
- The nature of the proposal and processes involved;
- The method of extraction;
- The scale of activity and duration proposed;
- Impact on the environment and landscape;
- Impact on residential amenity;
- Impact on the road network;
- Impact on hydrology and hydrogeology;
- Impact on archaeology and the built heritage;
- Mitigation measures proposed;
- Phasing programme for extraction; and
- Restoration and after-care proposals.

Prior to the lodgement of planning applications for extractive industry development, pre-planning consultation with the Planning Authority is encouraged.

The Planning Authority may require the submission of an EIAR for sub-threshold development where it is considered that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The restoration of disused pits and quarries to productive agricultural use will be encouraged where appropriate having regard to all appropriate environmental considerations. Other possible post closure uses may be considered such as recreational facilities and natural habitat areas.

A condition requiring the lodgement of a financial bond will be included in any grant of permission to ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site following the completion of extraction.

A Special Contribution in accordance with *Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended),* may be imposed for the upgrade or maintenance of the local road network to facilitate the proposed development.

Non-extractive industry related development may be restricted in areas that are in close proximity to existing extractive sites of significant resource potential where such developments would limit future exploitation or in areas containing proven mineral (aggregate) deposits in order to prevent the unnecessary sterilisation of these deposits.

13.17.2 Land Reclamation

Any proposal for land reclamation developments will be required to include the following information:

- A rationale for the development;
- The relationship of the site with any European Sites. The development shall not create any adverse effect on the integrity of the conservation objectives of any European Sites;
- Visual impact – cross-sections of existing and proposed ground levels. The development shall not interfere with the character of the surrounding landscape;
- Details of the type and quantity of material to be imported. Only clean, inert material will be allowed;
- A traffic management plan including haulage routes and daily/weekly truck movements;
- Details of how noise and dust will be managed;
- Residential amenity – an assessment shall be carried out on the potential impact of the development on any residential properties in the vicinity of the lands; and
- A phasing programme for the duration of the works.

Any development will be required to have the requisite waste authorisation in place in accordance with the stipulations of the *Waste Management Act 1996* or any subsequent updated guidance or legislation.

13.17.3 Contaminated Land

The development of any lands where there are known or suspected contaminated land and groundwater issues will require investigative works to be carried out detailing the extent of contamination, the potential sources of any contamination, the migration pathways, and potential receptors the contaminated land impacts upon. A risk based approach in accordance with best practice techniques, in consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency and any other relevant bodies (as required or necessary), shall be taken to the remediation of contaminated lands to ensure works are completed to the highest standards.

13.18 Energy and Telecommunications

13.18.1 Wind Energy

This Plan recognises that onshore and offshore wind energy is an energy source that has an important role in achieving national targets on fossil fuel reduction and greenhouse gas emissions.

Map 10.1 in Chapter 10 Utilities provides details of the locations in the County suitable for wind energy development.

The potential benefits of small-scale wind energy developments and community based wind energy developments in mitigating against climate change and raising awareness, and harnessing community involvement in the shift to cleaner sources of energy is recognised and will generally be considered favourable subject to appropriate planning considerations.

Any application for wind energy development shall be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Wind Energy Guidelines 2006* and any subsequent Guidelines. Details on access, including restrictions on new or intensification of existing accesses onto National and Protected Regional Roads are set out in Section 13.16 'Transport' and Tables 7.9 and 7.10 of the Movement Chapter.

13.18.2 Solar Energy

The potential of solar energy as a clean source of energy that will reduce dependence on fossil fuels and assist in achieving national targets on greenhouse gas emissions is recognised. The retrofitting of existing buildings and the integration of solar infrastructure into the design of new buildings will be generally encouraged.

Solar energy is also beginning to be developed on a larger scale through the construction of solar farms. At the time of writing, no national guidance had been published for the development of solar farms. Pending the publication of any guidance the following criteria shall be considered when preparing an application for a solar farm:

- The Landscape Character Area in which the site is located;
- Any environmental sensitivities in the landscape;
- Site contours and levels;
- Site suitability: Brownfield lands or poor agricultural lands;
- Visual impact;
- Ecology;
- Heritage;
- Glint and glare;
- Ground maintenance, soil stripping, storage and maintenance;
- Fencing, security and lighting;
- Drainage; and
- Decommissioning.

In order to ensure that all environmental issues and cumulative impacts of a proposal have been assessed any application for a Solar Farm shall include details of the grid connection.

Where this is not possible, details of the most likely corridor of the grid connection (including its width and route), the likely nature of the connection in terms of line voltage, whether it will be underground (preferred) or over ground (including details of pole type) and any ancillary equipment (e.g. substations) shall be provided.

Details on access, including restrictions on new or intensification of existing accesses onto National and Protected Regional Roads are set out in section 13.16 'Transport' and Tables 7.9 and 7.10 of the Movement Chapter.

13.18.3 Telecommunications Structures

The importance of high quality telecommunications infrastructure in maintaining economic competitiveness and providing connectivity for businesses and communities is recognised.

The assessment of any application for telecommunications structures will have regard to the *Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG, 1996* and *Circular Letter Pl07/12* published by the DECLG in 2012. The co-location of existing structures is encouraged.

The construction of a new antennae or structure will only be considered when co-location is not a feasible option. Any proposal for a new structure or antennae will require a supplementary report setting out the requirements for the infrastructure and why co-location is not feasible.

In identifying a suitable location for telecommunications structures consideration shall be given to the potential visual impact of the development and any sensitivities in the local landscape or settlement in which the structure is proposed to be located.

A Visual Impact Assessment of the development including photomontages, may be required, depending on the nature of the development proposed.

Telecommunication structures on visually sensitive elevated lands will only be considered where technical or coverage requirements mean the infrastructure is essential. Structures shall be designed to facilitate the attachment of additional antennae and minimise any visual impact.

Any boundaries around structures shall be carefully considered and take account of the location of the structure. Palisade fencing will not normally be considered acceptable, particularly in built up areas.

13.19 HERITAGE

13.19.1 Archaeology

Any development in the vicinity of a site included in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or within a Zone of Notification will require archaeological investigations to be carried out in accordance with the *'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage'* published by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, and the Islands in 1999.

An Archaeological Impact Assessment will be required to be prepared for any development that may have a potential impact on archaeology. The requirement for this assessment shall have regard to the nature and scale of the development and its relationship with any sites or monuments of archaeological interest.[4]

To ensure the long-term preservation of recorded monuments and their setting, a Conservation Plan may be required, depending on the nature of the development and the relationship of the development with the monument(s).

13.19.2 Architectural Heritage

Any works which would materially affect the character of a Protected Structure requires planning permission.

Owners or occupants of Protected Structures may request a declaration from the Planning Authority as to the type of works that would not materially affect the character of a specific Protected Structure and do not require planning permission. The provisions for this declaration are set out in *Section 57 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).* Any proposals to a Protected Structure shall ensure:

- The works shall not detract from the significance or value of the structure;
- Original features of architectural and historic interest are retained and new features are not presented as original or older features;
- Extensions are appropriately scaled, complement and are subsidiary to the main structure; and
- The special interest of the structure is not compromised when adhering to the requirements of the Building Regulations.

