



22nd December 2020

Forward Planning Unit,
Development Plan Review,
Louth County Council,
Town Hall,
Crowe Street,
Dundalk
County Louth
Email: louthcdp@louthcoco.ie

Subject: Submission on the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, Dundalk

Dear Sir / Madam,

Jacobs Engineering Ireland Ltd. represents the interests of IDA Ireland, _____, in respect of the review of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 and on their behalf we wish to make the following submission on the draft plan, published on 14th October 2020.

IDA Ireland supports the policies and objectives of the draft plan in respect of employment and the framework to facilitate high-value employment opportunities. In particular, we fully support the Strategic Objectives of the draft plan, notably Strategic Objectives SO1 and SO2 as follows:

- *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.*
- *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*

IDA Ireland supports the recognition of the Business and Technology zoning in the south-west of Dundalk as a key node that can support Foreign Direct Investment. Given the successes of the area, IDA Ireland recommends that additional land is zoned to accommodate high-value employment, including FDI, within the town to support the long-term aspirations to grow Dundalk to its role as a Regional Growth Centre that can accommodate a population of 50,000.

Louth County Council has built on the opportunities presented in the town to develop a zone suited to the development of Business and Technology uses at Mullagharlin. This location is appropriate for expansion to facilitate the growth of the sector and offers significant opportunities to develop synergies between firms, with the wider business network and with the third-level education and research facilities of Dundalk Institute of Technology.

The rationale for this recommendation is set out in the following sections.

IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland is the State's inward investment promotion agency. The mission of the agency is to partner with multi-national companies to win and develop foreign direct investment, providing jobs for the economic and social benefit of Ireland.

Regional development is a key pillar of IDA Ireland's strategy. IDA strategy is to continue the uplift in regional investment for each region outside Dublin, through a combination of new name investments, expansions from existing overseas companies in Ireland and R&D investments.

The benefits of Foreign Direct Investment to Ireland are many, including the growth and development of a highly-skilled workforce across a variety of sectors with considerable acquired industry expertise and experience in their respective fields. So too is the growing, keen interest and investment in developing R&D projects that has positioned Ireland as one of the leading R&D locations in the world with an exceptional level of collaboration between industry, academia, state agencies and regulatory authorities, and the Exchequer benefit of increasing tax receipts.

IDA Ireland's clients create high-value jobs with average salaries consistently above the national average. As a result, IDA Ireland clients account for one-third of total income tax, USC and employers PRSI paid by companies in the state.

The strong and growing economic benefits from the Multinational Company (MNC) investment directly into the Irish economy in 2018 include expenditure on Irish materials and services totalling €8.2bn, an annual payroll spend of €13.3bn and capital investment of €6.4bn in 2018. Overseas companies continue to be significant exporters from Ireland, with IDA Ireland clients' exports at €218.7bn in 2018 – the equivalent of

68% of national exports. Direct employment of 245,096 along with indirect employment of 196,077 translates to 441,173 jobs supported by FDI in Ireland at the end of 2019. IDA Ireland client companies are key contributors to business expenditure on R&D, spending €2.2bn on in-house R&D in 2018, with a further €1.4bn spent on outsourced R&D.

Thanks to its success in winning unprecedented FDI levels in the previous five years IDA Ireland is in a strong position to address current economic and trading challenges and uncertainties. Ireland's value proposition remains intact; strong and able to offer the certainties of Ireland being a committed member of the EU, having a talented workforce, a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, a competitive, business-friendly environment and strong regulatory system.

IDA Ireland reaffirms its commitment to the economic growth and prosperity of all regions in Ireland and will showcase to potential investors the significant opportunities and benefits offered to companies that locate in regional locations.

The Strategic Role of Dundalk

The key requirements of the international manufacturing industry include the availability of a highly-skilled workforce, a stable industrial and business environment, access to markets and suppliers through a sophisticated transport and logistics infrastructure, proximity to leading higher education institutions and the availability of a suitable site with the right support infrastructure. Companies located in Dundalk are within easy reach of universities and higher education colleges, international airports serving 290 destinations, intercity rail, motorway, deep seaports, a strong enterprise ecosystem and 35% of Ireland's young and highly educated workforce, both in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Previous work by IDA Ireland in 2015 identified a population within a 60-minute drive of Dundalk of 1,296,061. Together, Dundalk and Drogheda have the largest population catchment in the country after Dublin. (FDI Action Plan by Louth Economic Forum, 2015).

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) plays a pivotal role in the town's development. DkIT's four schools, School of Business and Humanities, School of Engineering, School of Informatics and Creative Arts, and School of Health and Science support a student body of over 4,500. The institute's Regional Development Centre acts as an Innovation Support and Technology Transfer organisation, a commercially oriented interface between DkIT and the industrial, commercial and business life of the region, and makes available the expertise, facilities and resources of the Institute for the wider benefit of the regional economy. DkIT has developed a strong applied R&D reputation in Software Development, Electronics and Engineering Design, Applied Humanities, Cultural Studies and Enterprise Development & Innovation.

This highlights the potential employment base that can be supported by the town.

National Policy

Dundalk is a strategically important centre identified throughout national and regional planning and employment policy.

At a national level, the National Planning Framework (NPF) sets a strategic development framework for the long-term physical development of the country and related economic, social and environmental aspects within a national, European and international context.

In setting the policy framework for employment growth at a regional and local level the NPF has a *'presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth'* (National Policy Objective 11) (NPF, p.65).

One of the contributors in achieving a 'Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills' (National Strategic Outcome 6) is the development of competitive clusters in key activities and sectors delivered *'through a focus on productivity, innovation and internationalisation and building competitive regional clusters in manufacturing and services'* (p.144).

