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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** is the over-arching strategic framework document for the proper planning and sustainable development, in spatial, economic, social and environmental terms of the entire functional area of County Louth. This Plan sets out the long term vision for the development of the County up to 2021, while protecting and enhancing its environment through employing the principles of sustainable development in the policies and objectives set out therein.

Sustainable development can be described as a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while respecting the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but in the indefinite future. Sustainable development is founded on the pillars of economic development, social development and environmental protection. Further details on Louth County Councils' commitment to sustainable development is evident throughout the Plan.

This plan builds on the strategies, policies and objectives of the **Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015**, taking into account recent key development trends and national, regional and local policy developments. It also takes account of the increased emphasis on flooding, climate change, renewable energy and the need to support economic development, in conjunction with European Union (EU) requirements including the application of **Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC)** and **Habitats Directive Assessment (92/43/EEC)** of the Plan.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Legislative Context:

In accordance with Section 9(1) of the **Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)**, every planning authority is required to make a development plan every six years. A development plan takes the form of a written statement supplemented by maps and contains both mandatory and discretionary objectives. It is through these two elements of statement and maps that an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area must be set out. **(It should be noted that in the event of any conflict or ambiguity between what is contained within the written statement and the supporting maps, the written statement will take precedence).**

Section 10 of the **Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)** provides the contents to be included in Development Plans to ensure that an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County is set out. This includes the requirement to include a **Core Strategy** which is to secure the co-ordination of development plans with the **National Spatial**

Strategy (NSS) 2002 and the **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022** (RPG's) and to show that the development objectives in the Plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with these national and regional development objectives. **The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002** is the national planning framework for Ireland which promotes self sustaining growth through building up sufficient scale and critical mass through a network of gateways and hubs. These gateways and hubs are partnered by county towns which support the role of smaller towns, villages and rural areas as a focus for business, amenity, residential and commercial functions. Relevant to County Louth, Dundalk has been designated as a Gateway whilst Drogheda has been given the unique status of Primary Development Centre. The Regional Planning Guidelines applicable to Louth are the **Border Regional Authority: Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022** which provide a framework for long term strategic development in the border region (Counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth) setting out policies *inter alia* for population, environment, economic development etc. National policy contained in the **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002**, is translated to a regional level in these Guidelines, which will guide policy making decisions at a local level through the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021**.

The Border Regional Planning Authority: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2010-2022 set out the following functions for Dundalk and Drogheda;

- Dundalk: 'To promote and facilitate the achievement of critical mass within the Gateway of Dundalk that will be necessary to sustain growth and to act as a catalyst for and driver of growth within the Region'.
- Drogheda: 'To promote and facilitate the development of Drogheda as an important strategic urban settlement in the Region and within the Eastern Economic Corridor in support of the Dundalk Gateway'.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) also requires that a separate statement be included showing that the development objectives in the Plan are consistent, as far as practicable with the conservation and protection of the environment.

As outlined above, the Plan must include a number of mandatory objectives which are briefly outlined below:

- Zoning of land (within urban areas only),
- Provision of infrastructure,
- Conservation and protection of the environment,
- Encouragement of the management of ecologically important landscape features,
- Promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives of River Basin Management Plan(RBMP)
- Integration of social, community and cultural requirements with planning ,
- Preservation of the character of the landscape,
- Protection of structures ,
- Preservation of architectural conservation areas (ACA's),

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- Renewal and development of areas in need of regeneration,
- Provision of traveller accommodation,
- Preservation and improvement of amenities,
- Control with regard to the Major Accidents Directive (Seveso sites),
- Provision of community services and facilities,
- Provision of linguistic and cultural heritage of Gaeltacht areas,
- Promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies,
- Preservation of public rights of way,
- Provide a framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to European Landscape Convention,
- Inclusion of a Housing Strategy, Core Strategy & Settlement Hierarchy is also required.

The Development Plan has been informed by a wide range of legislation including a number of European Directives and their associated legislation including (but not limited to) those listed below:

- ***Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC)***
- ***Habitats Directive Assessment (92/43/EEC)***
- ***EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)***

and other legislation including all relevant Irish and European planning and environmental legislation, national and regional policy documents, guidelines, statutory plans and local plans, strategies and studies. In addition to all the above, the Development Plan was informed by public consultation.

1.2.2 Review Process

The Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 has been prepared in accordance with the ***Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)***. The review process of the 2015-2021 Louth County Development Plan commenced November 2013. The first stage in the review process was the pre-draft consultation phase. The review process of the Plan commenced with the Council advertising its intention to review the existing Development Plan and to prepare a new Plan. Submissions in respect of the review and the making of the Plan were invited over a specified period. Consultation was carried out with the general public, prescribed bodies, service providers, and stakeholders during this period. (A list of all bodies notified is included in Appendix 1). The Council engaged in an extensive consultation process through various mediums including published newspaper notices, the Council's website, all Council libraries, local radio and public offices and public consultation workshops. An Issues Paper, which was strategic in nature, was prepared and circulated by the Planning Authority for the purpose of raising awareness of both the nature of the Development Plan and the Development Plan review process. This Issues Paper was made available at public meetings and to the prescribed bodies, service providers etc. A Manager's Report was prepared in accordance with Section 11(4)(a) and circulated to Elected Members for consideration.

1.2.3 Format of the Plan

The **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** consists of the written document with supporting maps and appendices, as detailed in the Contents Table of the Plan. There are 3 volumes contained in the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** which are outlined below:

Volume 1:	Written Statement
Volume 2:	2 (a) Appendices 1-2 2 (b) Appendices 3-17 2 (c) Appendix 18 Record of Protected Structures (Louth, Dundalk & Drogheda)
Volume 3:	Environmental Report

1.3 Vision for County Louth

County Louth, albeit the smallest county in the state is also one of the most densely populated containing as it does the two largest towns in the country, namely Dundalk and Drogheda. In addition to these major urban centers, the County also contains a number of substantial towns and villages including Ardee, Dunleer, Clogherhead and Carlingford.

The County is strategically located on the Dublin - Belfast economic corridor and has strong links to Northern Ireland. By reason of this location combined with high quality infrastructure (road and rail), accessibility to ports and airports (north and south), high speed broadband, a skilled and educated workforce, the County is well placed to continue to grow in both population and economic terms into the future. The challenge facing Louth County Council in partnership with the private sector and voluntary groups is to promote and regulate the future development of the County in a manner that will improve living standards and enable the social and cultural development of its inhabitants without jeopardising the ability of future generations in the county to do likewise. This in essence is the fundamental principle of sustainable development that is a reoccurring theme throughout the Plan.

The vision for County Louth into the future is of a place:

- Where people want to live, work, visit and invest now and in the future
- That is well planned, well managed, safe and inclusive
- Where there exists equality of opportunity for all

The vision for County Louth as enshrined in this Plan is attainable. It seeks to deliver through the planning process, in partnership with the community and other stakeholders, a prosperous and thriving County where no individual or social group is excluded from the benefits of development. It also enshrines the principle of environmental, economic and social sustainability including protection of the County's resources, heritage and the natural and built environment.

1.3.1 Local Area Plans

In accordance with Section (18), (19) and (20) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* provision is made for the making of Local Area Plans. Section 19(1) (b) imposes an obligation on a planning authority to prepare Local Area Plans in respect of any area which is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, has a population in excess of 5,000 and is situated within the functional area of a Planning Authority. Louth County Council will prepare Local Area Plans for the following:

- Dundalk and Environs
- Drogheda and Northern Environs
- Ardee
- Dunleer

The timing of these Local Area Plans will be determined by the relevant legislative provisions.

1.4 Strategic Objectives

The realisation of the vision for County Louth will be pursued by seeking to secure the following overall strategic objectives of the Plan:

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 the Dundalk Gateway and Drogheda Primary Development Centre as catalysts for development within the region and to forge strong economic links on a cross border basis with Northern Ireland and adjoining counties in a sustainable manner.
2. Direct new development in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy which will provide for the sustainable development of the County for the period 2015-2021 and beyond.
3. Ensure a more sustainable and integrated concept of development with regard to land use, transportation, water services, energy supply and waste management over the lifetime of the Plan.
4. Provide a framework for the management and regulation of development and use of land that will guide day to day planning decisions, thus ensuring a more sustainable and integrated concept of development with regard to all forms of land use.
5. Afford suitable protection to the environment and natural resources of County Louth and ensure the fulfillment of environmental responsibilities.
6. Protect and enhance County Louth's heritage (both built and natural) and other amenities in order that the full potential of the County can be realised, particularly in terms of attracting tourists and visitors to the County.

7. To acknowledge the complimentary role of the **Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)** which is to be formulated during the lifetime of the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** which will be an integrated strategy designed to promote social inclusion at all levels of society within the county. Encourage and support the development of inclusive communities which engage and include all members of society facilitating equal physical, social and cultural access and integration
8. To support Louth's **Local Enterprise Office (LEO)** in attracting investment and encouraging and stimulating entrepreneurship.
9. Facilitate the development of infrastructural projects which will underpin sustainable development throughout the County during the period of the Plan.
10. Provide a framework for sustainable development through energy efficiency, increase in the use of renewable energy, minimisation of travel demand and increased use of sustainable transport modes.
11. Engage in efforts to limit the human induced causes of climate change and take account of climate change in planning and delivering work programs.

1.5 Social Inclusion

It is important that all people are provided with equal opportunities to participate and have access to services in a locality and do not suffer from discrimination. Social inclusion refers to the manner in which all members of the community are integrated in an equal manner. It seeks to reduce barriers to participation in areas such as education, recreation, employment and health. It incorporates the need to ensure that minority groups, people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, those less-abled, the elderly, children and young people are recognised as valuable members of society.

The Council endeavours to ensure that its policies and objectives are fully inclusive. It aims to:

- Ensure that as far as possible, access for the less-abled is provided to all new developments including the council's buildings and services, as detailed in the **Louth County Council Disability Implementation Plan 2008-2015**.
- Facilitate and promote the **Rural Transport Initiative** to enable the socially excluded to gain access to employment and services.
- Facilitate the provision of small scale enterprise start-up units throughout the County.
- Encourage the provision of suitable and appropriate accommodation for all, in keeping with Louth's age friendly ethos.
- Ensure that new initiatives do not decrease local community access to services through cost or location.
- Seek to target anti-racism and promote inter-culturalism in accordance with the **Peace Programme** in relation to racism & sectarianism.

- To support the implementation of the **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016**.