Applications shall be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2011* and shall be supported by detailed drawings, photographs, a schedule of works, and construction materials and finishes. The level of detail required with any application will depend on the complexity and scale of the works involved.

[4] In relation to the statutory requirement on anyone proposing to carry out work at or in relation to a recorded monument to give two months' notice of the proposed work to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, it should be noted that the practice of the NMS is to accept planning referrals as having discharged this requirement, thus avoiding unnecessary imposition on owners and developers and reducing documentation to the NMS.

13.19.3 Change of Use

It is recognised that a change of use of a Protected Structure can, in some cases assist in supporting the long-term conservation of the Structure. Whilst a degree of flexibility in design standards may be considered, any extensions, new openings or modifications shall be carefully considered to ensure the works do not detract from the historic fabric or value of the structure.

13.19.4 Demolition of Protected Structures

There is a presumption in favour of the retention and repair of Protected Structures. Demolition will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The following information shall be provided with any application to demolish a protected structure:

- A detailed survey (including photographs) of the condition of the structure carried out by a suitably qualified professional;
- Detailed drawings of the structure; and
- A rationale for the demolition of the structure.

If a building is in poor condition or in a state of disrepair a detailed report and photographs of any defects would be required. Whilst this is not considered justification for demolition, consideration will be given to a survey carried out by an architect or engineer with specialist conservation expertise outlining why repairs or remedial works would not be a viable option.

Any partial demolition of a Protected Structure shall not undermine the structural integrity of the elements of the building to be retained.

13.19.5 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)

Volume 3, Appendices 11 and 12 provide detailed guidance and standards in relation to development in Louth's Architectural Conservation Areas.

13.19.6 Works to Buildings of Historic or Architectural Value

Any works to buildings of historical or architectural value that are not included in the Record of Protected Structures nor located within an Architectural Conservation Area, such as those included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, must be carefully considered and take account of any special features or important characteristics of the building.

Any proposals to demolish such buildings will require a detailed rationale by an appropriately qualified professional and will normally only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

13.19.7 Natural Heritage

Consideration shall be given to the potential ecological impact of any development on natural heritage areas within or connected to a development site. The loss of local habitats and wildlife corridors should be minimised or avoided, with mitigating measures included with any development to compensate or enhance local biodiversity where there is an unavoidable impact on the natural heritage.

Under the Birds and Habitats Directives, there is a requirement to consider the potential nature conservation implications of any plan or project on the Natura 2000 site network.

This process is known as Appropriate Assessment. Further details on Appropriate Assessment available in the *'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities'*.

13.19.8 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and High Scenic Quality

Any development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or High Scenic Quality (AHSQ) shall be sensitive to the landscape in which will be located. The design or scale of any building or the use/operation of any development shall not interfere, undermine the quality, or be prominent or obtrusive features within the landscape.

A Visual Impact Assessment may be required to demonstrate how a development would integrate into the local landscape.

This would be dependent on a number of factors including location, the nature of the development, and the design and scale of any buildings or operations.

The Visual Impact Assessment will involve an appraisal of the relationship of the development with its immediate surroundings from short and long distance vantage points and any changes in character of existing views or the local landscape as a result of the development. Photomontages of the development from surrounding vantage points shall be included with any Visual Impact Assessment.

Details of any access roads and ancillary buildings shall be included with any application and shall be designed to minimise the visual impact.

13.19.9 Development Management Assessment Criteria for Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice, and the Battle of the Boyne Sites (as included in Rural Policy Zone 1)

Specific criteria will apply for the assessment of applications in the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice, and the Battle of the Boyne Sites due to the outstanding cultural value and significance of these sites. When preparing an application in any of these locations the following shall be taken into account:

- There should be no intervisibility between the development site and the National Monuments of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, up to and including the apex level of the roof and minimum inter-visibility between the development site and the other National Monuments within the site;
- Development must not adversely affect the amenity, views and landscape setting of the National Monuments;
- Extensive screen planting, or earth moving which would alter and affect the landscape setting of the National Monuments will not be considered as adequate mitigation;
- Developments which would give rise to or exacerbate ribbon development will not be permitted;

- Development must be appropriately scaled and designed, to reflect the traditional vernacular style of the area, in terms of scale, height, massing, siting, form, materials and colour. Materials shall be appropriate to the site and its setting in the surrounding landscape;
- That appropriate services and infrastructure are capable of being provided without compromising the quality of the landscape;
- The cumulative impact of the development will be considered in the context of existing and permitted developments;
- Agricultural buildings in existing farmyards shall be appropriately sized, designed and sited; and
- Appropriately designed extensions to developments for the provision of public services will be considered.

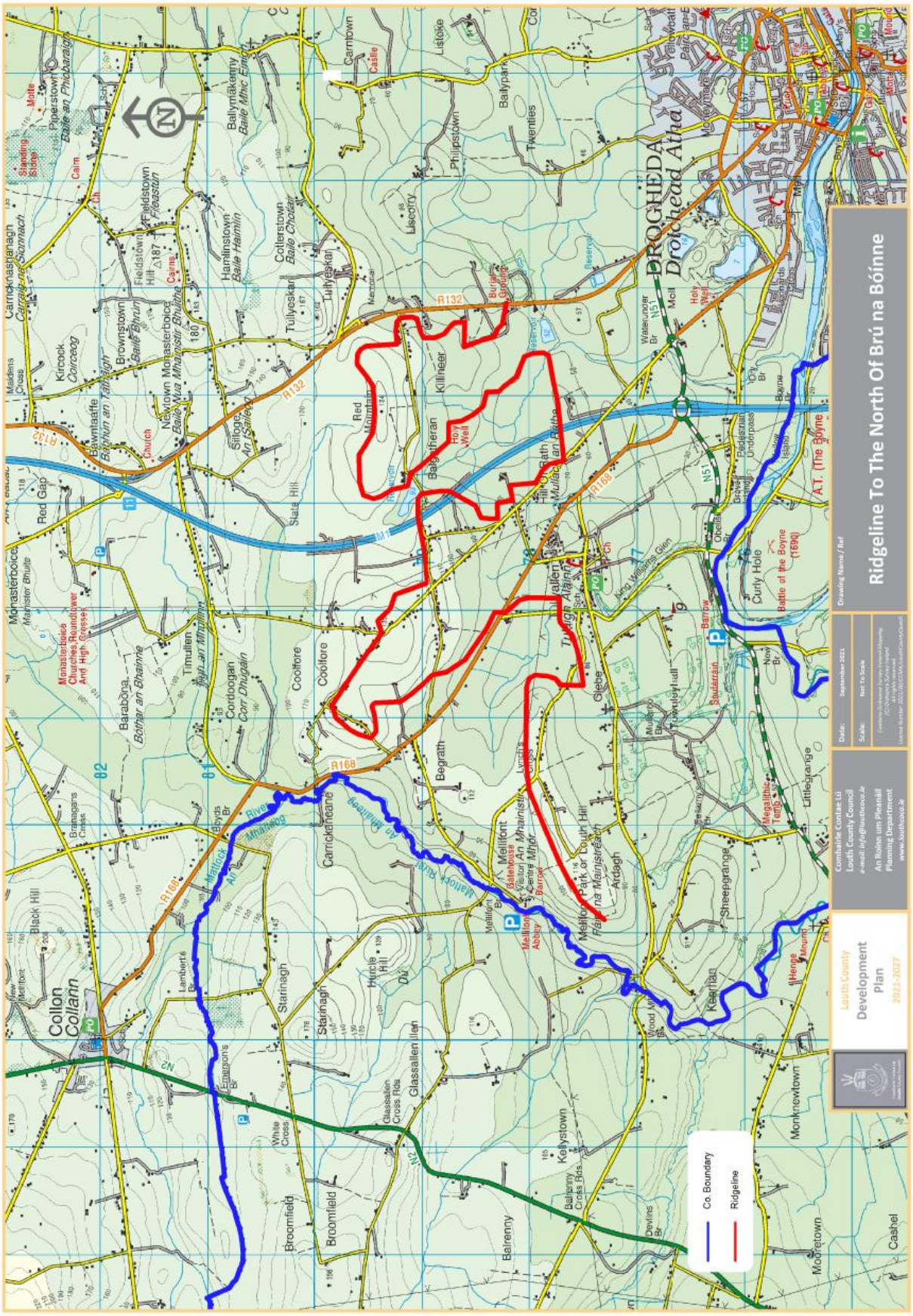
Note for Applicants:

