

Forward Planning Unit,  
Development Plan Review,  
Louth County Council,  
Town Hall,  
Crowe Street,  
Dundalk,  
Co. Louth  
A91 W20C.

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

Sent via email to: louthcdp@louthcoco.ie

**Re: Submission on the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027**

Dear Sir/Madam,

In reference to the public consultation on the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, I would like to make the following submission of three suggestions which I trust will be taken into consideration for inclusion.

I propose that a Policy Objective is included within Chapter 7 Movement, Section 7.5 Sustainable Transport; and/or to be included in Section 7.7.3 Table 7.2 Local Road, Sustainable Transport, and Environmental Improvement Projects; and/or to be included in section 7.6 Public Realm Improvements table 7.1. The proposal is as follows:

***Within the lifetime of this Development Plan, for Louth County Council to improve the sustainable transport infrastructure and public realm on the R132 Dublin Road in the Haggardstown Area, specifically along the 1km stretch of the road between the signalised junction adjacent to Old Golf Links Road and the junction at Greengates; to allow for the rapid growth in population underway in the area. The area is now essentially an urban/ village setting and there will be approximately 3000 (at least) housing units contained within 500 meters (approx.) either side of the R132 along this 1km stretch of the Dublin Road/R132. The sustainable transport improvements should include improved footpaths, off-road cycle tracks, pedestrian crossing points, an improved public realm (i.e. improved tree planting, landscaping, public lighting, bench's etc.) traffic calming measures, and possible traffic speed limit reduction; to be designed in line with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the National Cycle Manual.***

The rationale for inclusion of this specific objective is set-out below:

- Due to the current land zoning policies of encouraging the linear development of Dundalk Town along the Dublin Road, where the urban environment is now extending over a distance of 5km from Dundalk Town Centre, there is now a situation whereby there will be approximately 3000 housing units in the area adjacent to the Dublin Road in Haggardstown (**highlighted below in the map extract included in Figure 1**, the approximate number of 3000 residential units includes existing units, units under construction and with planning permission in place) that is approximately 5km from the services in Dundalk Town Centre. It is important to improve the attractiveness of walking and cycle for leisure and commuting/school trips into Dundalk Town Centre, and for local trips to Blackrock Village, and also local trips to the multitude of local services along the urbanised/village section of the R132 Dublin Road area in Haggardstown.

- The area along the 1km stretch of the Dublin Road between the signalised junction with the Old Golf Links Road and the junction at Greengates is now essentially an urbanised/village setting,

containing the following developments; a petrol station, 2 shops, a large hotel with pub/restaurant, two pubs, a large supermarket, a gym/spa/salon, a café, and a church (also there's soon to be a medical centre adjacent to the supermarket, and there is planning permission in place for a retirement village at the Old Golf Links Road). All of the above development when considered along with the 3000 residential units within 500m each side of the R132 road, now constitutes a village setting by anyone's definition (to put this into perspective, the area in question will soon have a larger projected population than the villages of Ardee, Dunleer and Castlebellingham combined). I feel it's worth pointing out that the area didn't become so highly developed by chance, it came about due to the land zoning and planning policies; and it is now essential that the public realm improvements and sustainable transport infrastructure required in the area are put in place by the Council. I fear that it's unlikely that the required improvements will come about by the inclusion of a vague overall policy objective on improving sustainable transport infrastructure; hence why I propose that this needs a specific policy objective of its own.

- For safety reasons. The R132 is currently an unsafe and unattractive option for cyclists and pedestrians to use to cycle and walk for local trips, school trips and also for longer trips into Dundalk Town and to Blackrock Village. The footpaths along this section of road are currently approximately 800mm wide only and of poor quality, there are no pedestrian crossing points and there is no cycle infrastructure. The speed limit on the road is 80km per hour and the actual speed of many vehicles appears to be in excess of this (most likely since the perceived width of traffic lanes is excessively wide and there is no perceived traffic calming along the route). I'll also ask the question, is 80km/h per hour an appropriate speed limit for such an urbanised/village setting? I can't think of another similar highly populated urban area with a busy 80km/h speed limit through the heart of it.

It's worth noting that the road is no longer a national route. Although the default speed limit for a regional road is 80km/h, I feel strong consideration should be given to reducing the speed limit to 60km/h and designing the road improvements and sustainable transport infrastructure in line with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the National Cycle Manual.