The Local Government Act 2014 set up **Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's)** in each local authority area to promote the integration of economic and community development at a local level. The Louth LCDC will oversee the development of a six year **Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)** and the commissioning of social inclusion interventions and work activation services in County Louth. The **LECP** shall be in accordance with the County Development Plan. It will have a statutory status and will involve a range of interventions for different social and economic sectors including the continued promotion of Louth as an Age Friendly County, among others.

Louth County Council has established a **Public Participation Network (PPN)** to harness public participation as committed in the **Local Government Reform Act, 2014**. Its purpose is to engage communities and citizens in local decision-making and planning. It is structured around three pillars of voluntary and community organisations, and will be the link through which the Local Authorities connect and engage with the three pillars of community, social inclusion and environmental sectors countywide, for consultation and information sharing. This will enable the public to take an active role in influencing plans and policies of the Local Authority.

1.6 Statement Demonstrating Objectives of the Development Plan are Consistent with Conservation & Protection of the Environment

Section 10 (1D) of the **Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)** requires that the written statement of the County Development Plan includes a separate statement which demonstrates that the development objectives in the development plan are consistent as far as practicable, with the protection and conservation of the environment.

The **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** sets out a vision for the County which seeks to deliver through the planning process, in partnership with the community and other stakeholders, a prosperous and thriving county where no individual or social group is excluded from the benefits of development. It also enshrines the principle of environmental, economic and social sustainability including protection of the county's resources, heritage and the natural and built environment. The eleven Strategic Objectives of the Plan are provided for in Section 1.4 which aim to help realise the stated vision and which support the objectives throughout the Plan. These include for the following:

- Promote regional development,
- Promote settlement hierarchy,
- Ensure sustainable and integrated concept of development,
- Provide a framework for management of development,
- Protect the environment,
- Protect and enhance Louth's Heritage (built and natural),
- Acknowledge role of LECP and encourage and support inclusive communities,

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- Support LEO in attracting investment and stimulating entrepreneurship,
- Facilitate the development of infrastructural projects underpinning sustainable development,
- Provide framework for sustainable development through energy efficiency, renewable energy, minimisation of travel demand and sustainable transport,
- Engage in efforts to minimise human induced causes of climate change and adaptation to address the impacts and opportunities resulting from climate change.

Sustainable development is reflected throughout the Plan in the policies and objectives contained within the document. Notwithstanding this, there are primary considerations which underline the principle of sustainable development and these include the conservation of natural resources, protection of the natural environment, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and promoting renewable energy, facilitating environmentally friendly patterns of development, energy efficiency and high quality design. The Core Strategy also sets out in Chapter 2 of the Plan an evidence based strategy for the sustainable spatial development of the County based on high quality sustainable residential communities, developed in conjunction with social and recreational infrastructure.

The objectives of the Plan have also been framed to promote compliance with other relevant environmental legislation, which is outlined in the various chapters of the Plan. These include *inter alia* for the **Water Framework Directive, Groundwater Directive, Nitrates Directive, Floods Directive, Shellfish Waters Directive, Wildlife Acts, Waste Management Acts and National Monuments Acts.**

In addition to the above the Plan has also been subjected to a full **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and Appropriate Assessment (Article 6(3) of the European Council Directive 92/43/EEC)**, which deemed that the Plan if implemented would not have a significant effect on the environment or a designated site. The findings from these processes have been fully integrated with the objectives and policies of the Plan, resulting in policies and objectives which afford a high level of protection to the environment and Natura 2000 sites. A Stage 1 **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment** has also been prepared in accordance with **EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC).**

Having regard to all of the above, it is considered that the objectives of the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** are consistent as far as practicable, with the protection and conservation of the environment.

Myplan is an initiative of the **Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG)** on behalf of planning authorities. It is a public information system providing easily accessible information on details of development plans and local area plans across the Country including current land use zoning. Louth County Council is committed to ensuring that up-to-date information for County Louth is available on Myplan at www.myplan.ie

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Note:

*Irish Water: The preparation of this Development Plan has, where relevant, been done with reference to Irish Water. Irish Water (IW) has given assurances and comfort that the core strategy as proposed and in accordance with the projected population growth from the **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022 (RPG's)** can be accommodated.*

*Interpretation: It should be noted that where, during the course of this Plan, there is reference to and application of policies, that these are, for interpretation purposes, objectives within the meaning of the **Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)**.*

Chapter 2

Core Strategy & Settlement Strategy

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Core Strategy as defined in the ***Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)*** is to show that the development objectives of the Development Plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with the national and regional objectives that are set out in the ***National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002*** and the ***Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region, 2010-2022*** respectively. The strategy aims to set out the medium to longer term quantitatively based strategy for the spatial development of the functional area of the planning authority.

2.2 Context

2.2.1 National Context

The National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 (NDP) sets out a detailed development strategy for the Country, supported by investment in the key areas of infrastructural development, education and training, the productive sector and the promotion of social inclusion. The National Development Plan also contains a commitment to support the ***National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002*** in the promotion of more balanced regional development throughout the country by identifying a number of development corridors known as Gateways and Hubs in individual regions, the purpose of which is to act as economic drivers for those regions.

2.2.2 Regional Context

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022 covers the counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan & Louth. The main objectives of the Regional Planning Guidelines are to provide a long-term strategic planning framework for the development of the Border region and to support the implementation of the ***National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002***. The Regional Planning Guidelines set out a population growth framework, housing targets and housing land requirements for each local authority which are to be incorporated into the Core Settlement Strategy. In the case of Co. Louth the Regional Planning Guidelines target population for 2022 is 142,800.

2.2.3 Local Context

The adoption of the ***Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015*** coincided with the onset of the global economic downturn and as a result, the level of economic activity and population growth envisaged over the Plan period has not been realised. This downturn has created several challenges which have affected the realisation of the targets set in the 2009-2015 Plan. These include unemployment and emigration, reduced commercial & retail activity, increased vacancy rates, collapse of the construction industry in the residential and commercial markets, lack of public funding coupled with falling levels of investment, and the legacy of unfinished housing and commercial developments.

2.3 Strategic Planning Approach

This Plan sets out an 'evidence based' Core Strategy for the future development of the county. It sets out the overall population targets and development strategy for County Louth for the period of the Plan and these population targets will form the basis for guiding the scale and location of new developments up to 2021. The Core Strategy provides a clear planning framework that will enable the delivery of the vision and objectives of the development plan, provide clarity for developers and utility providers investing in the County and help other departments, government agencies and external organisations to prioritise and deliver infrastructure and services such as road infrastructure and wastewater treatment facilities in a cost effective manner.

The Strategic aims of the Core Strategy are to:

- Outline a blueprint for the future sustainable economic development of the County to support the population of County Louth,
- Prioritise sustainable development at appropriate locations within the towns of Dundalk and Drogheda as economic drivers for the County,
- Support the realisation of more sustainable towns and villages appropriate to the scale of the settlement and its position in the settlement hierarchy,
- Encourage mixed use development forms and sustainable centres, in which employment, housing and community services are located in close proximity to each other and to strategic public transport corridors,
- To support the creation of a compact urban form in all settlements in County Louth,
- To protect and support rural areas through careful management of physical and environmental resources and appropriate, sustainable development,
- Ensure that future development patterns accord with sustainable management of water resources,
- Facilitate the development of sustainable and socially inclusive communities,
- Promote and support the integration of land use and transport and to encourage a modal shift to greater use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport,

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- Consolidate population growth and employment in areas best served by public transport and a range of transport modes.

2.4 Sustainable Communities

Sustainable communities are defined as “places where people want to live and work now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all”.¹ Louth County Council considers the implementation of this approach as being key to the sustainable economic development of the County. The Core Strategy outlines the parameters within which these sustainable communities are to be achieved. In relation to the future population allocation up to 2021, it is paramount that the Plan takes a careful approach to population growth, ensuring that it is directed to locations which can absorb new development at a scale commensurate to its location and that in respect of the settlements, that policies are in place to facilitate balanced and integrated development having regard to the availability of necessary infrastructure, including social infrastructure.

2.5 Population Projections and Spatial Distribution in County Louth

County Louth had a population of 122,897 in 2011, which was an increase of 10% on the 2006 population of 111,267. The percentage increase was above the State average of 8.1% over the same period. This increase is dispersed across the County with 90% of the 43 Electoral Divisions (ED's) experiencing population growth.

The 2011 Census shows that 69% of the population in Louth is classified as urban and 31% classified as rural. This is due to the presence within the County of the two largest regional towns in the State, the Gateway Town of Dundalk and the Primary Development Centre of Drogheda. Although County Louth is more urbanised than other border counties, the rural settlements and countryside have still experienced unprecedented housing demand and growth over a continued period since the 1996 Census. In terms of the population growth it is noted that whilst the population of Dundalk and Drogheda has increased by 7.3% and 4.9% respectively over the 2006-2011 period, the percentage increase in population in the rural areas of Louth has been significantly higher, with the Louth Rural Area DED experiencing 23.3% growth over the same period despite being the smallest of the three rural DED's in the County. The two other rural DED's of Dundalk Rural and Ardee No 1. Rural each experienced growth of 12.7%.

The 2011 Census revealed that 12.4% of all dwellings in County Louth were unoccupied on census night which is slightly below the national average of 14.7%. However, almost 10% of these dwellings, accounting for 631 units, consisted of holiday homes. Within the rural electoral divisions

¹ OPDM Sustainable Communities Plan, 2003

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Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy

of Carlingford and Drummullagh (Omeath), the number of unoccupied dwellings was significantly higher, as detailed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Unoccupied Dwellings – Census Night 2011

	Occupied	Unoccupied	Total Housing Stock	% Vacancy Rate
Carlingford	671	490	1161	40.4
Drummullagh (Omeath)	437	258	695	34.8
Greenore	390	132	522	23.8
<i>County Louth</i>	<i>44,971</i>	<i>6,373</i>	<i>51344</i>	<i>12.4</i>

Sources: CSO 2011

This represents a very significant level of vacancy and is reflective of the demand for holiday homes and second homes prevalent in these highly scenic areas. Since 2006 this problem may have been further compounded by additional house completions and whilst the vacancy rate has fallen from 13.4% to 12.4%, the actual number of vacant units in the County has increased by 4.4% (2006: 6,107 to 2011: 6,373).

Within the County Plan area (excluding Dundalk and Environs and Drogheda and Northern Environs), as of 2013 there were extant planning permissions for 1,711 dwelling units, some 15 unfinished residential developments and 349 new dwellings which were vacant.

