



County Development Plan Submission:

A county development plan is an indicative document that will guide development within the county for the next 6 years. The County Development Plan takes note of the National 2040 Plan and the East Midlands Regional Plan and sets out the structured and planned growth of our county.

Drogheda Business Improvement District believe in the proper and sustainable planning of our town, region and county and as such are happy to make a submission on the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. We believe that by working in conjunction and collaboration that we can assist in growing and developing our town in line with its new status as a Regional Growth Centre to assist in servicing the needs and requirements of our citizens.

Having reviewed the Draft County Development Plan Drogheda BID are seeking Louth County Council to consider the following

Appropriate zoning of employment lands

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

Drogheda and Co. Louth are particularly well located along the Belfast- Dublin Economic Corridor with excellent transport linkages through air, sea and land with both rail and road network connectivity. Over the past 2 decades we have seen extraordinary population growth rates across our town and South Louth and East Meath in particular. Lands currently zoned for D1 Regeneration along the waterfront will have the opportunity to be transformative for the town centre.

The Draft County Development Plan indicates the two main employment centres in the County as Drogheda and Dundalk, both have Regional Growth Centre status.

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. 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.

As noted in this paragraph, prior to COVID 19 pandemic there was a strong interdependency between Drogheda and Dublin with large portions of our population and workforce commuting outwards with a Resident workforce ratio of 0.76. This has obvious implications for individual and community quality of life, and in particular environmental sustainability, both of which are becoming increasingly important and relevant. Large urban centres are



typically a magnet for employment and innovation. The key function of a regional growth centre is to act as a focal point for strategic economic investment, employment, activity, service provision and as a centre for cultural and social activity. With Drogheda's current level of workforce ratio, we are experiencing large levels of residential growth without the necessary employment and industry levels and as such require support and management to help grow the town in a sustainable manner. We are seeking that appropriate lands are provided for within the Drogheda region to accommodate potential employment growth and that significant lands are provided for to help attract FDI to retain our local employment talent.

With the ongoing contraction of the Retail sector, well begun even before the adverse effects of COVID, Drogheda is likely to lose considerably more jobs in its largest employment sector. As such, Drogheda requires further support in terms of widening its employment sector base and attracting additional industry to our town

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. (Para 5.4)

To help improve quality of life, sustainable growth and opportunities for our town that Louth County Council strongly consider increasing appropriate zoning of Serviced Employment Lands to assist in giving Drogheda an equal opportunity of capturing FDI and increasing opportunities for indigenous growth of Drogheda Based companies that may wish to increase their size and scale as per Policy Objective 14& 15 *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.*

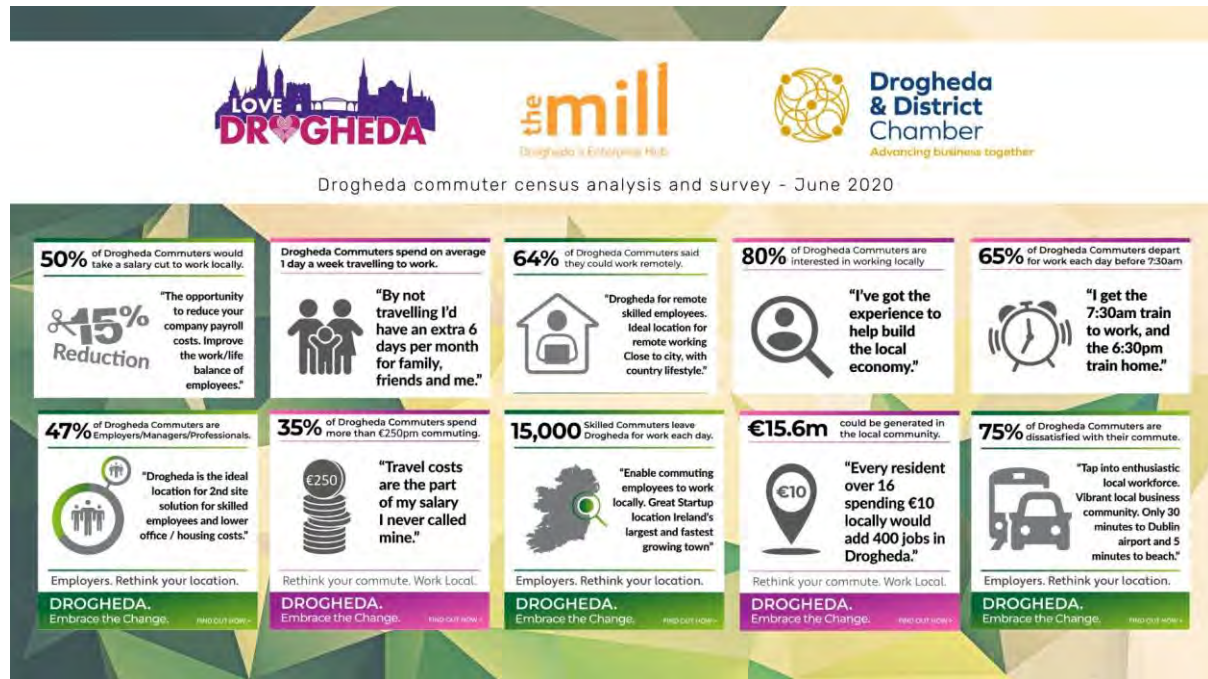
We are asking that due consideration is taken when allocating zoned land for industry that a balanced view is taken on the provision of employment land across the county to assist in balanced employment opportunities to help the retention of local talent and skilled workers.

