

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

23rd December 2020

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Drogheda and District Chamber submission on the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

I would be pleased if Louth County Council would consider this document as the submission of Drogheda & District Chamber on the Draft Louth County Development Plan. The submission has been compiled by the Chamber Council Members on behalf of our business community.

Drogheda & District Chamber have been the voice of the business community of South Louth and East Meath for the past 125 years, we represent not only our 200 plus member companies but also the wider business community and our goal remains to improve and support the business environment within the region.

Over the past number of years a number of additional support organisations have been established in Drogheda including, Love Drogheda (BIDS), The Mill Enterprise Centre and Drogheda City Status Group. These organisations and Drogheda & District Chamber share the common goal and this has allowed a very high level of inter-organisation collaboration and support, especially during the development of the National Planning Framework (NPF), The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and now the Louth County Development Plan (CDP). The high level of interaction, sharing and commonality of purpose will be noted in the submissions from the Chamber and these organisations and whilst we will attempt not to excessively duplicate our submissions there will be a common trend retained.

Drogheda & District Chamber fully support the requests in the submissions by the other parties and especially:

- Strong action on the development of the PANCR;
- Inclusion of access to the River Boyne in the development of Drogheda as Fáilte Ireland's Destination town;
- Inclusion of a tourism attraction of note within the town centre;
- Development of regional offices of Fáilte Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA within Drogheda to focus and assist in supporting the town's growth;
- Zoning of appropriate employment generating lands and allocating the infrastructure investment required to support such lands;
- Supporting the development of the Westgate vision for the town's regeneration; and
- Planning for and implementing the capital investment in the water supply.

The NPF and subsequently the RSES recognised the inappropriate status and positioning of the town of Drogheda in previous national and regional strategies and corrected it somewhat in the current framework documents. The tiered nature of the planning framework structures dictate that this correction must follow down through the County Development Plan to ensure appropriate guidance to the executive in supporting the appropriate development of Drogheda.

Drogheda & District Chamber acknowledges that the County Development Plan, although framed by the higher planning frameworks and crafted by Louth County Council Executive remains the peoples plan, as voiced through their elected representatives, and a strong guidance document to direct the executive in their role of administrating the county. The Chamber also recognises that the final adopted plan will copper fasten the direction of infrastructure funding, strategic development and award of planning within the county and deviation from the adopted plan, if required due to errors or omissions will require material contraventions or adopted amendments. The Chamber's submission on this plan is intended to support the function of the plan and to address issues noted in the document in order that they can be corrected at draft stage.

The issues noted appear to result from historic embedded imbalances as a carry-over from the previous incorrect positioning, inaccuracies due to the plan drafters not having access to the high level of local knowledge of Drogheda's development and needs contained within the accumulated business support organisations or simply inadvertent errors. The occurrence of these issues in the draft plan is not a significant issue however allowing them to be retained in the final document for adoption would be.

I anticipate that the plan preparation process involved the development of the various assessment reports which then directed the plan, for this reason we first reviewed the assessment reports as included as an appendix to the draft plan.

Review of County Development Plan – Appendices

Drogheda & District Chamber consider that the following issues requiring attention are included in the draft development plan support documentation and request that these issues are addressed in advance of publication of the final draft.

Appendix 2 – The infrastructure assessment and land use evaluation of Drogheda appears grossly insufficient, only 3 sites are assessed and all residential, there are no assessment of tier 1 or tier 2 sites for industry / commerce, all other settlements are given much greater assessment. This cannot be accepted on the basis that such assessment is not required in Drogheda considering the continuous response for the IDA & Enterprise Ireland that there are limited suitable sites for marketing to potential FDI or indigenous second sites. The infrastructure assessment should be re-done for Drogheda to ensure the plan proposal meets the needs of the town and environs over the plan period.

Appendix 3 – The Housing Strategy population figures assessed is based on numerical values alone, no consideration is given to the fact that Drogheda’s residential development availability within the town boundary is confined due to the existing high density and delays in releasing port access route resulting in a high level of development on the periphery. The fact that this development, external to the town boundary is ignored invalidates the policies derived in the plan for the Drogheda area. The housing strategy should be re-done for Drogheda, with appropriate modelling incorporating all residential development external to the town boundary including trans-boundary development to ensure the plan proposal meets the needs of the town and environs over the plan period.

The residential assessment is based on a county wide approach, a more nuanced assessment of the various areas may be more appropriate due to the variability of development and the variability of the source of growth pressures.

Appendix 4 – Retail Strategy, again the Louth figures are assessed ignoring the Meath part of Drogheda or the local services high population areas, the manner of assessment of retail space requirement appears to be county wide rather than strategic to each centre. This manner of assessment is not consistent with the retail planning guidelines which require trans-boundary populations to be considered. The Retail Strategy should be re-done for Drogheda, with appropriate modelling incorporating all trans-boundary populations to ensure the plan proposal meets the needs of the town and environs over the plan period.

Written statement

The introduction should also reference the mandated trans-boundary urban development plan for Drogheda.

In order to provide appropriate context for the plan, the section on Drogheda should not only state that it is proposed to grow the Louth section of Drogheda to 50K over the plan period but also recognise that the town of Drogheda (Louth and Meath) is close to 50K at the commencement of the plan and that this is reflected in the policies developed for the town.

The section on compact growth and the inclusion of 30% through regeneration should be altered to acknowledge that Drogheda is already compact with density significantly higher than the norm (Drogheda – 2,700 persons / km², Dundalk (1,580 persons / km²))

The section on the statutory Joint UAP, considering its importance, needs to be significantly expanded to include a compressed timeframe for delivery, a consideration of the actual population levels serviced and the manner of implementation governance and oversight to ensure the two local authorities can function together seamlessly. The Joint UAP should feed into strategic policies in each of these areas.