It is important to achieve population growth within the designated growth centres in order to achieve the critical population mass necessary to sustain high level services, community and recreational facilities and a strong level of job creation.

2.6 Settlement Hierarchy

The settlement hierarchy for the county is set out in Table 2.2. The aim is to allocate population growth in order to achieve the critical population mass necessary to sustain high level services, community and recreational facilities and a strong level of job creation in line with the principles of the **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002** and the **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022**. In this regard, the hierarchy is consistent with that set out in the Regional Planning Guideline's for the Border Region. The hierarchy supports balanced development throughout the county in parallel with the growth of Dundalk as a Gateway and Drogheda as a Primary Development Centre and the strengthening of their links to other significant urban centres in the border region and beyond. These reflect the principles of the Core Strategy.

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Table 2.2 Settlement Hierarchy Based on County Role

Level	Role		Settlements
1	Large Growth Town I	Key destination, economically active, supporting surrounding areas, located on a multi-modal corridor.	Dundalk & Drogheda
2	Moderate Sustainable Growth Town	10km from large growth town on public transportation corridor, serve rural hinterland as market towns.	Ardee & Dunleer
3	Small towns	Good bus or rail links; circa 10km from large growth towns.	Annagassan, Baltray, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Carlingford, Clogherhead, Collon, Dromiskin, Louth Village, Omeath, Knockbridge, Tallanstown, Termonfeckin, Tullyallen
4	Villages	Serve smaller rural catchment, provide local services with some smaller scale rural enterprises in a number of such villages.	Bellurgan, Ballagan, Ballapousta, Darver, Dromin, Faughart, Glenmore, Grange, Grangebellew, Greenore, Gyles Quay, Kilcurry, Kilkerry, Lordship, Mountbagnal, Muchgrange, Phillipstown, Ravensdale, Reaghstown, Sandpit, Sheelagh, Stabannon, Tinure Willville

Source: Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022

2.7 Rural Settlements/Countryside

County Louth contains significant rural areas and it is recognised that there is a need to protect and support rural settlements and the countryside by accommodating limited growth in accordance with the needs of genuine rural dwellers whilst providing careful management of our physical and environmental resources. All of County Louth falls within '*rural areas under strong urban influence*' as defined by the **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002** by reason of its proximity to Dublin and its strong urban structure and for this reason, to facilitate the careful management of rural one-off housing in County Louth, Local Needs Qualifying Criteria have been outlined in detail in Section 2.19.1 of this Plan.

The rural villages & settlements and the countryside represent a smaller proportion of the allocated overall growth for the County over the plan period (2.3% growth in the Level 4 Settlements and 22.7% in the countryside). Policies and objectives to manage their future development are contained in this chapter.

2.8 Preferred Development Strategy

The preferred development strategy for County Louth has been informed by the **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region, 2010-2022** and by the environmental sensitivities of the County. The strategy is based inter alia on building strong urban centres while protecting the rural hinterlands. The focus of the strategy is on achieving;

- Critical mass in the large growth towns of Dundalk & Drogheda, at the moderate sustainable growth towns of Ardee and Dunleer and at key small towns (Annagassan, Baltray, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Carlingford, Clogherhead, Collon, Dromiskin, Louth Village, Omeath, Knockbridge, Tallanstown, Termonfeckin, Tullyallen);
- The development of 24 smaller rural settlements capable of providing local services with some smaller scale rural enterprises;
- Managing development in rural areas with a focus on agricultural diversification, appropriate rural enterprise and the strengthening of existing town and villages; and
- Protecting the environment by implementing an environmental protection policy which recognises the various environmentally sensitive zones within the County but which does not mutually exclude appropriate and otherwise acceptable uses and development.

2.9 Future Population Growth

The Core Strategy as adopted by **Variation No.2 of the Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015** contains a comprehensive approach to the allocation of population in the county up to 2016. This 2015-2021 Core Strategy is building upon the established policy of allocating target population in compliance with the **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022**, in a rational and sustainable manner.

The population projections for County Louth for 2021 are detailed in Table 2.3. These are based on the Regional Planning Guidelines population projections for 2022, discounted by 1.24%, reflecting the predicted annual percentage population growth rate for that year.

The Regional Planning Guideline's set out the target population increase to be allocated to Dundalk, Drogheda and to the remainder of the County. The upper Level of the county's settlement hierarchy (Level 1) comprises Dundalk and Drogheda. In order to promote and facilitate the achievement of critical mass within the Gateway of Dundalk and develop Drogheda as an important strategic urban settlement some 60% of future population growth is directed towards these two towns.

The remaining 40% of the population and household growth is to be directed to the moderate sustainable growth towns of Dunleer & Ardee (Level 2), the Level 3 smaller towns, the Level 4 villages and the rural areas. This is represented by the remaining share in Table 2.4.

Table 2.3 Population Projection for County Louth 2016-2021

Year	County	Dundalk	Drogheda*	Remaining Share (County)
2016	132,648	42,300	35,373	54,975
2021	141,050	46,622	37,944	56,484

*Drogheda refers to Drogheda Town and its Environs which lie in County Louth.

2.9.1 Allocation of Population in the Settlement Hierarchy

Having regard to the population target figures in Table 2.3 for the County as a whole, Table 2.4 illustrates the target population within the county settlement hierarchy. The remaining share (that is 1,509 persons) has been distributed between the remaining levels within the settlement hierarchy and the rural areas directly in proportion to their associated projected 2016 populations.

Some 28% of rural housing will be accommodated within Level 3 and Level 4 settlements while the remainder will comprise 'one – off' type houses within rural areas.

Table 2.4 Distribution of Existing and Proposed Populations in the Settlement Hierarchy

	Projected Population 2016	Projected Population 2021	Increase in Population	Equivalent Residential Units
Louth	132,648	141,050	8,402	3,111
Dundalk & Environs	42,300	46,622	4,322	1,600
Drogheda & Northern Environs	35,373	37,944	2,571	952
Ardee	4,841	4,970	129	48
Dunleer	1,688	1,751	63	23
Level 3 Settlements	13,669	14,008	339	125
Level 4 Settlements	2,003	2,033	30	11
Rural Area	32,774	33,722	948	351

2.9.2 Allocation of Population within the Remaining Share of the County 2016-2021

A population growth of 1,509 is allocated to the County area outside of Dundalk and Drogheda. The moderate sustainable growth towns of Ardee & Dunleer (Level 2), the Level 3 smaller towns, the Level 4 villages and the rural areas will accommodate an additional 559 households over the period of this Plan.

The importance of Ardee as the third largest settlement in the county after Dundalk and Drogheda is recognised by the **Louth County Development Plan 2015 – 2021**. It is placed at Level 2 in the settlement hierarchy along with Dunleer. The Plan and the Core Strategy promote the development of Ardee as a medium size town for urban strengthening to serve the needs of the local community and drive development within the locality. They also facilitate the growth of Dunleer with associated community facilities, services and employment opportunities. This growth should be commensurate with growth in economic activity, provision of public transport and in line with capacity in water services. The phasing of housing lands as set out in their respective local area plans should ensure

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that these towns grow at a suitable and sustainable scale, appropriate to their position in the hierarchy. As detailed in Table 2.4, an additional 48 houses have been allocated to Ardee and 23 houses to Dunleer.

Level 3 Settlements have experienced unprecedented residential growth during Ireland's property boom. The growth experienced in Tullyallen, Termonfeckin, Clogherhead, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran and Dromiskin was largely based on commuter development. Economic development has not matched the rate of population growth and there has been severe pressure on social infrastructure and demand for school places. Carlingford and Omeath have experienced substantial residential development pressure, due to the attractiveness of their locations on Carlingford Lough, for second homes and investment properties. Within these settlements there are high rates of dwelling vacancy. The continued development of these villages in the absence of supporting infrastructure would exacerbate existing unsustainable commuting patterns and speculative development. Furthermore, such development would jeopardise the achievement of critical mass in Dundalk and Drogheda.

Settlement Plans for Annagassan, Baltray, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Carlingford, Clogherhead, Collon, Dromiskin, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Omeath, Tallanstown, Termonfeckin and Tullyallen, including zoning maps and objectives, are now included within the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021**. A total increase in population of 339, equivalent to 125 households, is allocated to these settlements.

Level Four in the settlement hierarchy comprises 24 smaller rural settlements. They contain some undeveloped lands which are not the subject of land use zoning objectives. However each settlement has a development envelope as set out in Appendix 2, Volume 2 (a), within which one-off type housing is provided for subject to local qualifying criteria, in order to assist in satisfying rural generated housing need. Within each Level 4 settlement densities of 5 houses per hectare are permissible.

A collective target increase in population of 30 is allocated to these settlements. Given their limited size it is not considered appropriate or necessary to distribute this figure to the individual settlements. It is the policy of the County Development Plan to restrict residency in Level 4 settlements to county based local needs. It will therefore be important to monitor the demand for residential development. If required, policy pertaining to local needs qualification may be reassessed in the review of this Plan.

In relation to the rural areas, in line with population projections it is considered reasonable to allow for 351 rural housing units over this Plan period. **DECLG** guidelines state that where local needs assessment criteria have been satisfied and subject to compliance with stated requirements in relation to location, environment etc, rural housing needs should be accommodated. This principle has been encompassed in the rural housing policy in this chapter.

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Table 2.5 Potential Housing and Population Growth within Settlements

	Extrapolated Population Levels 2016	Population Target Levels 2021	Household Allocation to 2021	Average Density	Existing Undeveloped Land	Housing Land Required (ha) up to 2016	Housing Land Required (ha) up to 2021	Excess (including Strategic Reserve)
Dundalk & Environs	42,300	46,622	4,322	42	904	51	57	796
Drogheda & Environs	35,373	37,944	2,571	40	355	40.3	36	277
Ardee	4,841	4,970	129	30	60	11	2.4	46.6
Dunleer	1,688	1,751	63	30	14.4	4.5	1.15	8.75
Level 3 Settlements	13,669	14,008	339	20	150.9	21	9.375	120.525
Level 4 Settlements	2,003	2,033	30	5	-	18.6	3.3	-
Rural Area	32,774	33,722	948	-	-			-
Total	132,648	141,050	8,402	-	1589.93	146.4	108.07	

**Headroom requirement of 50% extra over and above actual predicted land / unit requirements has been included in these figures.*

2.10 Phasing and Release of Residential Zoned Lands

Table 2.6 illustrates the availability of zoned land in each of the top four Levels of the settlement hierarchy, the household allocation for 2016 – 2021, housing land requirement and excess in zoning. The density consigned to each settlement has had regard to **Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009 (DECLG)**, within the county settlement hierarchy in addition to public infrastructure.