In section 5.12.5 Employment Areas in the Southern environs of Drogheda it indicates that the employment lands have had limited success in attracting investment. The IDA Business and Technology Park is now being utilised by Amazon Data Centre. In Policy Objective EE41 it notes that the Draft Plan should seek to provide International Quality to continue to compete for International Investment. We are seeking for that "International Quality" planning and employment lands to be provided for within Drogheda and that Drogheda is also identified and promoted as an ideal location for Foreign Direct Investment.

To help support the level of opportunities for entrepreneurship we are asking that Louth County Council along with the Local Enterprise Office increase its presence in Drogheda to aid in the growth of indigenous business.



Prioritise the establishment of an Investment One-Stop Shop for Drogheda that can help showcase opportunity sites for potential investors and FDI Clients. As evidenced by our combined Commuter Survey in early 2020 there is an appetite for local commuters to Embrace the Change and with the right structures and supports in place we feel that there is a great opportunity to tap into this local talent that in Drogheda to help elevate it and retain our highly skilled workers.



1

Figure 1, Commuter Survey Responses 2020

Connectivity and permeability of town centre:

Part of the essence of any town is the connection of the town and hinterland residents and the local business community. Drogheda BID are in support of the extension of new bus services D3-5 and Policy Objective MOV 20 to help improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to schools, third level colleges bus and rail stations. We are asking that when making this draft plan and the Drogheda Joint Urban Area Plan that the connectivity between surrounding residential areas are considered in terms of appropriately lit and maintained pathways.

Waterfront & Riverfront Regeneration:

Drogheda BID note that the Boyne River is one of the key assets of our town and is integral in helping to drive our new status as a Fáilte Ireland Tourism Destination Town, enhanced by a range of biodiversity key species and wonderful heritage structures, can play a significant role in enriching the user experience – a softening of a rich built environment by means of pocket parks, orchards, pollinators, and swift box enhancement can all go to enhance the urban fabric as well as functioning as an ecosystem service.

¹ This survey was taken pre covid 19 and as such there may be greater levels of remote working opportunities at the time of submitting.



Many towns and cities had turned their backs to waterways dissecting urban centres in the past, Louth's marine environment also calls to be acknowledged, supported and developed. These sensitive habitats and communities, if sustainably managed will be a constant draw to tourists, the basis for high-end locally produced food and a backdrop to Louth's rural landscape for generations.

We are asking that Louth County Council seek to develop a new waterfront and riverfront regeneration masterplan that could help linkup the riverside walkways at the rear of John St and Dyer St and plan the reinvention and repurposing of some of our vacant properties along the North and South Quay to host co-working facilities, and flexible work solutions for the local population whilst creating a new business cluster as per Policy Objectives EE18-23 and provision for extension and connection of the Boyne Greenway.

To assist in enhancing the biodiversity within the town centre we suggest that creative greening be permitted in the town centre – Incorporating creative greenery into unused spaces to help soften the streetscape and make it more attractive to town centre users.

Infrastructure (PANCR)

As the largest port in the State on an axis north of Dublin and Limerick, Drogheda Port As noted in Figure 5.5, plays an important role in our local economy and handles the greatest level of tonnage per annum in the county. To assist in reducing HGV traffic volumes in the town centre and working to support a town centre first policy of increasing residential population we are asking that Louth County Council vigorously pursue the PANCR project to help open available development lands and assist in the planned growth of our town on the Northern aspect of our town.