Applications within the area between the World Heritage Site and the ridgeline to the North as identified on Map 13.1 and any developments, which may affect views to and from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, should be accompanied by the following:

- A comprehensive visual and architectural heritage impact assessment by an appropriately qualified multi-disciplinary team, including drawings, photographs, photomontages or other visual material necessary, to show the proposed development and its relationship to, and potential visual and physical impact on;
  - The UNESCO Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site;
  - The Battle of the Boyne Site;
  - The Townley Hall Demesne ACA; and
  - The Oldbridge ACA (County Meath).

In some cases, it may be necessary to place a visual aid on site such as a sheeted pole structure or large balloons to outline the size and profile of the proposed building to eaves and ridge level and photographed as part of the visual impact assessment. The pole structure should be made available for inspection.

Map 13.1 Ridgeline to North of Brú na Bóinne



13.20 WATER SERVICES

13.20.1 Public Water Supply and Wastewater Collection

All new developments will be required to utilise and connect to the public water and wastewater network, where practicable. Applicants who need to get a new or modified connection to public water supply or wastewater collection infrastructure must liaise with Irish Water. Where the applicant has concerns about the feasibility of connecting to the public network, they should make a pre-connection enquiry to Irish Water in order to establish the feasibility of a connection in advance of seeking planning permission.

13.20.2 Private Wells

Private bored wells used as a source of water supply to single dwellings are the responsibility of the householder. Such wells are not regulated under the *European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2014*. The Council and Irish Water have no regulatory function in this regard.

13.20.3 Domestic and Commercial Wastewater Treatment

Domestic wastewater treatment plants and percolation areas must comply with the requirements of the *Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10) (EPA, 2021)* or any subsequent updated guidance.

Commercial wastewater treatment plants and percolation areas must comply with the requirements of the *Wastewater Treatment Manuals - Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels (EPA 1999)* or any subsequent updated guidance.

13.20.4 Sustainable Drainage Systems' (SuDS)

All new developments (including amendments/extensions to existing developments) will be required to incorporate 'Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems' (SuDS) as part of the development/design proposals. SuDS are effective technologies, which aim to reduce flood risk, improve water quality and enhance biodiversity and amenity. The systems should aim to mimic the natural drainage of the application site to minimise the effect of a development on flooding and pollution of existing waterways.

SuDS include devices such as swales, permeable pavements, filter drains, storage ponds, constructed wetlands, soakways and green roofs. In some exceptional cases, and at the discretion of the Council, where it is demonstrated that SuDS devices are not feasible, approval may be given to install underground attenuation tanks or enlarged pipes in conjunction with other devices to achieve the required water quality. Such alternative measures will only be considered as a last resort.

Best practice guidance is available from *The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS).* Development proposals will be required to be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment that addresses run-off quantity, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality.

This approach using Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) offers a total solution to rainwater management and is applicable in both urban and rural situations.

13.21 LAND USE ZONING OBJECTIVES

13.21.1 Introduction

This section sets out the general land use and zoning objectives of the Plan. It provides an explanation of the land use categories and the zoning objectives that are applicable to them.

The primary purpose of land use zoning is to promote the orderly development of settlements within the County, by eliminating potential conflicts between incompatible land uses, protecting resources and to establish an efficient basis for investment in infrastructure and facilities.

The objective of zoning is to specify which types of land use the Planning Authority considers appropriate for different areas or 'zones', and it therefore indicates the planning control objectives of the Planning Authority for its administrative area.

Zoning policy has regard to the core strategy and other strategic policies underlying this Plan. The overall zoning strategy is based on the principles of sustainable development, social inclusion, climate action, environmental protection, compact growth of urban centres, land use/transportation planning integration and providing opportunities to enjoy a high quality of life.

The land use zoning categories and objectives should be read in conjunction with the relevant Land Use Zoning Maps contained in Volumes 1A and 2 of this Plan.

13.21.2 Land Use Zoning Acceptability

13.21.2.1 Generally Permitted Use

Land uses that are listed as a ' Generally Permitted Use' are considered to be generally acceptable, subject to the normal planning considerations (such as design, scale, density, layout, noise, odour, residential amenity, traffic generation, and service arrangements), compliance with the relevant policy objectives and standards set out under this Plan and any relevant ministerial guidance.

13.21.2.2 Open for Consideration Use

Land uses that are listed as 'Open for Consideration' may be acceptable to the Planning Authority where it is satisfied that the proposed development would be compatible with the overall policy objectives for the zoning category, would not have undesirable effects on the 'generally permitted uses' or conflict with other aspects of the Plan, and would otherwise be consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.21.2.3 Uses not listed

Whilst an extensive list of potential uses in the 'Generally Permitted' and 'Open for Consideration' categories has been provided, it is recognised that there may be scenarios where there are proposals for uses not included in the list.

Where this arises such proposals will be considered on their individual merits taking account of surrounding land uses, the compatibility of the use/development in the area in which it is proposed to locate, compliance with the relevant policy objectives, standards and requirements as set out in this Plan, and the general proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.21.2.4 Non-conforming Uses

'Non-conforming uses' are established uses that do not conform to the zoning objectives of the Plan. Generally, the Planning Authority will consider reasonable intensification or extensions to and improvement of premises that accommodate non-conforming uses, provided that it would not be injurious to the amenities of the area and does not prejudice the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.21.3 Transitional Zone Areas

Abrupt transitions in scale and use should generally be avoided adjacent to the boundary of land use zones. Development proposals in transition areas should seek to avoid development that would be detrimental to the amenities of the contiguous zone.