Phasing of housing lands has been implemented to ensure that towns and villages grow at a suitable and sustainable scale, appropriate to their position in the settlement hierarchy. For Dundalk and Drogheda, this phasing will be provided for in their respective Core Strategies, as part of the preparation of their respective local area plans. To manage the sustainable development of Ardee and Dunleer, additional residential development will be phased as part of the review of their respective local area plans and will be consistent with their Core Strategies.

In order to ensure consistency between the Core Strategy and household allocations and residential zoned land requirement within the Level 3 Settlement it is necessary to address the excess of residential zoning. As detailed in Table 2.6, the overall target growth in these centres is 339 persons amounting to 125 residential units. Based on an average of 20 units per hectare this equates to 9.375 hectares. This figure includes 50% head room for market choice. Hence there is currently an excess of 28.59 hectares residential zoning.

The following three mechanisms have been considered in addressing this excess:

1. *Prioritising / phasing of development – by indicating on relevant maps and tables, where surplus capacity of land will be regarded as a strategic reserve and that proposals for the development of such lands for housing shall not be considered for development purposes during the plan period.*
2. *Alternative Objectives – by indicating lands will be considered for alternative appropriate uses within the plan period such as employment, amenity, community or other uses.*
3. *Discontinuing the Objective –by deletion of the zoning objective and related lands from the written statement and maps of the development plan.*

In consideration of the above options cognisance has been taken of the need to consolidate these settlements by keeping them as physically compact as possible and applying the sequential approach to land-use zoning. A prioritising / phased approach encompassing organic growth from the centre of the settlement outwards has been particularly utilised, having regard to the settlement function. Additional factors have been taken into consideration including; environmental constraints, capacity of environmental infrastructure, availability of community, social and commercial facilities, accessibility, taking into account the availability of physical and social infrastructure and cognisance of the built and natural environment.

The inclusion of such lands as Strategic Reserve will not in any way imply a prior commitment on the part of Louth County Council regarding their future zoning during the preparation of the subsequent County Development Plan for the period 2021-2027.

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Table 2.6 Residential Zoning in Level 3 Settlements

Settlement	Target Population Allocation 2021	Household Allocation 2016 - 2021	Allocated Housing Land 2010 – 2016 (Ha)	Allocated Housing Land 2016 – 2021 (Ha)	Aver. Density unit/ ha	Undeveloped Land Available (Ha)	Strategic Reserve [^] (Ha)
Annagassan	339	125	2	Infill	20	2	0
Baltray			1.96	Infill	20	1.96	4.79
Carlingford			3.93	1.15	20	5.08	12.10
Castlebellingham/ Kilsaran			6	5.4	20	11.4	10.28
Clogherhead			4	Infill	20	4	1.07
Collon			2	0.3	20	2.3	2.11
Dromiskin			6.2	1.356	20	7.556	7.39
Knockbridge			1.3	0.55	20	1.85	0
Louth Village			1.3	5.85	20	7.15	7.9
Omeath			1.62	Infill	20	1.62	16.57
Tallanstown			1.7	0.5	20	2.2	3.5
Termonfeckin			6.2	2.47	20	8.67	24.84
Tullyallen			2.7	1.63	20	4.33	0.166
Total			40.91	18.056		60.35	90.55

Policy

- CS 1** To promote the household and population growth in the County in accordance with Table 2.5 and 2.6 of the Core Strategy.
- CS 2** To facilitate orderly and sustainable development in Level 3 Settlements for the duration of this plan, through the implementation of an overall phasing strategy as follows:
- (i) Phase I of residential development comprises of residential development which forms part of mixed development in defined village centres (as zoned), additional residential land which facilitates the consolidation and organic growth of these settlements as identified in the land use maps contained within the settlement plans and infill development.
- CS 3** To require that a 'Core Strategy Population and Phasing Statement' will be submitted with all planning applications for residential development on zoned land detailing how the application complies with the core strategy household allocations and phasing proposals included in the settlement plan.

2.11 Economic Strategy, Infrastructure & Services, Heritage & Retail

2.11.1 Economic Strategy

The strategy for the future economic development of the County is outlined in Chapter 6 of this Plan and seeks to focus development on strategic economic growth centres and supporting economic growth towns to allow County Louth to reach its potential and maximise its contribution to the economy in a sustainable manner.

It is accepted that the majority of economic growth will be focused on the two principle urban areas of Dundalk and Drogheda. ***The County Louth Economic Development Strategy 2009-2015*** also recognises that there is considerable scope for economic opportunities in rural Louth. Outside of the Level 1 centres of Dundalk & Drogheda, the Level 2 centres of Ardee and Dunleer are promoted as the principle centres of employment and investment. The Level 3 settlements of Annagassan, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Clogherhead, Collon, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Tallanstown, Termonfeckin and Tullyallen are considered suitable for small scale business and enterprise and lands have accordingly been identified and zoned for employment activities.

See also Chapter 6 Economic Development, Tourism & Retail

Policy

- CS 4** To support the development of identified growth centres of Dundalk and Drogheda, as focal points for regional critical massing and employment growth.
- CS 5** To encourage and facilitate new employment opportunities within the Level 2 Settlements of Ardee and Dunleer,
- CS 6** To promote and attract economic activity at the Level 3 Settlements of Annagassan, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Clogherhead, Collon, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Tallanstown, Termonfeckin and Tullyallen,

2.11.2 Infrastructure & Services

The Core Strategy will seek to achieve and support the aims of national policy as contained in **“Transport 21, a Sustainable Transport Future –A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020”**, **the Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012**, **National Cycle Policy Framework**, **Smarter Travel** and other relevant policy which may evolve during the course of the Plan. The key aims of these documents include maximizing the efficient use of the transport network, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, reducing transport emissions, improving accessibility to transport, adopting a hierarchy of transport users with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the top of the hierarchy and considering land use planning and transport planning together.

The provisions of infrastructure and supporting services for development, particularly water and waste water services, is critical. This Plan has been discussed with Irish Water, who has given assurances that the Core Strategy as proposed in accordance with the projected population growth from the Regional Planning Guidelines can be accommodated.

See also Chapter 7 Transport

2.11.3 Heritage

Heritage is recognised as an important environmental and economic resource and its conservation and enhancement is a major objective of the **Louth County Development Plan, 2015-2021**. A key challenge is to balance the protection of our natural and built environment with the pressure for development. It is therefore important to formulate policies and objectives for the protection and management of our heritage resources. This is achieved by the objectives of the **“Draft Louth Heritage Plan, 2014-2018”** and the **“Draft Louth Biodiversity Action Plan, 2014-2018”**.
(See also Chapter 5 Heritage Natural & Built)

2.11.4 Retail

Louth County Council aim to ensure that all retail development permitted is in accordance with the **Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012** and the **Retail Design Manual – A Good Practice Guide, 2012** and the **Louth Retail Strategy**. The Retail Strategy, 2014 sets out the indicative potential for additional convenience, comparison and bulky household goods floor space in the towns of Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee, over the lifetime of the **Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015** and for the three years beyond. The potential floor space capacity for each town is in accordance with the settlement and retail hierarchy of the County and has been proportioned in accordance with population target of the aforementioned settlements for 2021.

2.12 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

The Plan contains robust policies and objectives in relation to Flood Risk Management, which are designed to ensure that proposed developments in areas at risk of flooding shall conform to “**The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009**”. In this regard Appendix 13, Volume 2 (b) includes a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for County Louth, whose baseline data is derived from the Office of Public Works (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) data, the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Management (PFRAM) data and the Areas of Further Assessment (AFA).

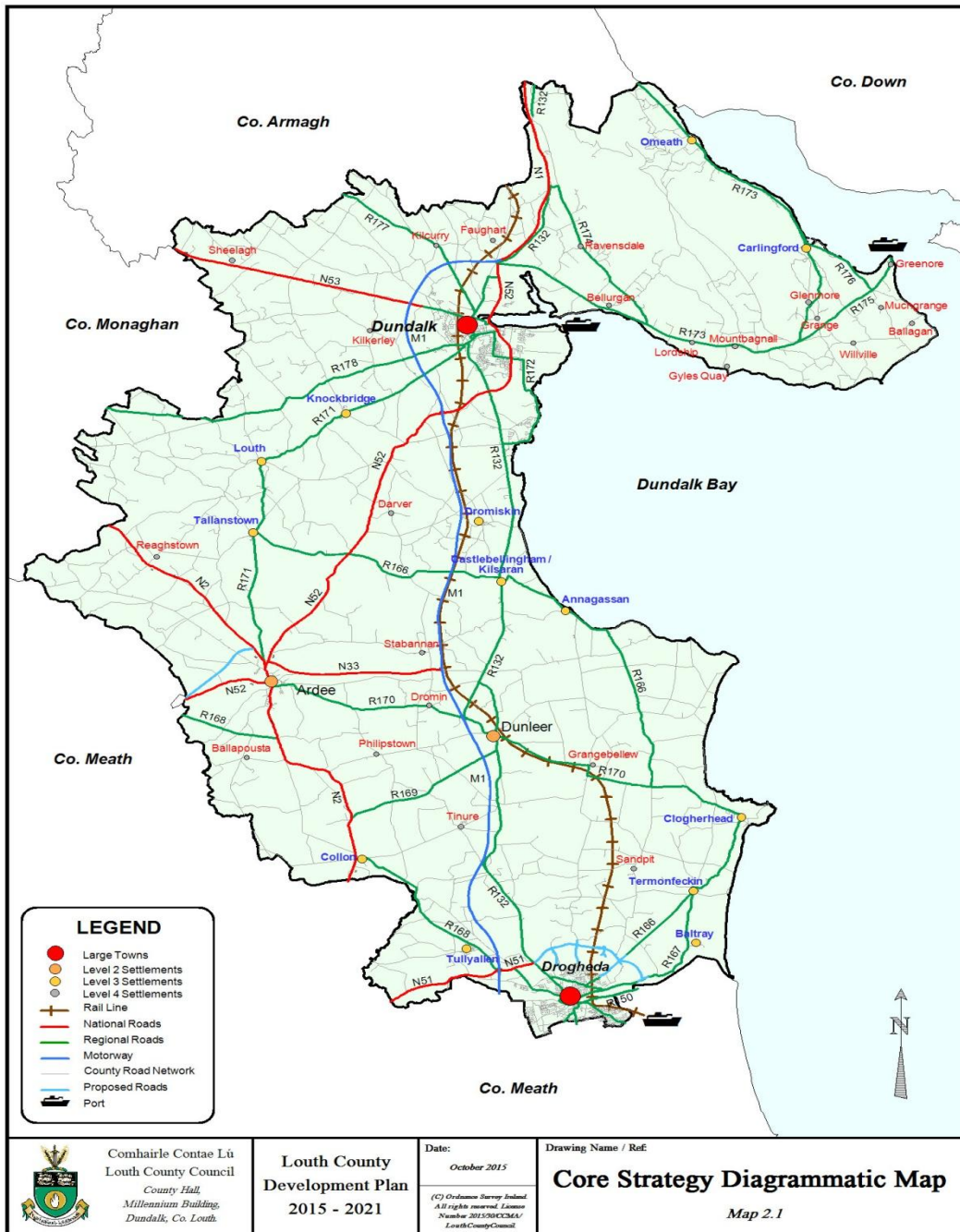
2.13 Conclusion to Core Strategy

The success of the Core Strategy will be dependent on the ability of Louth County Council to channel development into the identified settlements. Whilst the policies of the Plan promote and facilitate this, the success of these will be the extent to which development outside these designated settlements can be managed.