Implementation of Westgate Vision & Town centre Heritage

Drogheda BID are asking that Louth County Council proceed with implementation of the West Gate Vision to help create a new quarter in the town centre whilst enhancing the sense of arrival and creating the opportunity for new mixed use development in the town centre. Drogheda BID endeavours to work collaboratively with all stakeholder groups within the town centre and ask that when developing the Town Centre Renewal Plan for Drogheda that a Town Centre First Policy is taken in terms of sequential planning. It is suggested that the Council ensure that policy focus and priority be on town centre regeneration in combination with a mix of uses and this support for Town Centre Renewal Plans alongside a Placemaking Strategy for towns be included as policy objectives in accordance with RPO 6.12 of the RSES.

In the current Draft Plan, Laurence Gate is the only local monument under state care that has been identified. Drogheda is one of Ireland's premiere Walled Towns with one of the finest Barbican Gates in Ireland and Europe. With its close proximity to Bru Na Boinne, Oldebridge, Monasterboice, Millmount and our wonderful town gates should be properly preserved and our continued participation in the walled towns network with properly maintained signage, historic information and access in each case to enhance the visitor experience where possible.



Lighting Strategy for Drogheda

As part of the Town Centre Renewal Plan, Joint Urban Area Plan, the Westgate Vision and the Urban Design Framework for Drogheda we are asking that Louth County Council investigate the creation of a town centre Lighting and Illumination Strategy & Masterplan similar to <https://www.luciassociation.org/map-city/lyon/> to help assist in the development of Drogheda as a Tourist Destination along Ireland's Ancient East. A co-ordinated masterplan to illuminate the town's historic sites and bridges, whilst providing a safe and well lit town centre that is attractive to visitors and town centre users.

Monitoring of vacancy rates

With the current Covid pandemic having a major impact across town and urban centres we are asking that vacancy rates are monitored across all towns in the county and that should certain areas have a vacancy rate above 13-15% that appropriate action is taken to help address these areas with regeneration and revitalisation planning support. In our larger towns, consideration may be given to 'sterilising' former retail areas / streets that no longer perform as originally planned. Such zones could be rezoned as residential, hospitality or non-retail employment zones. Consolidation of our urban centres is the key to viable towns and sustainable retail communities. Disjointed and isolated retail outside of larger residential communities runs the risk of withering on the vine, and will in turn continue the cycle of vacancy and dereliction that scourges our towns.

Assist in the development of a Town Centre Living Policy for County Louth

In line with EC policy, formulate a Town Centre Living Strategy for the designated regional growth centres. Formulate and deliver a Strategic Development Plan for Louth's **existing, and possibly future**, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) i.e. Dundalk BID and Drogheda BID – highlight the need for National and Regional Strategies for the development of BID Companies in Ireland e.g. Scotland has 40 no. BID companies and Ireland currently has five with two located in Louth.

Water Services

While recognising that Irish Water are ultimately responsible for the provision of Wastewater treatment and potable water for the public, business, and industry, LCC as the planning authority, have responsibility to ensure enough provision has been made to allow for the orderly provision of same through Louth's planning obligations.

Policy objectives IU 2 and 3 stress

IU 2. To work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect and make climate resilient existing water and wastewater infrastructure, 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.

As Drogheda and East Meath's population continues to rise ahead of the state average, and while recognising that South Louth's water provision is running at, or near capacity, so much so that outages and low pressure have become more common at high demand times, provision must be made to allow for the timely provision of sufficient facilities to ensure the



water needs of the general population and industry are adequately planned for and ultimately provided.

(Policy Objective ~~Delete~~)

IU 3. 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.

While South Louth and East Meath have approximately sufficient capacity in the Wastewater treatment provision to allow for upon 25,000 pers. to add to the existing demand of 76,000 pers., the same cannot be said of freshwater provision for the same area. This could become an inhibitor to the growing demand for housing in South Louth and East Meath and a serious obstacle to some industries opportunity to locate or expand.

Smart City tools and requirements for Drogheda

That Louth seek to apply SMART City Tools and Principles for future development in Drogheda along the principles outlined in <https://smartcitiesireland.org/>.

Town Centre Frontages:

We are asking that there is continued support for the successful Shop Front Grant Initiative and that Louth County Council continue to monitor new and current Shop Front signage that it is in keeping with shop frontage signage regulation. in all conservation areas of the towns in the county and seek the removal of all signage that is not consistent with the realm and historic nature of each area.

We would like to thank you for taking time to consider our observations and suggestions on the Draft County Development Plan and look forward to working towards the continued betterment of Drogheda and County Louth.

Yours Sincerely

Love Drogheda Business Improvement District