13.21.4 Land Use Zoning Categories

The following section sets out the objectives and guidance for each of the land use categories. It classifies which use class is 'Generally Permitted or 'Open for Consideration' on lands that are zoned under a particular category.

The use classes listed below are intended as general guidance and are not exhaustive. In total, there are twenty-three land-use zoning categories as follows:

Table 13.14 Land Use Zoning Categories and abbreviations

Land Zoning Category	Land-Use Zoning Objective
Existing Residential	A1
New Residential Phase 1	A2
New Residential Phase 2	A3
Town or Village Centre	B1
Neighbourhood Centre	B2
Retail Park	B3
District Centre	B4
Retail, Leisure and Recreation	B5
Mixed Use	C1
Port Harbour Area	C2
Commercial and Business	C3
Regeneration	D1
General Employment	E1
Business and Technology	E2
Research, Education and Innovation	F1

Land Zoning Category	Land-Use Zoning Objective
Community Facilities	G1
Institutional Lands	G2
Open Space	H1
Tourism and Leisure	I1
Transportation Development Hub	J1
Public Infrastructure and Utilities	J2
Agriculture	K1
Strategic Reserve	L1

13.21.5 A1 – Existing Residential

Objective
To protect and enhance the amenity and character of existing residential communities.

Guidance

The objective for this zoning is to conserve and enhance the quality and character of established residential communities and protect their amenities. Infill developments, extensions, and the refurbishment of existing dwellings will be considered where they are appropriate to the character and pattern of development in the area and do not significantly affect the amenities of surrounding properties. The strengthening of community facilities and local services will be facilitated subject to the design, scale and use of the building or development being appropriate for its location.

Generally Permitted Use

Allotments, B&B/ Guest House, Community Facility, E-Charging Facility, Home Based Economic Activities, Nursing Home, Park/Playgrounds, Place of Worship, Recreational /Amenity Open Space, Recreational /Sports Facility, Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Sheltered Accommodation, Traveller Accommodation, Utilities.

Open for Consideration

Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Childcare Facility, Healthcare Practitioner, Restaurant, Shop ≤200m², Telecommunications Structures, Veterinary Surgery.

13.21.6 A2 – New Residential – Phase 1

Objective
To provide for new residential neighbourhoods and supporting community facilities.

Guidance

This is the primary location for new residential neighbourhoods. Any development shall have a high quality design and layout with an appropriate mix of housing and associated sustainable transport links including walking, cycling, and public transport to local services and facilities. The density of the development shall be reflective of the location of the lands, with higher densities required on more centrally located areas close to employment or services, or in strategic locations along public transport networks.

In addition to residential development, consideration will also be given to community facilities, retail services and uses that would support the creation of a sustainable neighbourhood; provided such development or uses are appropriate in scale and do not unduly interfere with the predominant residential land use.

Generally Permitted Use **Allotments, B&B/ Guest House, Childcare Facility, Community Facility, Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), E- Charging Facility, Home Based Economic Activities, Nursing Home, Park/Playgrounds, Place of Worship, Recreational/Amenity Open Space, Recreational/Sports Facility, Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Sheltered Accommodation, Third Level Student Accommodation, Traveller Accommodation, Utilities.**
Open for Consideration **Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Cultural Facility, Healthcare Practitioner, Restaurant, Shop ≤200m², Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Telecommunications Structures, Veterinary Surgery.**

13.21.7 A3 – New Residential – Phase 2

Objective
To provide for new residential neighbourhoods and supporting community facilities.

Guidance

These are lands identified for residential uses that will only become available for development after 75% of the Phase 1 (A2) lands in the immediate vicinity of the phase 2 lands have been developed (as set out in policy objective CS 4). The Planning Authority will monitor the lands zoned 'New Residential Phase 1' at regular intervals. If it becomes apparent that there are lands zoned 'New Residential Phase 1' that are not being brought forward for development and this is impeding the achievement of Core Strategy projections and restricting the growth of the settlement as envisaged in national and regional policy, consideration may be given to releasing appropriately located 'New Residential Phase 2' lands, subject to the lands contributing to compact and consolidated patterns of development.

The release of lands zoned 'A3 – New Residential Phase 2' will not be considered until after the 2 Year Progress Report of the County Development Plan has been prepared and given to the Elected Members.

One of the following two criteria will have to be satisfied for the written agreement of the Planning Authority prior to the release of any lands identified as 'A3 – New Residential Phase 2':

Criteria Number	Description
1	At least 75% of the lands identified as 'A2 New Residential – Phase 1' in the immediate vicinity of the Phase 2 lands have been developed (immediate vicinity means approximately 500m from the subject lands).
Or	
2	The annual rate of residential completions in the settlement is less than 50% of the projected annual average output for the settlement. This is based on the housing allocation in the settlement as set out in the Core Strategy Table divided by the duration of the Plan i.e. 6 years.

In addition to fulfilling criteria 1 or 2 the Planning Authority will give consideration to the following:

1. **Extant Permissions** – Consideration will be given to any extant permissions within approximately 500 metre area of the subject lands, the date of expiration of the permission and a realistic assessment of the likelihood of the permission being implemented (applicable to criteria 2 only).

2. **Infill and Brownfield Lands** – The capacity of infill and brownfield lands within approximately 1,000 metres of the subject lands and in particular larger sites with a potential to deliver in excess of 100 units.

3. **Lands Zoned 'A1 Existing Residential'** – The capacity of lands zoned 'A1 Existing Residential' within approximately 1,000 metres of the subject lands and in particular larger sites with a potential to deliver in excess of 100 units.

4. **Quantum of Lands Available** – The quantum of 'A3 New Residential – Phase 2' lands to be released will not result in the housing allocation as set out in the Core Strategy Table for the respective settlement being exceeded. This shall take into consideration a realistic assessment of the likelihood of the implementation of extant permissions, having regard to the remaining duration of such permissions; in addition to the rate of household completions during the plan period.

5. **Compact Growth** – The location of the 'A3 – New Residential Phase 2' lands proposed to be released shall be in a location that is within walking distance of schools, facilities, and services and the development of the lands will contribute to a consolidated pattern of development.

Applicants are advised to consult with the Planning Authority to discuss the above criteria prior to lodging any planning application on lands zoned 'A3 New Residential – Phase 2'. Any planning application on lands zoned 'A3 New Residential – Phase 2' shall include supporting documentation with respect to the above.

Generally Permitted Use **Allotments, B&B/ Guest House, Community Facility, E-Charging Facility, Home Based Economic Activities, Nursing Home, Park/Playgrounds, Place of Worship, Recreational /Amenity Open Space, Recreational /Sports Facility, Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Sheltered Accommodation, Traveller Accommodation, Utilities.**
Open for Consideration **Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Childcare Facility, Healthcare Practitioner, Restaurant, Shop ≤200m², Telecommunications Structures, Veterinary Surgery.**

13.21.8 B1 Town or Village Centre

Objective
To support the development, improvement and expansion of town or village centre activities.