Monitoring of how many one-off dwellings are granted permission, constructed and their location is vital for identifying those areas of the County which are under the most urban pressure. Such details are important in planning terms as they form the basis for monitoring the effectiveness of the policies contained in the 2015 -2021 Plan, and will form the basis for future policy.

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Map 2.1 Core Strategy Diagrammatic Map



2.14 Settlement Strategy

The aim of this Settlement Strategy is to confirm the settlement hierarchy within the County, promote sustainable residential development within existing towns and villages and to make provision for sustainable housing in the rural areas of the County.

The policies as set out in this section of the Plan seek to build upon the provisions of the **Louth County Development Plan 2009 – 2015** while having regard to national and regional policy and guidelines.

Over the period of the previous 2009-2015 Plan, with the onset of the economic downturn, the pressure for residential development in the towns and villages of County Louth declined though the demand for one-off houses in the rural areas has remained strong. The availability of more affordable housing in County Louth in comparison to other areas closer to Dublin City, together with enhanced transport infrastructure, resulted in the generation of considerable commuter traffic to the capital.

The Settlement Strategy set out in the Plan acknowledges the primary positions of Dundalk and Drogheda as Level 1 Settlements at the top of the settlement hierarchy. The Plan seeks to prioritise sustainable residential development in these towns and their environs that they may achieve critical mass and enhance their capacity to attract new investment, employment, services and improved public transport.

The Settlement Strategy also seeks to guide the sympathetic development of Ardee, Dunleer and other towns, villages and settlements in a fashion that will promote sustainable forms of development, that is, consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the County and with the **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002** and the **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022**. In this regard, it is considered important that development permitted within the towns and villages of the County is commensurate with their existing populations and their position within the settlement hierarchy and does not result in an excessive or disproportionate level of development.

It is considered that the level of rural housing that continues to be permitted within the County, in addition to its impact on the countryside, has a potentially detrimental effect on the viability of existing settlements. This section sets out a settlement strategy based on sustaining a vibrant network of settlements across a range of urban and rural locations throughout the County that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

2.15 Population Distribution

County Louth is the most urbanised county in the state outside of Dublin. The 2011 Census figures confirm that 69% of the population of the County is classified as urban and 31% is classified as rural. The Census definition of urban is, '*settlements of 1,500 persons or more*'. Therefore, the towns of Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee, Dunleer, Carlingford and Clogherhead are within the urban definition while all other towns and villages are deemed to be rural. Table 2.7 shows the distribution

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of the population in the county vis-à-vis the urban and rural divide as per the Census classification. It also illustrates the dominance of Dundalk and Drogheda within the settlement hierarchy.

Table 2.7 Population Distribution in County Louth as per CSO definition

Settlements	Population distribution within County
Urban - Dundalk and Drogheda	57%
Urban - Ardee and Dunleer, Carlingford & Clogherhead	12%
Rural towns, villages and countryside	31%

2.16 Settlement Hierarchy

The Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015 set out a clearly identifiable five level settlement hierarchy, composed of both urban and rural settlements. This settlement hierarchy is based on factors such as size of population, range of services, the extent and range of community and other facilities available. The revised settlement hierarchy which now provides for 4 levels is set out in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8 Settlement Hierarchy

Level	Settlements
1	Dundalk and Drogheda
2	Ardee and Dunleer
3	Annagassan, Baltray, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Carlingford, Clogherhead, Collon, Dromiskin, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Omeath, Tallanstown, Termonfeckin, Tullyallen.
4	Bellurgan, Ballagan, Ballapousta, Darver, Dromin, Faughart, Glenmore, Grange, Grangebellew, Greenore, Gyles Quay, Kilcurry, Kilkerry, Lordship, Mountbagnal, Muchgrange, Philipstown (Collon), Ravensdale, Reaghstown, Sandpit, Sheelagh, Stabannon Tinure, Willville

Policy

SS 1 To maintain the settlement hierarchy within the County and to encourage residential development within each settlement that is commensurate with its position in the hierarchy and the availability of public services and facilities.

2.16.1 Level 1: Dundalk

The urban area of Dundalk and its environs, with a population of 37,816 in 2011, is designated as a Gateway in the *National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002* and the *Spatial Settlement Strategy of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022*. It is projected that it will grow to 46,622 during the lifetime of this Development Plan, to a level where it can support a wide range of services and facilities that will provide higher levels of economic activity, growth and development. Occupying a strategic position approximately mid way between Belfast and Dublin, Dundalk is also the administrative capital of County Louth. It contains not only the offices of the County Council, but also the regional offices of the IDA and Enterprise Ireland. The town contains a highly regarded third level educational institution, namely the Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT).

Infrastructural improvements including road, rail, telecommunications and broadband services provide excellent connectivity with Dublin, Drogheda, Newry, Navan and the *National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002* hub towns of Cavan and Monaghan. The Council sees significant potential for the growth of Dundalk and its environs and will endeavor to ensure that the town and its environs reaches its population target of 46,622 by 2021 and fulfils its role as a designated gateway.

The council will also co-operate with northern authorities in the interest of promoting development in Dundalk and the North-East sub-region and to promote projects that are mutually beneficial to both areas, north and south.

2.16.2 Level 1: Drogheda

Drogheda has been identified as a Primary Development Centre in the *National Spatial Strategy (NSS)* and the *Spatial Settlement Strategy of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022*. Its population, in the 2011 Census of Population was 32,453 (including the Northern Environs of Drogheda). Over the last decade, the town has experienced significant growth principally resulting from its location close to Dublin, the completion of the motorway and improvements to rail commuter services.

While acknowledging Drogheda's role as a commuter town, the Council is keen to support the policies and objectives of the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan, particularly having regard to the objective of developing the town as a self-sustaining Primary Development Centre that will energise development within its own catchment.

2.16.3 Drogheda Northern Environs

In 2004, the Council prepared a **Local Area Plan (LAP) for the Northern Environs of Drogheda** which provided for the phased development of three new neighbourhoods capable of accommodating an additional population of 20,000 inhabitants. A detailed master plan for the area was prepared in 2006 and adopted by the Council as a variation of the Local Area Plan. To date, planning permission has been granted for a total of circa 5,051 new dwellings within the Northern Environs Area. It is envisaged that during the life of this Plan, a single Local Area Plan will be prepared for Drogheda and the Northern Environs Area.

2.16.4 Preparation of Local Areas Plan's for Dundalk and Drogheda

The statutory development plan for the urban and surrounding environs area of Dundalk is currently the **Dundalk & Environs Development Plan 2009-2015**, while the corresponding statutory development plan for the urban area of Drogheda is the **Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017**. **The Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** will be an overarching Development Plan for the entire county including Dundalk and Drogheda. Whilst Development Plans are currently in place for both Dundalk and Drogheda, following the adoption of the new **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021**, the existing respective development plans for the urban areas of Dundalk & Drogheda will be reviewed and ultimately replaced by Local Area Plans. The local area plans for Dundalk and Drogheda will be sub-sets of and will be consistent with the provisions of the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021**.

Policy	
SS 2	To facilitate the development of Dundalk and Drogheda and to maintain their positions at the top of the settlement hierarchy.
SS 3	To review the <i>Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009 – 2015</i> and to prepare a Local Area Plan for Dundalk and Environs which will be consistent with the provisions of the County Plan.
SS 4	To review the <i>Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017</i> and to prepare a Local Area Plan for Drogheda and Environs which will be consistent with the provisions of the County Plan.
SS 5	To ensure that the expansion of Drogheda to include the Northern Environs, takes place in an orderly and sustainable fashion that will support the growth of Drogheda and not

detract from the vitality and viability of its town centre.

SS 6 Aspects relating to Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Dunleer shall be incorporated as part of the review of their respective Local Area Plans.

2.16.5 Level 2: Ardee

The population of Ardee increased from 4,301 in 2006, to 5,216 in 2011, representing an increase of 21.2%. This was mainly as a result of commuter-based demand for residential development facilitated by the improved road infrastructure. This demand is likely to continue, given Ardee's proximity to the greater Dublin area, albeit at a slower rate.

The Council considers that Ardee's function as a local service and employment centre within the mid Louth area should be protected and enhanced. Consequently, the growth of the town will be managed in a manner that provides for gradual expansion, in line with provisions of additional employment opportunities, community facilities and services.

The current **Ardee Local Area Plan 2010-2016** seeks to promote consolidation and achieve a more balanced growth towards the northern section of the town. It is envisaged that this Local Area Plan will be reviewed following the adoption of the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021**.

2.16.6 Level 2: Dunleer

Dunleer is substantially smaller than Ardee with a population of 1,780 in 2011. **The Dunleer Local Area Plan 2010-2016** aims to consolidate and strengthen Dunleer's role as an important economic, social, cultural, residential and service centre in the mid Louth area to cater for a population in the region of 3,500. The increased population of Dunleer will contribute to the critical mass within the catchments of both Dundalk and Drogheda and should reduce the demand for dispersed one-off housing in the countryside.

Policy

SS 7 To promote the town of Ardee as a prosperous and thriving local development and service town for Mid- Louth and bordering areas of Monaghan and Meath, where no individual or social group is excluded from the benefits of development and where the principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability including protection of the town's heritage and the natural and built environment are enshrined and to review the Ardee Local Area Plan following the adoption of the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021.