Spatially, National Policy Objective 44 identifies a strategic role for Dundalk, *'in co-operation with the relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, to further support and develop the economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network and to promote and enhance its international visibility'* (p.110).

The NPF also recognises that the Dublin-Belfast cross-border network, focused on Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry, will be a key driver for the Louth/ North-East region.

The cross-border role of the town contributes to its strategic importance, seeking to *'Develop the critical mass and the potential of the Dublin Belfast Corridor; in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network- to compete with other large cities'* (p.111).

Regional Policy

The principles established in the NPF are enhanced and built on in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region.

Within the Settlement Hierarchy, Dundalk is designated as a Regional Growth Centre, a large town *'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'* (Table 4.2 p. 44). The RSES seeks 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.' (p.67)

The RSES identifies Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) specifically relating to Dundalk, as well as one RPO in relation to the town's position within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. Of particular note is RPO 4.21

RPO 4.21: Enhance Dundalk's role as a strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and provide for employment opportunities through identification of suitable lands for new industry including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Local

At a local level, the policies of the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021, the Louth Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022, and the North East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020, all add further weight to Dundalk's status and role in employment promotion.

IDA Ireland supports the policies and objectives of the draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 in respect of employment and the framework to facilitate high-value employment opportunities. In particular, we fully support the Strategic Objectives of the draft plan, notably Strategic Objectives SO1 and SO2 as follows:

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.

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

IDA Ireland fully supports the policy measures put in place to enhance the role of Dundalk and those that recognise the role of FDI employment in attaining its full potential to achieve balanced regional development

Potential Mullagharlin Expansion

IDA Ireland has undertaken an assessment of investment delivered for regions since 2015, which confirmed the strategic importance of a number of key criteria, that include critical mass, availability of appropriate skills, the presence of third level

institutes, connectivity infrastructure regional place-making strategies, access to utilities, proximity to international air and sea transport, high-quality broadband infrastructures, public transport options and car parking facilities.

Previous statutory plans have established the south-west of the town as the highest order employment location within the town and environs. This part of the town meets those key requirements to attract high-quality employment opportunities, including FDI investment:

- Proximity to power lines and substation (38kv and 110kv) and transmission capacity;
- Proximity to dark fibre;
- Proximity to M1 Junction 16, with regional and international connectivity;
- Access to water supply mains and pumping station;
- Access to natural gas supply;
- Infrastructure to support FDI exists and with further investment can continue to be a key enabler to FDI;
- Approx. 1km from Dundalk Institute of Technology;
- Suitable topography;
- Environmental capacity.

The Mullagharlin Framework Plan 2008 established a framework for the development of the lands and has proved highly successful in attracting major employers to the location, including PayPal, Wuxi Biologics, Almac and Wasdell. The existing land bank is the home of the IDA Ireland Dundalk Science and Technology Park.

The ability to attract major investment and employers to this quadrant of the town demonstrates the success in identifying the needs of employers and the collaboration of the full range of statutory stakeholders.

With the take up of land for FDI investment, IDA Ireland has reviewed the extent, nature and characteristics of the available lands zoned for Business and Technology use and considers that additional land should be zoned for this purpose as part of the Louth County Development Plan.

The success in attracting investment in the past has been the product of myriad factors. From a land-use planning policy perspective, this has come through the timely identification of lands, the preparation and adoption of a clear, adaptable long-term development framework, and the provision and enhancement of key infrastructure and services. This can be enhanced through the early provision of statutory planning consents, where appropriate. In our view, the current draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 provides a timely opportunity to establish this additional resource.

The key drivers that led to the establishment of the employment base at Mullagharlin continue to be relevant to meet future employment needs. Strategically, the expansion of the lands to facilitate the scale, configuration and characteristics of sites suitable for FDI is to expand the zoning northwards, rather than southwards.

- Allows for the continuation of Business and Technology uses, not split by residential development along Marlbog Road;
- Availability of large, coherent land parcels, not restricted by existing road network;
- Coherence in zoning which does not increase the town extent;
- Provides better connectivity back to Dundalk town centre;
- Better connected to N52 and national and international connectivity;
- Proximity to infrastructure serving existing Mullagharlin framework;
- Environmental constraints can be accommodated and mitigated within the development framework.

It is appropriate that the future development of these lands is subject to the preparation and adoption of a masterplan, to ensure that the expansion recognises and responds to the constraints and environmental characteristics of the area. A masterplan led approach would also provide for a phased, planned expansion that can respond to the changing development needs of the FDI sector and the changing economic environment.

IDA Ireland fully supports the draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 in continuing to prioritise this strategic location for Business and Technology uses. We consider that additional land should be zoned for employment uses in the southwestern part of Dundalk, expanding the current Business and Technology area.

Summary

IDA Ireland welcomes and supports Louth County Council in the preparation of the draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. The draft plan is aligned to IDA Ireland's aspirations for employment generation.

In respect of land-use zoning, IDA Ireland recommends that additional lands are zoned for Business and Technology uses to facilitate future opportunities that can enable Dundalk to develop to the scale and importance identified throughout national and regional Land Use Planning and Employment policies.

IDA Ireland has developed a strong stakeholder relationship with Louth County Council over many years. This process has delivered an appropriate planning framework and supply of supporting infrastructure for each specific site. This allows for early sight of potential investments, appropriate planning activities and build-out of relevant supporting infrastructure.



We look forward to working closely with you throughout the plan-making process and in the further planning and development of our property assets.