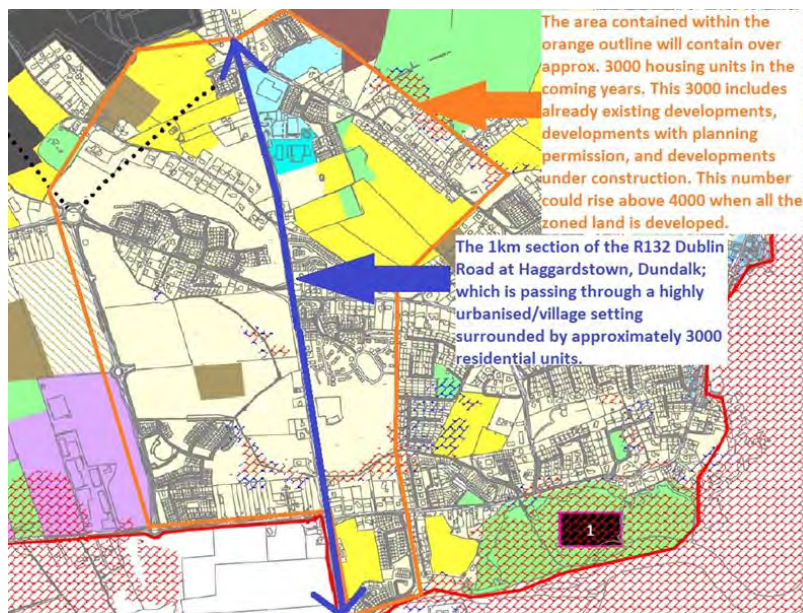


Figure 1. Extract from the Draft Dundalk Composite Map, at Haggardstown, Dundalk.

My second proposal is also for another Policy Objective to be included within Chapter 7: Movement, Section 7.5 Sustainable Transport; and/or included in section 7.6 Public Realm Improvements table 7.1.

***Within the lifetime of this Development Plan for Louth County Council to carry out a Feasibility Study and Options Assessment Report with the aim to improve the junctions, the sustainable transport infrastructure and the public realm infrastructure on the N52 Inner Relief Road in Dundalk, from the Junction with the Dublin Road as far as the junction at St. Helenas Park. The feasibility study should include, options for public realm improvements (such as tree planting, bench's, landscaping, street lighting, art installations etc) cycle infrastructure, pedestrian crossing points, options for upgrading of the existing roundabouts and existing signalised junctions, and options for reduction in and formalisation of any excessive unnecessary traffic lane width.***

The rationale for inclusion of this is set out below:

- It would appear that the original function of this road when originally designed was to totally by-pass the Town, and to funnel as many cars as possible away from the town centre. The town has now grown and surrounded the road, but the functionality of the road does not appear to have been reconsidered since. The road should be assessed for the suitability of installing sustainable transport infrastructure and to allow for pedestrian permeability and the upgrade of the existing junctions. The type of development that now lines the road is as follows; a large third level education institute (DKIT), a large hotel (Crowne Plaza), a nursing home (under construction), a number of large industrial estates, a proposed 12,000 capacity stadium, a large commercial retail park, two drive-through take away restaurants, a petrol station, two large grocery shops (Dunnes Stores and Aldi), the Louth County Council Offices, a public gym and pool, local GAA and football clubs, and a number of existing large housing developments. With all of the above development the road is now one of the major thoroughfares of Dundalk and is in need of a review of improvements to the public realm and sustainable transport.

My final proposal is also for another Policy Objective to be included in the Development Plan as follows;

**For Louth Council to carry out a feasibility study/options assessment study on the potential to provide an attractive and coherent pedestrian link in Dundalk Town Centre between the Marshes Shopping Centre and the area surrounding the Francis Street/Earl Street/Park Street Junction; with the aim to increase connectivity and pedestrian footfall between the shopping centre and the main streets of the town centre.**

The rationale for inclusion of this is set out below:

The Marshes Centre is located quite close to the main streets of the town, but currently there is no attractive and coherent link between the two areas and the shopping centre, and hence it does not feel like it is part of a coherent town centre area. The formation of a clear and coherent pedestrianised area linking towards the main streets could encourage people shopping in the Marches Centre to venture further into the main streets of the town centre.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission and I hope that it can be taken into consideration for inclusion in the County Development Plan.

Kind regards,

Shane Comaskey