SS 8 To promote and develop the resources of Dunleer to create a self sufficient, sustainable and vibrant community which will act as a local development and service centre for the border catchment area and to review the *Dunleer Local Area Plan* following the adoption of the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021.

2.16.7 Level 3 Settlements

Level 3 Settlements contain a satisfactory range of services such as schools, churches and shops and are serviced by public piped utilities. They are characterised by a high degree of self-sufficiency and the ability to cater for limited additional residential development subject *inter alia* to capacity within the foul drainage system and public water supply. The corresponding Maps for each Level 3 Settlement are included in Appendix 2, Volume 2(a).

Policy

SS 9 To promote and facilitate limited development within Level 3 Settlements that is commensurate with the nature and extent of the existing settlement, to support their role as local service centres and to implement the policies and objectives relative to each settlement as provided for in Appendix 2, Volume 2 (a).

2.16.8 Level 4 Settlements

Level 4 Settlements are small settlements which are principally residential with limited local facilities and a lack of public foul drainage. As these settlements are not capable of being economically serviced, permitted residential development in such areas will be on the basis of individual waste water treatment systems.

Given the lack of piped utilities, it is the view of the Council that they are not capable of absorbing significant amounts of additional residential development in a proper planning and sustainable manner.

The purpose of these settlements is to assist in satisfying rural generated housing needs within a structured but low density environment as an alternative to the development of scattered one – off housing. Also, by limiting development to county based local needs, these settlements are more likely to be affordable in a restricted local market and would also offer individuals an opportunity to design and build their own home in a rural area, subject to normal planning criteria. Whilst development is anticipated to be primarily residential, low impact local services which contribute to supporting diversification and growth of the local rural economy may also be considered

Permitted development within these settlements will be on the basis of individual wastewater treatment systems, on minimum site areas of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres). This is considered necessary in order to protect the environment and preserve a degree of consistency in design and scale. There are a total of 24 Level 4 Rural Settlements. The corresponding Maps for each Level 4 Settlement are included in Appendix 2, Volume 2(a).

2.17 County Based Local Area Need for Level 4 Rural Settlements

A county based local area need refers to, *the housing need of persons who are from County Louth or who work within County Louth*. In determining what constitutes a county based local area need for Level 4 Rural Settlements, the Council will take into consideration the applicant's family, work, school and other ties with the County in addition to his or her accommodation needs.

Policy	
SS 10	To provide for the construction of one-off type houses within Level 4 Rural Settlements in order to assist in satisfying a housing and county based local area need within a structured but low density environment as an alternative to the development of scattered one – off housing.
SS 11	To restrict residential development within Level 4 Rural Settlements to that required to satisfy county based local needs and to apply an occupancy condition of 7 years in respect of all dwellings permitted therein.

2.17.1 Development Management Assessment Criteria for Level 4 Rural Settlements

The following Development Management Assessment Criteria shall be applied in relation to development within the Level 4 Rural Settlements.

Policy	
SS 12	To permit land within Level 4 Rural Settlements, for small scale multi-unit residential developments (maximum 6 units per planning application).
SS 13	Where multi-unit developments are permitted within the same landholding, Planning permission will not be granted for any additional units on the holding until the initial permitted development is fully completed and occupied.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| SS 14 | To require a minimum site area of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) for each residential unit within Level 4 Rural Settlements where serviced by an individual waste water treatment plant. |
| SS 15 | To ensure that the design and arrangement of dwellings are complementary and reflect the existing character of the settlement. In this regard applicants will be required to demonstrate that the proposal is consistent with the document <i>Building Sensitively and Sustainably in County Louth</i> and paragraph 4.7 - Rural House Design and Siting Criteria |
| SS 16 | To require that access to the public road for all dwellings will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic. |
| SS 17 | To require that all necessary services can be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment or character of the locality. |

2.18 Rural Housing

Whilst the Council acknowledges the role of rural housing in sustaining rural communities, it also recognises that uncontrolled and excessive one-off urban generated housing in the countryside is not sustainable in the long-term and accepts that measures need to be put in place to regulate this form of development. A concern arises that if one-off rural housing is permitted at the current levels, then irreparable damage will be done to the environment and the legitimate aspirations of those brought up in the countryside to continue to live within their own communities will be compromised.

The overriding aim of the Council's approach to one-off houses in the countryside is guided by the following publications;

2.18.1 National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002 recognises the long tradition of people living in rural parts of Ireland and promotes sustainable rural settlement as a means of delivering more balanced regional growth. It advises planning authorities to ensure that key assets in rural areas are protected and that account be taken of the different types of rural housing demands. It recognises that the demand for one off housing tends to come from two distinct areas;

- rural generated housing demand,
- urban generated housing demand.

Rural generated housing demand arises from persons who are indigenous to an area, have family links to the area and/or who work in a type of employment, intrinsic to the rural economy, which requires them to live in a rural area, to be close to their rural based employment.

Urban generated housing demand arises from persons who have no indigenous links with the rural area but who may currently live and/or work in the larger towns and villages or larger urban areas and who wish to live in a rural location or have a second home.

The **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002** emphasises that, in general, and subject to good planning practice, rural generated housing needs should be accommodated where they arise.

2.18.2. The Border Regional Authority: Regional Planning Guidelines 2010–2022

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022 state it is necessary that rural housing policy considers the impact of urban centres of all sizes on both hinterland areas and the potential for incremental urbanisation, while at the same time recognising the long-term and potential future local needs for a given area. It states that the avoidance of speculative house-building to the detriment of local needs for example, needs to be addressed in planning policy for rural housing. In accordance with the **Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005 DECLG** a local authority's Rural Housing Policy should therefore accommodate genuine rural housing need, rather than urban generated demand, the latter of which should be accommodated in zoned towns and villages.

2.18.3 Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005

The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005 DECLG were drafted in the context of the rural housing policy set out in the **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002**. Expanding on the rural policy framework, these guidelines provide that:

- People who are part of the rural community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas including those under strong urban based pressure subject to good planning practice in matters of location, siting, design and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas of high landscape value.
- Anyone wishing to build a house in rural areas suffering persistent and substantial population decline should be facilitated.
- The development of the rural environs of the major urban areas, including the gateways and hubs as identified in the **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002** and other larger towns over 5,000 in population need to be carefully managed in order to ensure their orderly development and their successful functioning in the future.

In a national context, all of County Louth falls within '*rural areas under strong urban influence*' as defined by the **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002** by reason of its proximity to Dublin and its strong urban structure.

The challenge therefore facing the Council in terms of one-off or dispersed rural housing is to ensure that rural generated housing as defined in the **National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002** and the **Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005** is accommodated in rural areas while

protecting such areas from the increasing demand for urban generated rural housing. This challenge is exacerbated by the pressures deriving from the County's close proximity to Dublin and the quality of both rail and road infrastructure.

See also Chapter 7 Transport

2.19 One-Off Rural Housing Policy

One-off housing refers to individually designed, detached houses primarily located on large unserviced sites in the open countryside. The overriding aim of the Council's approach to one-off houses in the countryside is guided by the ***Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005, DECLG*** wherein rural generated housing relates to those who have spent a substantial period of their lives living in a rural area as members of the established rural community. This approach seeks to accommodate, within rural areas, people who are functionally or socially part of the rural community and to resist demand for urban generated housing in the countryside.

Policy

SS 18 To permit rural generated housing in order to support and sustain existing rural communities and to restrict urban generated housing in order to protect the visual amenities and resources of the countryside, subject to the local needs qualifying criteria as set out in Section 2.19.1 below.

2.19.1 Local Needs Qualifying Criteria

In order to protect the rural areas of the County from excessive urban generated housing, the Council considers it necessary to retain the local needs provision as recommended in the document ***Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005 DECLG***. Local needs provisions apply across the entire rural area of the County. Applicants for one-off rural housing will be required to demonstrate compliance with criteria relevant to the specific Development Zone in which the dwelling is to be located. These Local Needs Qualifying Criteria are as outlined below;

Development Zone 1: To Preserve and protect the natural unspoilt physical landscape

1. Applicants are the son or daughter of a qualifying landowner. The applicant must demonstrate a rural housing need and show that they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the county for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application.

Or

2. That the applicant is providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the elderly person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

Development Zone 2: To protect the scenic quality of the landscape and facilitate development required to sustain the existing rural community.

Development Zone 3: To protect the recreational and amenity value of the coast.

Development Zone 4: To provide for a greenbelt area around the urban centres of Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee.

1. Applicant(s) is the son/daughter of a qualifying landowner. The applicant must demonstrate a rural housing need and show that they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the county for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application,

Or

2. That the applicant(s) have lived for a minimum period of 10 years in the local rural area (including cross-border), they have a rural housing need, they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the county for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application,

Or

3. That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in agriculture and that the nature of the agricultural activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be agriculture. In all cases, supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full-time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that agricultural enterprise.

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Or

4. That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise, that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation and that the applicant can demonstrate a specific functional need to live at the site of their work. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise. In such cases supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that enterprise.

Or

5. That the applicant is providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the older person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

Development Zone 5: To protect and provide for the development of agriculture and sustainable rural communities and to facilitate certain resource based and location specific developments of significant regional or national importance. Critical infrastructure projects of local, regional or national importance will also be considered within this zone.

1. Applicant(s) is the son/daughter of a qualifying landowner. The applicant must demonstrate a rural housing need and show that they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the County for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application,

Or

2. That they have lived for a minimum period of 10 years in the local rural area (including cross-border), they have a rural housing need, they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the County for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application,

Or

3. That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in agriculture and that the nature of the agricultural activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be agriculture. In all

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cases, supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full-time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that agricultural enterprise.

Or

4. That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture or rural based enterprise, that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation and that the applicant can demonstrate a specific functional need to live at the site of their work. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise. In such cases supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that enterprise.

Or

5. That the applicant is providing care for an elderly person or a person with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the older persons or person with the disability resides.

Or

6. That the applicant is required to live in a rural area for exceptional health reasons. Such applications must be accompanied by a medical consultant's report and recommendation outlining the reasons why it is necessary for the applicant to live in a rural area and also be supported by an appropriate disability organization of which the applicant is a registered member.

Development Zone 6: To preserve and protect the heritage and cultural landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the UNESCO (Tentative) World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the Site of the Battle of the Boyne.