Guidance

The purpose of this zoning is to protect and enhance the character and vibrancy of existing town and village centres and to provide for and strengthen retailing, residential, commercial, cultural, entertainment and other appropriate uses. It will promote the consolidation of development on town and village centre lands, allowing for a broad range of compatible and complementary uses, which will be encouraged to locate in this area in order to create an attractive environment to reside, shop, work, visit and in which to invest.

The appropriate reuse, adaptation and regeneration of buildings, backlands, vacant, derelict and underutilised lands for uses suitable to the location will be encouraged. Such uses may include residential development. The full use of upper floors in retail and commercial premises in the town centre for residential use is considered permissible.

Primacy of the Retail Core area will be retained and prioritised for any new retail development to enhance its vitality and viability. Retail proposals shall have regard to relevant policies and objectives in the Retail Strategy (Appendix 4, Volume 3) and Chapter 5 of this Plan and the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012.

Town centre development proposals will be required to be of a high architectural quality, which contributes to a distinct sense of place and public realm, promotes sustainable modes of travel and be appropriate to its location.

New commercial and retail uses will be accommodated in village centres. The size and scale of any such development shall be reflective of the role and function of the village in the settlement hierarchy.

Generally Permitted Use
Advertisements and Advertising Structures, Bank/Financial Institution, B&B/ Guest House, Bring Banks, Business Enterprise Centre, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Car Park , Casual Trading, Childcare Facility, Children Play/ Adventure Centre, Cinema, Conference/Event Centre, Craft Centre/Shop, Crematorium, Cultural Facility, Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), Education Facility (Third Level or Training Centre), E- Charging Facility, Funeral Home/Mortuary, Health Care Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Nightclub, Offices, Place of Worship, Public House, Public Services, Public Transport Infrastructure (Rail/Bus), Recreational/Amenity Open Space, Residential, Restaurant, Sheltered Accommodation, Shop, Taxi Office, Telecommunications Structures, Utilities.
Open for Consideration
Amusement Arcade, Betting Office, Builders Provider/Yard, Community Facility, Drive thru Restaurant, Garden Centre, Hospital, Multi Storey Car Park, Nursing Home, Park/Playgrounds, Plant and Tool Hire, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Service Station, Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Third Level Student Accommodation, Traveller Accommodation, Vehicle Sales Outlet, Vehicle Servicing/Maintenance Garage.

13.21.9 B2 Neighbourhood Centre

Objective
To provide for and improve local neighbourhood facilities.

Guidance

It is intended that land zoned for 'neighbourhood centre' will be developed to provide an appropriate range of local services including commercial, office, retail and community uses, to support the local community.

Supermarket (Convenience) type development up to 1,500 m² of net retail floor space will generally be permissible in this zone.

Neighbourhood centres may where appropriate include an element of residential development particularly above ground floor level.

Generally Permitted Use
Bank/Financial Institution, Bring Banks, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Childcare Facility, Community Facility, Digital Innovation Hub/Co working Space, E- Charging Facility, Funeral Home/Mortuary, Healthcare Practitioner, Place of Worship, Public House, Recreational/Sports Facility, Shop ≤200m², Shop (Convenience) ≤1,500m², Veterinary Surgery.
Open for Consideration
Advertisements and Advertising Structures, Allotments, Betting Office, Business Enterprise Centre, Garden Centre, Health Care Centre, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Offices, Public Services, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Residential, Restaurant, Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Telecommunications Structures, Vehicle Servicing/Maintenance Garage.

13.21.10 B3 Retail Park

Objective
To consolidate retail warehousing development.

Guidance

The primary objective of this zoning is to facilitate a location for the sale of bulky goods. The focus in this Plan is for the consolidation and build out of undeveloped areas of existing retail parks in the County.

Generally Permitted Use
Bring Banks, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Car Park, Children Play/ Adventure Centre, E- Charging Facility, Factory Outlet Stores, Garden Centre, Retail Warehouse, Service Station, Telecommunications Structures, Utilities.
Open for Consideration
Advertisements and Advertising Structures, Childcare Facility, Cinema, Drive thru Restaurant, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Industry Light, Research and Development, Restaurant, Road Transport Depot, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Vehicle Servicing/Maintenance Garage, Veterinary Surgery, Wholesale Warehousing/Cash and Carry.

13.21.11 B4 District Centre

Objective
To maintain and enhance retail led mixed-use district centres.

Guidance

District Centres provide range of primary retail and non-retail functions and serve a wide catchment population. The range of services and functions available is higher than a Neighbourhood Centre. This generally includes a supermarket and non-retail services such as banks, local offices, restaurants, and community facilities.

Generally Permitted Use
Car Park, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Community facility, Restaurant, Service Station, Shop, Shop(Convenience) ≥1,500m².
Open for Consideration
Bank/Financial Institution, Betting Office, Bring Banks, Childcare Facility, Drive thru Restaurant, Garden Centre, Health Care Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Nursing Home, Offices, Plant and Tool Hire, Public Services, Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Telecommunications Structures, Utilities.

13.21.12 B5 Retail, Leisure, and Recreation

Objective
To provide for retail warehousing and the sale of bulky goods where not more than 20% of the floor area is allocated to sale of small goods, the provision of large scale retail development and recreation and leisure facilities.

Guidance

These lands provide a range of retail warehouse and leisure functions of scale that serves a wide catchment area. Any development shall be designed and configured to ensure the range of uses in this zoning can be provided for.

Generally Permitted Uses
Car Park, Childcare Facility, Cinema, Conference/Event Centre, Drive thru Restaurant, Garden Centre, Industry (Light), Nightclub, Public House, Recreational/Sports Facility, Retail Warehouse, Tourist Facility, Training Centre, Vehicle Sales Outlet, Veterinary Surgery, Wholesale Warehousing/Cash and Carry, Warehousing (General).
Open for Consideration
Advertisements and Advertising Structures, Bank/Financial Institution, Coffee Shop/Tearoom, Community Facility, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Offices, Park and Ride Facilities, Place of Worship, Recycling Facility (Waste), Restaurant, Road Transport Depot, Service Station, Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Taxi Office, Telecommunications Structures, Vehicle Servicing/Maintenance Garage.

13.21.13 C1 Mixed Use

Objective
To provide for commercial, business and supporting residential uses.

Guidance

These lands shall provide for both commercial and business uses and the facilitation of residential uses as appropriate.

Mixed-use developments that generate daytime and evening activities will be encouraged and supported, however an over-concentration of any one use will not normally be permitted. Maintaining the existing urban character, quality of design, integration and links between uses and spaces are important considerations for new developments.

Retailing will be considered in this zoning, provided that a sequential test in accordance with the *Retail Planning Guidelines 2012* is carried out and the lands are demonstrably the optimum location for the nature and quantum of retail development proposed.

