



22 December 2020

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

Re: Draft Co Louth Development Plan 2021-2027

To whom it may concern,

I refer to the above. The Department of Education wishes to make the following submission in relation to the proposed Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Department of Education wishes to acknowledge the Draft Plan and welcomes the content of Chapter 4 – Community Facilities. Plan objectives SC-25 and SC-26 provide support for zoning of land for educational facilities and the reservation of sites to meet educational requirements in Co. Louth. Objective SC 27 is welcome in its support for multi-campus educational facilities. Objective SC 28 is welcome in its support for the reduction of the need to travel by car to school.

In considering the implications of Draft Plan for school accommodation requirements, this Department is cognisant of potentially differing scenarios where variances in factors such as household sizes, demographic profiles and housing delivery rates could significantly alter the future school accommodation requirements. In addition, given planning and construction timeframes, it is necessary to identify site requirements to provide for potential school accommodation requirements beyond the lifetime of the Plan. In order to address this, the Department has considered the Draft Plan in the context of projected population growth in the County to 2031.

Based on its analysis, this Department anticipates that some requirements for additional educational accommodation may emerge over the lifetime of the Plan, should the projected population increases materialise. Given the NPF objectives around compact growth, the facility to expand existing schools and/or to otherwise maximise the use of existing school sites will be critical for this Department in the future, to meet emerging requirements in Louth and nationally. In that context, the inclusion of a specific objective in the Plan explicitly supporting the intensification of development on existing school sites would be welcomed.



In respect of the individual settlements in the County, this Department has the following observations:

Dundalk:

Dundalk's status is noted as the county town and as Regional Growth Centre with a projected population of 50,000 people by 2031.

Based on the projected population increase, there is a requirement to zone sites for the following educational requirement:

- Site(s) for two new primary schools in Dundalk . (Sites to cater for 24 classroom school buildings)
- A site for a new post-primary school

Drogheda:

Drogheda lies in two separate planning authorities, Louth and Meath.. Drogheda's status as a Regional Growth Centre is noted along with the population projection of 50,000 people by 2031. This is an increase of some 9,000 people over the 2016 level. The Department notes this planned population increase and the requirement for a Joint Vision and Urban Area Plan for Drogheda. This Joint Vision and Urban Area Plan will provide the optimum opportunity for this Department to consider educational requirements in the settlement as a whole.

Based on the projected population increase, there is a requirement to zone sites for the following educational requirement:

- A site for one new primary school in Drogheda (site to cater for a 24 classroom school)
- A site for a new post-primary school

The site for a new post-primary school is in addition to the already identified requirement for a site for Drogheda Educate Together Secondary School (ETSS) Roll 68348A which opened in September 2019 and is currently operating in interim accommodation on the Mill Road, Mornington. The Department is already actively seeking a site for this school. Drogheda ETSS is a regional solution to cater for demographic need in the school planning area of Drogheda and the adjoining school planning area of Laytown. In order to cater for both areas, South Drogheda is considered to be the optimal location. As South Drogheda is in the Meath planning authority area, the Department is engaging with Meath County Council on the urgent identification of a site for Drogheda ETSS and has referred to it in its submission to the Meath County Development Plan in March 2020. It is critical that this school be delivered as soon as possible in order to meet current and projected requirements for Drogheda.



The location of the proposed additional zoned educational sites in Drogheda can be further re-visited in the context of the Joint Vision and Urban Area Plan for Drogheda.

Ardee:

Ardee's status as a self-sustaining growth town is noted.

The proposed additional population is noted. It is anticipated that potential school place requirements (primary and post-primary), should the projected population materialize, and allowing for potentially increased requirements, could be met at existing schools.

Dunleer

Dunleer's status as a self-sustaining growth town is noted.

The proposed additional population is noted. It is anticipated that potential school place requirements (primary and post-primary), should the projected population materialize, and allowing for potentially increased requirements, could be met at existing schools.

Other geographical areas

This Department has not identified the requirement for school site reservations at any other settlement in Co Louth at this time. However school accommodation requirements across the county will continue to be kept under review. In that regard, the Department welcomes the ongoing engagement with Louth County Council and will continue to work closely with the Council in relation to the provision of new schools and the development of existing schools. It also wishes to emphasise the critical importance of the ongoing work of the Council in ensuring sufficient and appropriate land is zoned for this purpose.

Section 13 Development Management Guidelines

In regard to community use of school facilities outside of school hours, the Department's policy is to encourage the use of school facilities, where possible, for community, training and education related activities. School property owners, school authorities and other stakeholders are, in general, favourably disposed to allow the use of their school buildings outside of school hours where this is appropriate, and have considerable experience in doing so. To assist schools in considering applications for use of their facilities the Department in consultation with representatives of schools has drafted general guidelines on the use of school property outside of school hours which are publicly available at

<https://assets.gov.ie/24484/ca5b1787db1b47f98de31f57e977dad0.pdf>

Policy objective SC 29 is compatible with this approach. However, it is noted that **Section 13.10.3 Educational Facilities** states that "*full details of all anticipated uses outside of school hours (of a school building/extension) should be provided with any planning*



application." This wording poses a practical difficulty as in the majority of school building projects it would be premature at planning stage to provide full details of anticipated use of a new school/extension outside of school hours. . A decision on the use of school facilities lies with the relevant school authority in consultation with the property owner. It would not be feasible or practical to conduct this consultation/decision process at planning stage.

Further and Higher Education

Responsibilities relating to the education function at central government level have recently been re-aligned with the establishment of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). This new Department has been advised of the invitation to submit observations in relation to the draft Co. Louth Development Plan.

If you have any queries in respect of the above, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,


Mary Carney
Statutory Plans
Forward Planning Section