In the section on Growth strategy, where again the target of 50K by 2031 is mentioned, this should be altered to acknowledge the population which will be served by the joint UAP and adapt the policies accordingly. Similarly throughout the document all discussions around population, density and growth levels are inappropriately skewed by ignoring the trans-boundary development of Drogheda. This anomaly should be rectified at this stage rather than adopting the plan and then allowing conflicts with the joint UAP when the actual populations and development levels are included. The difficulty with the current drafts approach can be seen in table 2.7 where the growth rate is cited at 4.9% when the actual CSO growth rate is 6.2% based on the 2016 census. This 25% shortfall in the considered rate of growth will have serious implications for the policies developed if not corrected.

On the tourism section, the reference to the Boyne greenway omits the current proposal to extend this facility to the Mornington beaches, the development of this extension, in conjunction with Meath County Council should be included as a policy.

It is acknowledged that the region has significant tourism attractions (The beaches, Oldbridge, River Boyne, Newgrange, Monasterboice, Funtasia, Tayto Park etc.). However, Drogheda's ability to enhance the experience of these tourists and accrue a benefit in return is significantly limited due to the lack of an appropriately serviced coach parking facility in the town, this needs to be included as a policy.



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Within the tourism section of the plan, the section on the River Boyne appears to have been omitted. The River Boyne is one of the premier natural and cultural heritage features in Ireland and is the reason we have Oldbridge, Newgrange, and even Drogheda. A section addressing the plan for the river including the provision of access (pontoon, slipway), riverside parks, guidelines for riverside developments etc. should be included in the next draft and policy objectives to provide the required access and to protect this natural resource.

The section on infrastructure will require updating when the appropriate infrastructure analysis is re-done, in addition the funds (€75m) allocated to Meath County Council in 2008 and subsequently re-allocated to Irish Water, specifically for the water network upgrading in Drogheda and East Meath, should be tracked down and a policy objective put in place that the envisaged capital works to support the development of this region should be carried out within the life of the proposed plan.

I trust the above will be considered in the development of the next stages of the Louth Draft Development Plan.

Yours faithfully,

—

Robert Murray

President

Drogheda & District Chamber 2020/21

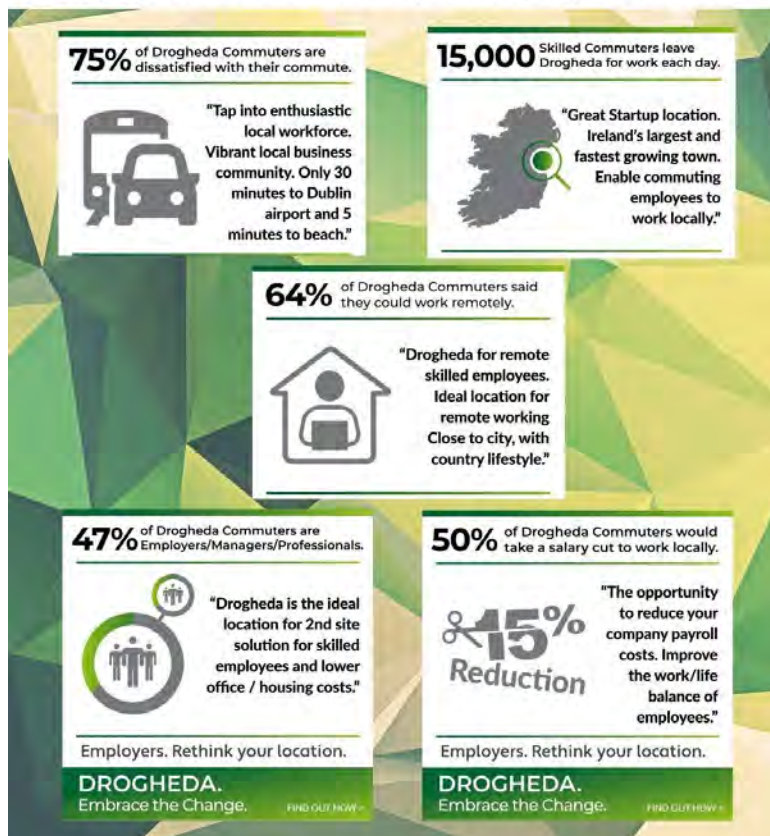


Drogheda commuter census analysis and survey - June 2020



LOVE DROGHEDA the mill Drogheda's Enterprise Hub Drogheda & District Chamber Advancing business together

Drogheda commuter census analysis and survey - June 2020





Drogheda commuter census analysis and survey - June 2020

50% of Drogheda Commuters would take a salary cut to work locally.

15% Reduction

"I'd gladly take a salary cut to work closer to home and have a better quality of life."

Drogheda Commuters spend on average 1 day a week travelling to work.



"By not travelling I'd have an extra 6 days per month for family, friends and me."

65% of Drogheda Commuters depart for work each day before 7:30am



"I get the 7:30am train to work, and the 6:30pm train home."

64% of Drogheda Commuters said they could work remotely.



"The fiber optic network enables me to work from a co-working space or from my home."

Rethink your commute. Work Local.

DROGHEDA.
Embrace the Change.

[FIND OUT HOW >](#)

35% of Drogheda Commuters spend more than €250pm commuting.



"Travel costs are the part of my salary I never called mine."

Rethink your commute. Work Local.

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