The design and layout of any residential development shall be of a high quality. The compatibility of any commercial, business, or retailing use or operations with a residential development shall be taken into account in the layout and configuration of any development on these lands.

Consideration may be given to the use of mixed use lands for community or recreational facilities in certain circumstances where such a use or facility would have a wider social and/or community benefit.

Generally Permitted Use
Bank/Financial Institution, B&B/ Guest House, Bring Banks, Business Enterprise Centre, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Car Park , Casual Trading, Childcare Facility, Cinema, Community Facility, Craft Centre/Shop, Cultural Facility, Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, E-Charging Facility, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Offices, Park/Playgrounds, Place of Worship, Public House, Public Services, Nursing Home, Recreational/Amenity Open Space, Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Restaurant, Sheltered Accommodation, Shop, Shop (Convenience) ≤1,500m², Telecommunications Structures, Third Level, Student Accommodation, Tourist Facility, Training Centre, Utilities.
Open for Consideration
Advertisements and Advertising Structures, Amusement Arcade, Betting Office, Crematorium, Funeral Home/Mortuary, Garden Centre, Health Care Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Nightclub, Recreational/Sports Facility, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Service Station, Taxi Office, Traveller Accommodation.

13.21.14 C2 Port Harbour Area

Objective
To provide for port related activity and mixed-use development.

Guidance

This zoning is to provide for the consolidation of port activities in addition to realising new opportunities for development that can maximise the strategic location of the lands in relation to the town centre. This could include high quality commercial, business, office, employment, or residential uses.

Generally Permitted Use **Port Related Activity.**
Open for Consideration **Business Enterprise Centre, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Car Park, Community Facility, Conference/Event Centre, Cultural Facility, Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, E- Charging Facility, Offices, Residential, Restaurant, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Telecommunications Structures, Tourist Facility, Training Centre, Utilities, Veterinary Surgery.**

13.21.15 C3 Commercial and Business

Objective
To provide for mixed commercial and business uses.

Guidance

This zoning will facilitate opportunities for mixed commercial and business uses. Any commercial use shall complement rather than compete with the town centre.

Permitted Use **B&B/ Guest House, Car Park, Childcare Facility, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Nursing Home, Offices, Park/Playgrounds, Taxi Office, Third Level Student Accommodation, Training Centre, Vehicle Sales Outlet.**
Open for Consideration **Builders Provider/Yard, Business Enterprise Centre, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Cinema, Community Facility, Cultural Facility, Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), E- Charging Facility, Garden Centre, Health Care Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Holiday Homes/Caravan Park, Industry Light, Multi Storey Car Park, Nightclub, Public Transport Infrastructure (Rail/Bus), Residential, Telecommunications Structures, Tourist Facility, Traveller Accommodation, Veterinary Surgery.**

13.21.16 D1 Regeneration

Objective
To facilitate social, economic and physical regeneration and/or rejuvenation of an area or specific lands.

Guidance

The purpose of the 'Regeneration' zoning is to encourage and facilitate opportunities for regeneration and place making.

The lands or areas are strategically located within settlements and consist of vacant or under-utilised buildings or land with significant potential to stimulate the rejuvenation of an area or neighbourhood.

The potential uses of the lands in these zones are specific to the location of each area or piece of land and can include residential, commercial, business, retail, employment, or community uses. The primary objective is to support regeneration, make a positive contribution to urban spaces, and improve quality of life for all.

Permitted Use
Taking account of the broad potential uses associated with these lands, it was considered more prudent to identify uses as 'Open for Consideration'.
Open for Consideration
Bank/Financial Institution, Business Enterprise Centre, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Childcare Facility, Community Facility, Conference/Event Centre, Cultural Facility, Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), Education Facility (Third Level or Training Centre), E-Charging Facility, Health Care Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, High Technology Manufacturing, Home Based Economic Activities, Industry Light, Nursing Home, Offices, Park/Playgrounds, Recreational/Amenity Open Space, Recreational/Sports Facility, Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Restaurant, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Service Station, Sheltered Accommodation, Shop, Shop (Convenience) ≥1,500m^2, Shop (Convenience) ≤1,500m^2, Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Telecommunications Structures, Tourist Facility, Traveller Accommodation, Vehicle Servicing/Maintenance Garage, Veterinary Surgery.

13.21.17 E1 General Employment

Objective
To provide for general enterprise and employment generating activities.

Guidance

This zoning is the primary location for employment generating activities. It will facilitate the improvement and expansion of existing employment areas and the investment and development of new employment areas. A wide range of uses will be facilitated on these lands including small, indigenous enterprises, general industry, manufacturing, food production, logistics, and warehousing. The compatibility of a particular use or operation will be dependent on the nature of the use/operations and surrounding uses in the area in which the development will be located.

This zoning also facilitates opportunities for uses that are deemed permissible under the "Business and Technology" zoning category.

Generally Permitted Use

Builders Provider/Yard, Business Enterprise Centre, Childcare Facility, Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, Education Facility (Third Level or Training Centre), E- Charging Facility, Energy Installation, Food Processing Facility, High Technology Manufacturing, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Industry Light, Industry General, Logistics, Offices, Park and Ride Facilities, Port Related Uses, Research and Development, Road Transport Depot, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Utilities, Vehicle Sales Outlet, Wholesale Warehousing/ Cash and Carry, Warehousing (General).

Open for Consideration

Abattoir, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Car Dismantler/Recovery Yard, Data Centres, Garden Centre, Industry Heavy*, Plant and Tool Hire, Public Services, Recycling Facility (Waste), Service Station, Telecommunications Structures, Vehicle Servicing/Maintenance Garage.

*As deemed appropriate to the specific location.

13.21.18 E2 Business and Technology

Objective

To provide for office, research and development and high technology/high technology manufacturing type employment.

Guidance

These lands have been identified to attract and facilitate science and technology, research and development, major offices, global services (including financial services), high tech manufacturing based employment in high quality campus style developments.

These developments should be designed to the highest architectural and landscaping standards while promoting walking, cycling and public transport accessibility. Support facilities such as canteen, gym or childcare services, which are integrated into the employment unit and are of a nature and scale to serve the needs of employees on the campus, will generally be considered acceptable. In specific circumstances where there is a requirement to provide residential development on site this may be considered where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that there is a site specific requirement for the accommodation and the accommodation will be intrinsically linked to the business or industrial operations. Any accommodation will be ancillary to the respective business or industry.

Light industry will generally be acceptable in this zoning provided it is not detrimental to the amenity of the area.

Generally Permitted Use

Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, E- Charging Facility, High Technology Manufacturing, Industry Light, Offices, Research and Development, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Telecommunications Structures, Utilities.

Open for Consideration

Business Enterprise Centre, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Childcare Facility, Conference/Event Centre, Data Centres, Food Processing Facility, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Residential*, Training Centre.

*Residential (Ancillary) – Limited residential development ancillary to an existing or proposed business/industrial operation may be considered.

13.21.19 F1 Research, Education, and Innovation

Objective
To provide for education, recreation, enterprise and innovation.