1. Applicant(s) is the son/daughter of a qualifying landowner in the local rural area (including cross-border) and where the applicant has resided in the family home on the landholding for a minimum period of 10 years. The applicant must demonstrate a rural housing need and show that (i) they do not already own a house or have not owned a house within the rural area of the county for a minimum of 5 years prior to making an application and (ii) that they do not own land outside of the buffer area of the ***UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne*** and/or

the UNESCO (Tentative) World Heritage Site of Monasterboice Early Medieval Monastic Site and (iii) that they comply with either (a) or (b) as outlined below,

- (a) That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in agriculture and that the nature of the agricultural activity, by reference to the area of land and/or the intensity of its usage, is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be agriculture. In all cases, supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full-time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that agricultural enterprise, or
- (b) That the applicant is actively and significantly involved in the bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise, that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation and that the applicant can demonstrate a specific functional need to live at the site of their work. Where the applicant is employed in a part time basis, the predominant occupation shall be bloodstock and equine industry, forestry, agri-tourism or horticulture sectors or rural based enterprise. In such cases supporting documentation outlining that the nature of the activity is sufficient to support full time or significant part time work shall be provided. The proposed dwelling shall be on a site immediately adjacent to or within the boundaries of that enterprise.

Or

2. That the applicant is providing care for an elderly person(s) or a person(s) with a disability who lives in an isolated rural area and who does not have any able bodied person residing with them. One house only will be allowed on this basis and the site must be adjacent to the dwelling in which the elderly person(s) or person(s) with the disability resides.

Policy

SS 19 To require that applicants for one-off rural housing demonstrate compliance with the Local Needs Qualifying Criteria relevant to the respective Development Zone as set out in Section 2.19.1 above

2.19.2 Definition of Local Rural Area

In addition to establishing criteria for local needs qualification, it is also considered necessary to have a clear definition of 'local rural area' in order to implement the rural housing policy. For the purposes of this plan, local rural area is defined as

"being a radius of six kilometres from the qualifying rural family residence. Where the qualifying area is reduced by reason of its location, for example, proximity to the coast, county boundaries or development zone boundaries, the six kilometer (6km) radius may be extended to include an area equivalent to the area lost".

For the purposes of this definition it shall be the case that the rural area excludes those lands which lie within Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Settlements inclusive.

2.19.3 Definition of (Cross-Border) Local Rural Area

In addition to establishing criteria for local needs qualification, it is also considered necessary to have a clear definition of '(cross border) local rural area' in order to implement the rural housing policy. Where an individual can demonstrate by credible documentary form, to the satisfaction of the Council that they have long standing links to a local rural area which crosses the Louth County border from an adjacent county, permission may be granted for a dwelling within County Louth for the applicant. Applicants in this category must demonstrate compliance with the qualifying criteria as detailed in Section 2.19.1.

Any development permitted must accord with the policies applicable to the relevant Development Zone located within County Louth.

In all cases, a maximum radius from the County border of 0.5 km will be applied. Those living in townlands located in urban areas which extend into rural areas will not be eligible to apply for permission under this qualification criterion.

Policy

SS20 To consider the local area for the purposes of assessing one-off rural housing applications encompassing a maximum radius from the Louth County border of 0.5 km. Applicants must demonstrate compliance with the qualifying criteria as detailed in Section 2.19.1.

2.19.4 Removal of Occupancy Condition

The onset of a national economic recession since the adoption of the **2009-2015 County Development Plan** has witnessed an increasing frequency of instances where the occupancy clause attached to planning permissions for new dwellings in rural areas is contributing to genuine hardship of a financial nature. There have also been instances where the clause has inhibited individuals / families who must relocate due to personal health related issues.

The planning authority operates entirely in line with the recommendations set out in the **Sustainable Rural Housing, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005** when applying occupancy conditions. The application of occupancy conditions to all planning permissions for new dwellings in rural areas of County Louth reflects the developmental demand for one-off housing experienced across the county and the fact that the entire County is recognised as being under strong urban influence both from within and beyond the County.

However where such cases do arise, a new planning application may be made to the effect of seeking the removal of the occupancy condition. In assessing such applications the Planning Authority must be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the case is genuine and will require evidence of same.

Any development permitted must accord with the policies applicable to the relevant Development Zone located within County Louth.

Policy

SS21 To only consider the removal of occupancy conditions by way of a planning application made to the effect of seeking the retention of the dwelling together with removal of the occupancy condition. The planning authority in assessing such cases must be satisfied that there is genuine hardship arising from the inability of the applicant to dispose of the property. As such the authority will require;

Written evidence from the financial institution responsible for the applicant's financial affairs verifying the nature and scale of the difficulties being encountered

In cases where there is a health problem which necessitates disposal of the property, the application should be supported by relevant documentation from a registered medical consultant.

Sales of dwellings qualifying under these extreme circumstances will not attract the requirement that potential purchasers must be eligible under the appropriate qualifying criteria for the area.

SS 22 In those cases where for financial or other reasons, construction has been suspended on a rural dwelling indefinitely, the Council will consider removing restrictions on the purchase of such dwellings to permit their completion. In all cases the council must be satisfied that works are in situ. The planning authority will only consider the lifting of occupancy conditions by way of a planning application made to the effect of seeking the retention and completion of the dwelling together with removal of the occupancy condition. The planning authority in assessing such cases must be satisfied that there is genuine hardship arising from the inability of the applicant to dispose of the property. As such the authority will require;

Written evidence from the financial institution responsible for the applicant's financial affairs verifying the nature and scale of the difficulties being encountered. In cases where there is a health problem which necessitates disposal of the property, the application should be supported by relevant documentation from a registered medical consultant.

Sales of dwellings qualifying under these extreme circumstances will not attract the requirement that potential purchasers must be eligible under the appropriate qualifying criteria for the area. This shall not apply in those cases where a planning permission has expired.

2.19.5 Definition of Qualifying Land Owner

For the purposes of this Plan, a Qualifying Landowner is defined as being where a person has owned a landholding of at least 3 hectares for a minimum of 10 years.

2.19.6 Application of Occupancy Conditions

Louth County Council is committed to attaching occupancy conditions to any one-off rural dwelling granted in the rural areas and within any Level 4 Settlement stating that when completed, the dwelling shall be first occupied as a place of permanent residence by the applicant or his/her heirs, and shall remain so occupied for a period of at least 7 years. This is in accordance with *the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005 and Circular SP 5/08* issued by the (DECLG).

Policy

- SS 23** To attach an occupancy condition of 7 years in respect of all planning permissions for new dwellings in rural areas and Level 4 Settlements.

2.19.7 Development Management Assessment Criteria for One-Off Rural Housing

In addition to compliance with the above rural housing policy, the Council will have regard, *inter alia*, to the following considerations in assessing all applications for one-off rural houses:

- The cumulative visual impact and pattern of development of existing houses and permissions granted in the vicinity of the site,
- The cumulative visual impact, pattern of development and number of houses developed and granted permission on the landholding,
- The quality and capacity of the road network serving the site,
- Breaking the skyline and visual impact,
- Existing hedgerows and trees which would be affected by the proposed development,
- Use of materials which are traditional and indigenous to the area as far as practical,
- Impact on farming practice and rural based activities,
- Traffic safety,
- Impact on natural resources and landscapes,
- Siting of house, how house fits into the landscape and avails of existing natural shelter,
- Site suitability in terms of drainage and compliance with EPA guidelines,
- Suitable landscaping proposals,
- Orientation so as to maximise heat and light from the sun,
- Sustainable energy uses,
- Flood risk considerations where apparent,
- Regard to applicable policies in the Chapter 7 'Transport'.

Policy

- SS 24** To ensure that the proposed development is consistent with the strategic objective for the development zone in which it is located as set out in Table 3.2 of this Plan.
- SS 25** To require that applications for one-off houses demonstrate compliance with the Development Management Assessment Criteria for One-Off Rural Housing as detailed in Section 2.19.7.

SS 26	To require that the design and siting of the proposed dwelling is such that it does not detract from the rural character of the landscape or the visual amenities of the area. In this regard, applicants will be required to demonstrate that the proposal is consistent with the document <i>Building Sensitively and Sustainably in County Louth</i> and the guidelines contained in Section 2.20
SS 27	Applicants, who qualify to build within a rural area on the basis of residency within Development Zone 5, will not be deemed to qualify to build within any other development zone.
SS 28	To apply a presumption against granting planning permission within Development Zone 1 and 6 where there is an alternative site available on family lands in Development Zones 2, 3, 4 and 5.
SS 29	To apply a presumption against granting planning permission within Development Zones 2, 3 and 4 where there is an alternative site available on family lands in Development Zone 5.

2.19.8 Refurbishment of Existing Dwellings and Vernacular Buildings in Rural Areas

The stock of traditional vernacular houses in County Louth, including thatched houses, has decreased alarmingly in recent years. Whilst not perhaps affording the standard of accommodation required by the current generation, these homes are an integral part of the heritage of the County and should be retained. They usually occupy mature, well secluded settings and as such, sit very comfortably within the landscape. With carefully designed extensions and sensitive restoration, these houses can be brought up to a standard capable of meeting modern day demands. Hence, the Council will encourage applicants and owners along this path in the interests of preserving Louth's valuable vernacular heritage.

There are a range of older vernacular buildings in County Louth which are no longer needed for their original purpose. These include former school houses, churches and older traditional barns and outbuildings. The reuse and sympathetic conversion of these types of buildings can represent a sustainable approach to development in the countryside and for certain buildings may be the key to their preservation. Hence, the council will encourage the reuse of existing vernacular non-residential buildings as dwellings. The planning authority may also consider the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings in the countryside for non-residential uses, including appropriate economic, tourism and recreational uses or as local community facilities.

See also Chapter 5 – Heritage

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Policy

- SS 30** To encourage the sensitive refurbishment of existing vernacular dwellings and buildings in the interest of preserving the built heritage of County Louth.
- SS 31** To clearly demonstrate by way of a qualified structural engineers report that the roof, all external structural walls and internal walls are substantially intact and the building is physically capable of being renovated/converted without demolition.
- SS 32** To clearly demonstrate by way of a qualified structural engineers report details to protect the building from collapse prior to and during construction/renovation works.
- SS 33** To ensure that the design of the proposed refurbishment does not erode the siting, setting and character of the existing building.
- SS 34** To require that the reuse or refurbishment would maintain or enhance the form, character and architectural features, design and setting of the existing building and not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality.
- SS 35** To require that any new extensions are sympathetic to the scale, massing and architectural style and materials of the existing building;
- SS 36** To ensure that the size of any extension does not exceed 100% of the existing floor area, subject to compliance with the maximum permitted floor area of the Development Zone in which it is located.
- SS 37** To require that mature landscape features are retained and enhanced, as appropriate.
- SS 38** To require that all necessary services can be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment or character of the locality.
- SS 39** To demonstrate that the reuse or conversion would not unduly affect the amenities of nearby residents or adversely affect the continued agricultural use of adjoining land or buildings.