Guidance

Lands in this zone will be reserved to accommodate development and uses associated with primary, secondary and higher education including research and development, science and technology, student/campus accommodation, student support services, enterprise/start-up business units and recreation/sport facilities.

Generally Permitted Use
Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), Education Facility (Third Level or Training Centre), E-Charging Facility, Research and Development, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Third Level Student Accommodation.
Open for Consideration
Bank/Financial Institution, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Childcare Facility, Conference/Event Centre, Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, Recreational/Sports Facility, Restaurant, Utilities.

13.21.20 G1 Community Facilities

Objective
To provide for and protect civic, religious, community, education, health care and social infrastructure.

Guidance

This zoning will facilitate the provision of community, educational, health, institutional, and religious facilities and to safeguard their future provision.

Permitted Use
Allotments, Cemetery, Childcare Facility, Community Facility, Crematorium, Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), Education Facility (Third Level or Training Centre), E- Charging Facility, Health Care Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Hospital, Nursing Home, Park/Playgrounds, Place of Worship, Recreational/Amenity Open Space, Recreational/Sports Facility, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Utilities.
Open for Consideration
Bring Banks, Car Park, Cycleway/Walkway trails, Funeral Home/Mortuary, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Sheltered Accommodation, Telecommunications Structures, Training Centre.

13.21.21 G2 Institutional Lands

Objective
To conserve and protect the setting of institutional buildings.

Guidance

This zoning consists of large parcels of land where institutional buildings and associated open spaces are located. The buildings generally have community or institutional type uses including schools or hospitals. These lands are generally suitable for community uses whilst limited residential development may be considered. In designing any development, consideration shall be given to the conservation/protection of institutional buildings of merit and the provision of public open space as required to ensure new development does not detract from the architectural setting of the existing structures.

Generally Permitted Use
Childcare Facility, Community Facility, Cultural Facility, Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), Health Care Centre, Nursing Home, Public Transport Infrastructure (Rail/Bus), Residential.
Open for Consideration
B&B/ Guest House, Car Park , E- Charging Facility, Healthcare Practitioner, Holiday Homes/Caravan Park, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Park/Playgrounds, Plant and Tool Hire, Retail Warehouse, Retirement Village, Taxi Office, Telecommunications Structures, Tourist Facility.

13.21.22 H1 Open Space

Objective
To preserve, provide and improve recreational amenity and open space.

Guidance

This zoning refers to areas of 'active' and 'passive' open space. Development that will improve the facilities or quality of the open space, amenity or recreational facilities, or contributes to the enjoyment of the space will be considered.

Generally Permitted Use
Cycleway/Walkway trails, Park/Playgrounds, Recreational/Amenity Open Space, Recreational/Sports Facility.
Open for Consideration
Allotments, Bring Banks, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Car Park for recreational purposes, Community Facility, E- Charging Facility, Restaurant, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Telecommunications Structures, Utilities.

13.21.23 I1 Tourism and Leisure

Objective
To provide for and enhance tourism and leisure facilities.

Guidance

This zoning provides for the use of land for the provision of tourism and leisure facilities and uses. This includes tourist attractions, cultural facilities, tourist amenities, services, and accommodation. Development that contributes to the enjoyment of recreation or leisure activity will also be considered.

Generally Permitted Use
Agri-Tourism, B&B/ Guest House, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Car Park, Car Park for recreational purposes, Children Play/ Adventure Centre, Conference/Event Centre, Craft Centre/Shop, Cycleway/Walkway trails, Hotel/Hostel/Aparthotel, Recreational/Amenity Open Space, Recreational/Sports Facility, Restaurant, Tourist Facility.
Open for Consideration
Cultural Facility, E- Charging Facility, Holiday Homes/Caravan Park, Park and Ride Facilities, Public House, Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Telecommunications Structures, Utilities.

13.21.24 J1 Transportation Development Hub

Objective
To support the provision of mixed-use development commensurate with a transportation hub.

Guidance

This zoning will facilitate the development of a public transport hub and is suitable for other land uses including high-density residential development and retail and office uses.

Generally Permitted Use
B&B/ Guest House, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Car Park, Childcare Facility, Cinema, Community Facility, Conference/Event Centre, Funeral Home/Mortuary, Healthcare Practitioner, Home Based Economic Activities, Industry Light, Multi Storey Car Park, Nightclub, Nursing Home, Offices, Park/Playgrounds, Park and Ride Facilities, Plant and Tool Hire, Public Transport Infrastructure (Rail/Bus), Recreational/Sports Facility, Retail Warehouse, Research and Development, Retirement Village, Shop (Convenience), Taxi Office, Telecommunications Structures, Training Centre, Veterinary Surgery.
Open for Consideration
Advertisements and Advertising Structures, Amusement Arcade, Bring Banks, Business Enterprise Centre, Drive thru Restaurant, Garden Centre, Industry General, Recycling Facility (Waste), Residential, Restaurant, Shop ≤200m² Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Traveller Accommodation, Utilities, Vehicle Sales Outlet.

13.21.25 J2 Public Infrastructure and Utilities

Objective
To provide for transport infrastructure and public utilities.

Guidance

This zoning identifies lands associated with the provision of transport infrastructure and public utilities such as electricity, gas, telecommunications/broadband, and water and wastewater infrastructure. Commercial or mixed-use developments associated with the provision of public transport services such as bus or rail stations will be considered in this zoning category.

Generally Permitted Use **Car Park, E-Charging Facility, Logistics, Multi Storey Car Park, Park and Ride Facilities, Public Transport Infrastructure (Rail/Bus), Telecommunications Structures, Utilities, Water/Wastewater Facility.**
Open for Consideration (applicable to lands in this zoning category that are used to provide public transport services) **Business Enterprise Centre, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, Residential, Restaurant, Shop ≤200m².**

13.21.26 K1 Agriculture

Objective
To preserve agricultural land.

Guidance

This zone is for the use of land for agricultural purposes and farming-related activities and to provide for the development of existing established uses.

Individual dwellings for permanent occupancy for persons principally involved in agriculture will be open for consideration subject to normal site suitability considerations and compliance with the policy objectives set out in Chapter 3 of this Plan.

Permitted Use **Allotments, Agri-Tourism.**
Open for Consideration **B&B/ Guest House, Community Facility, Craft Centre/Shop, Garden Centre, Home Based Economic Activities, Recreational/Sports Facility, Residential, Telecommunications Structures.**

13.21.27 L1 Strategic Reserve

Objective
To provide a land reserve for the orderly expansion of the settlement into the future.

Guidance

These are strategically located lands that will generally not be available for development until after the expiration of this Plan.



Chapter 14

Implementation and Monitoring

14 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

14.1 INTRODUCTION

The Plan sets out the Council's vision and strategy for the sustainable development of the County over the period 2021-2027. Included within the Plan are a broad range of policy objectives that provide a framework for the future growth and development of the County.

The Council has a statutory obligation to implement the provisions of the Plan and is committed to securing its objectives.

The Council will continue to occupy a leadership role in progressing and securing the policy objectives of the Plan thereby enhancing economic prosperity, promoting Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres, facilitating the transition to a low carbon County, promoting the County's unique cultural, built and natural heritage, developing communities, integrating land use and planning as well as, ensuring sustainable use of natural resources.

In providing this leadership role, the Council will foster a collaborative approach with citizens, stakeholders, sectoral interests, and adjoining authorities to achieve collective support and successful implementation of the Plan.

The implementation of the Plan is also dependant on a number of factors including political support, Council funding and the availability of capital from other sources. Due to the uncertain economic climate as a result of COVID 19, the provision of funding may present a challenge in the years ahead.

The Plan will also be regularly reviewed to assess progress, and to determine where amendments are required.

Therefore, the Council may carry out a variation of the Plan from time to time, where it is considered such amendments are warranted.

14.2 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* provides under:

Section 15 (1) that it shall be the duty of a Planning Authority to take such steps within its powers as may be necessary for securing the objectives of the Development Plan, and;

Section 15 (2) that the Manager of the Planning Authority shall, not more than 2 years after the making of a Development Plan, give a report to the members of the authority on the progress achieved in securing the objectives referred to in subsection (1).

14.2.1 Urban Area Plans and Local Area Plans

An important driver of the Plan Strategy is to bring policies to a more detailed local level through Urban Area Plans and Local Area Plans. The strategic and broad-ranging policy objectives of the Plan provide a general framework, but not necessarily the detailed treatment required for significant proposals in certain areas.

Urban/Local Area Plans will be prepared for the following settlements:

- Drogheda – A Joint Urban/Local Area Plan is to be prepared in collaboration with Meath County Council; and
- Dundalk.

Local Area Plans will be prepared for the following settlements:

- Ardee and Dunleer.

14.3 SOURCES OF FUNDING

14.3.1 Public Funding

Funding for the various projects, programmes and policy objectives of the Plan will be dependent on capital funding from the government. The Council's own funds will also be allocated under the annual budget adopted by the Elected Members each year. As previously referred to, the availability of funding over the lifetime of the Plan is uncertain and will be dependent on the medium and long term impacts of COVID 19 on the national and international economy.

14.3.2 Development Contributions

It is considered reasonable that contributions be paid towards Local Authority investment in the provision of infrastructure and services by developers who benefit from such provision. The Council may, when granting planning permission under *Sections 34, 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act (as amended*), attach conditions requiring the payment of financial contribution(s) in respect of public infrastructure and facilities, benefiting the development. Details of such contributions are set out in the *Louth County Council Development Contributions Scheme 2016-2021 (and any subsequent scheme)*, which came into effect on the 19th September 2016. This contribution scheme will be reviewed during the life of the Plan.

14.3.3 Additional Funding Sources

The Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Funds arising from the National Development Plan, in support of the National Planning Framework and other national strategies are available to support the implementation of Regional and Local authority development plans and Local Economic and Community Plan objectives.

The Climate Action Fund which aims to support initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets will leverage investment by public and private bodies. The Disruptive Technology Innovation Fund aspires to support Ireland's innovation ecosystem and to drive collaboration between public bodies, research, Small and Medium sized Enterprises' and industry**.**

Additional National and EU level programmes include the Re-building Ireland Action Plan, the Neighbourhood Scheme, National Lottery Facility Funding, as well as other funding mechanisms available from the various Government Departments and other agencies.

14.3.4 Private Funding

14.3.4.1 Public Private Partnerships

A Public Private Partnership (PPP) involves a partnership agreement between the public and private sector for the delivery of specific projects relating to public services and infrastructure. Such approaches ensure a commitment to funding due to interlinked public and private assistance and aims at ensuring the most economically efficient manner of development.

Education, local services, health, housing, public transport, roads, solid waste, water/wastewater and other public services can benefit from the approach of a PPP.

Other partnership approaches will be pursued with state and public organisations. Such approaches can involve/several different types of projects, including:

- Design and build;
- Design, build and operate;
- Design, build, operate and finance, and
- Operating contracts.

14.3.4.2 Bonds

To secure the satisfactory completion of development on a site which has been granted planning permission, the Council will require the giving of a cash bond to ensure the completion of the development to the satisfaction of the Council. This is covered under *Section 34(4)(g) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).* This bond may be requisitioned in part or in full where the development has not been satisfactorily completed and used by the Council to ensure the satisfactory completion of the development. This cash bond shall not be released until the estate is taken in charge. The value of the cash bond will be reviewed during the lifetime of the Plan and each year thereafter each year in accordance with the Wholesale Price Index for the Construction Industry.

14.3.4.3 Phasing

The timely provision of supporting infrastructure and community facilities in tandem with the development of areas is important in ensuring high quality, sustainable development takes place.

All large-scale development proposals shall be phased having regard to the delivery of both physical and social infrastructure and orderly development.

14.3.5 Enforcement

The Council has extensive powers under the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* to take enforcement action where unauthorised development has occurred, is occurring or where permitted development has not, or is not being carried out, in compliance with the planning permission granted.

The Council will enforce the planning legislation to ensure that the environmental, visual and economic development of the County is not jeopardised by inappropriate and environmentally damaging development and to ensure that the policies and objectives of the Plan are implemented and adhered to.

14.4 MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Planning Department of the Council is the lead section responsible for monitoring and implementing the Plan, mainly through its development management function. However, it is important to note that this Plan co-ordinates the work and objectives of not only of the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development directorate but also the Corporate and Emergency Services, Operations and Environment Services, Housing and Community Services, as well as the Finance and Water Service directorates.

In some instances, the implementation of certain policy objectives may be the responsibility of external bodies such as Irish Water, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Inland Fisheries Ireland, National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Environmental Protection Agency etc. The Planning Authority will work in collaboration with the relevant external body to assist in ensuring the implementation of the relevant policy objective.

The Plan policy objectives are specific, measurable, achievable and realistic. However, a number are set within a longer timeframe, thus they may not be fully implemented over the lifetime of this Plan.

On-going monitoring shall take account of residential development permitted in settlements designated under the settlement hierarchy in order to ensure compliance with the population allocations defined by the Core Strategy, and to adjust the approach to permitting development proposals in instances where Core Strategy objectives are not being met.

14.5 Statutory Two Year Review

In accordance with *Section 15 (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (amended),* the Plan will be reviewed after 2 years and a progress report will be prepared by the Chief Executive on the achievements in securing the policy objectives of the Plan at that time.

The 2-year Review shall monitor and assess the overall implementation policy objectives including those pertaining to the Core Strategy and the environmental objectives as set out in the Strategic Environmental Assessment. Information utilised to carry out the 2-year review shall come from a variety of sources including other directorates, external bodies, the Central Statistic Office and the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, who update their baseline data on a four-yearly cycle.

The Department are currently reviewing the Development Plan Guidelines and it is anticipated that these may contain more detail on the types of indicators to be utilised in relation to monitoring and review of development plans thus the exact content of the statutory Two Year Review will be determined at the time of writing.



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