2.19.9 Replacement Houses

There is growing concern that the tendency to replace, rather than upgrade, older rural dwellings is depleting our vernacular rural dwellings and vernacular structures, the preservation of which is increasingly viewed as an important element of our built heritage. Accordingly, it is the Council's policy to seek to retain vernacular dwellings and structures and promote their sympathetic renovation and continued use rather than replacement. For this reason there will be a presumption against the demolition of vernacular dwellings and structures where restoration or adaptation is a feasible option. Permission will only be considered where it is demonstrated that a vernacular dwelling is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved. If a dwelling is not considered to be vernacular or does not make an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the locality, planning permission will be considered for a new dwelling. In cases where a dwelling has been recently destroyed by fire or through an accident, planning permission will be considered for a replacement dwelling.

Policy

- SS 40** To apply a presumption against the demolition of vernacular dwellings where restoration or adaptation is a feasible option.
- SS 41** To permit the replacement of a vernacular dwelling only where it is clearly demonstrated by way of a qualified structural engineers report that it is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved, where the roof, all external structural walls and internal walls are substantially intact and where the building was last used as an authorised habitable dwelling.
- SS 42** To permit the replacement of a non-vernacular dwelling only where the roof, all external structural walls and internal walls are substantially intact and where the building was last used as an authorised habitable dwelling.
- SS 43** To restrict the floor area of the replacement dwelling within all Development Zones to the maximum permitted floor area of the Development Zone in which it is located, or an additional 25% of the footprint of the existing house, whichever is the greater. Where the floor area of an existing dwelling is already in excess of the Development Zone limit, the replacement dwelling shall not exceed the original floor area (as per Table 2.9).

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SS 44	To require that the overall size of the replacement dwelling does not have a visual impact significantly greater than the existing dwelling and that the design of the replacement dwelling should be of a high quality appropriate to its rural setting and have regard to local distinctiveness.
SS 45	To require the replacement dwelling to incorporate the footprint of the replaced house.
SS 46	To only consider a replacement dwelling which does not incorporate the footprint of the original dwelling where either; (A) It is considered by the planning authority that the original dwelling position is unduly prominent and where an alternative position within the curtilage of the original dwelling would result in demonstrable landscape, heritage, access or amenity benefits, or (B) It is considered by the planning authority that the original dwelling makes an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the locality and where it is demonstrated that it is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound (for residential purposes) or otherwise improved. In this situation, retention of the existing structure will be accepted where it is sympathetically incorporated into the layout of the overall development scheme, for example as ancillary non residential accommodation or a store, to form an integrated building group.
SS 47	To require that access to the public road for all replacement houses will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.
SS 48	To require that all necessary services can be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment or character of the locality.

2.19.10 Accommodation for Dependent Relatives

The demand for accommodation to meet the needs of older people and dependent relatives will inevitably increase due to the rise in average life expectancy. This has led to a demand for custom built extensions to family dwellings or the conversion of garages or other structures within the respective curtilage for this purpose.

Where it is proposed to convert and/or extend an existing garage or outbuilding within the curtilage of a dwelling for this purpose, planning permission will depend on whether the development provides a modest scale of accommodation only and that the unit remains in the same ownership as that of the existing dwelling on the site. Where an extension to an existing garage or outbuilding is required in order to provide a satisfactory level of accommodation, the cumulative floor area of the existing and proposed shall not exceed 50 square metres.

Proposals must also accord with normal planning considerations such as the ability of the site to accommodate the unit, compliance with environmental standards, septic tank requirements, drainage, water and amenity.

Policy	
SS 49	To facilitate the provision of accommodation for older people and dependant relatives by way of a new extension to the existing dwelling, subject to <u>all</u> of the following; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development shall provide a modest scale of accommodation only and shall not exceed a gross floor area of 50 square metres,• It shall be attached to the existing dwelling,• It shall be linked internally with the existing dwelling,• It shall not have a separate access provided to the front elevation of the dwelling,• The accommodation shall remain in the same ownership as that of the existing dwelling on site.
SS 50	To facilitate the provision of accommodation for older people and dependant relatives by way of conversion of existing garage or other outbuilding within the curtilage of the existing dwelling, subject to <u>all</u> of the following; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development shall provide a modest scale of accommodation only and shall not exceed a gross floor areas of 50 square metres,• Where an extension to an existing garage or outbuilding is required in order to provide a satisfactory level of accommodation, the existing and proposed additional

floor area shall not exceed a gross floor area of 50 square metres,

- The accommodation shall remain in the same ownership as that of the existing dwelling on site.

2.19.11 Dwelling Gross Floor Areas and Minimum Site Size

It is not only the number of one-off dwellings in the countryside that has a negative impact on the character of rural areas but also their size and design. In more recent times there has been an increased demand for much larger houses, many with floor areas exceeding 400 square metres. These larger houses, many of which are poorly designed, sited and located on restricted sites, are very obtrusive and damaging to the rural landscape and environment.

It is the policy of this Plan to protect the unspoilt natural environment of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the heritage and cultural landscape, the Areas of High Scenic Quality, greenbelt areas and Louth’s coastline and as such, it is considered appropriate to limit the floor area of new dwellings in such sensitive landscapes in order to curb the visual impact of such development in these sensitive areas.

Policy

SS 51 To require that new dwellings and or extensions to existing dwellings within Development Zone 1-6 inclusive shall comply with the minimum site size area and maximum cumulative gross floor areas as outlined hereunder in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9 Dwellings Gross Floor Area & Minimum Site Size

Development Zone	Minimum Site Size in Hectares	Maximum Cumulative Gross Floor Area in Square Metres
1	0.2	160*
2	0.2	220
3	0.2	220 (or See SS 52)
4	0.2	220 (or See SS 52)
5	0.2	220 (or See SS 52)
6	0.2	200

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*Includes Replacement Houses or extensions to existing houses

Policy

SS 52 To require that within Development Zones 3-5, in those cases where the proposed dwelling (excludes replacement dwellings) or extension to the dwelling is in excess of 220sqm cumulatively, the site area shall be correspondingly increased by a ratio of 20 square metres for each 1.0 square metre additional floor area of the dwelling. This stipulation will not apply to applications made under policies SS 49.

2.19.12 Ribbon Development

The visual amenity of many areas throughout the rural parts of the County, and especially in locations adjacent to settlements, has suffered greatly by the creation of ribbon development, where ribbon development is defined as “four or more houses in a continuous row along a public road includes those houses constructed prior to 1st October 1964”.

Such development damages the appearance of rural areas, detracts from the setting of town and villages and can sterilise back-lands, often hampering the planned expansion of settlements. Additionally it can compromise access to farmlands and generate road safety problems.

Furthermore, ribbon development does not necessarily have to be served by individual accesses nor have a continuous or uniform building line. Buildings sited back, staggered or at angles and with gaps between them can still represent ribbon development, if they have a common frontage or they are visually linked.

Historically, consistent opposition to ribbon development has been applied in previous development plans and will continue to be the case.

Policy

SS 53 To prevent the creation of ribbon development by not permitting more than four houses in a row along any public road. A minimum gap of 300 metres shall be maintained between such developments. An exception to this requirement may be considered where the dwelling is required to meet the housing needs of a son/daughter/foster child of a qualifying landowner and where the planning authority is satisfied that there is no other suitable site available on the landholding.

SS 54 To preserve a clear break of a minimum of 300-metres between the boundary of existing settlements and any permitted development along adjoining roads.

2.19.13 Infill Development

Many road frontages in the countryside have gaps between houses or other buildings that provide relief and visual breaks in the developed appearance of the locality and which help maintain rural character.

Infill development is described as development that takes place within a small gap between these existing developments. *The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005 DECLG* require consideration to be given to the degree to which a proposal might be considered infill, the degree to which existing development would be extended or whether distinct areas of ribboning would coalesce as a result of infill development. The infilling of these gaps will therefore not be permitted except where it comprises the development of a small gap within an otherwise substantial and continuously built up frontage.

Policy

SS 55 To permit infill development where a small gap sufficient to accommodate one house only, within an otherwise substantial and continuously built up frontage and provided this respects the existing development pattern along the frontage in terms of size, scale and siting.

SS 56 To apply a presumption against development that would exacerbate ribbon development by extension or leading to the joining up of existing developed areas along public roads.

2.19.14 Extensions to Dwellings

Where additional accommodation is required, an extension to an existing dwelling often affords a more sustainable approach than the construction of a new dwelling. Proposed extensions should complement the original building, where applicable harmonise with adjoining properties and not have an undue adverse impact on the visual amenities of the area. While the council will have regard to special housing needs, such as the housing needs of extending families and people with disabilities, extensions which are out of character, proportion or not incidental to the main dwelling will not be considered favorably. The size of any extension should be proportional to and in keeping with the character of the existing structure.

Policy

SS 57 To limit the size of extensions to not more than 100% of the floor area of the original dwelling subject to compliance with Table 2.9 and Policy SS 52. Extensions in excess of 100% of the floor area of the original dwelling shall only be considered where the proposed extension compliments the original house in terms of proportion, position, materials and details and harmonises with any adjoining property.

Extensions in excess of 100% of the floor area of the original floor area shall only be considered in exceptional cases where the planning authority considers the proposed extension complements the original house in terms of proportion, position, materials and details and harmonises with adjoining property.

Policy

SS 58 Extensions to dwellings on site sizes less than 0.2ha (0.5ac) will be considered depending on the history, context, location and capacity of the site together with the proposed design.

2.19.15 Access

Safe access to any new housing development must be provided, not only in terms of the visibility from a proposed entrance but also in terms of the impact on existing road traffic, through generation of stopping and turning movements.

All applications will be required to show how the required visibility standards appropriate to the class of road as detailed in Tables 7.4 and 7.5 of the Plan (Chapter 7 Transport), can be met. Where compliance with these standards can only be met by removing large stretches of roadside hedgerow, ditches or stone boundaries, consideration should be given to an alternative site in the interest of protecting the landscape character and visual amenity of the area.

See also Chapter 7 – Transport

Policy

SS 59 To require that access to the public road will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic by demonstrating compliance with the appropriate visibility and traffic safety standards as set down in Section 7.3.6 of the Plan.

SS 60 To require that new accesses are located so as to minimise the impact on existing roadside boundaries.

2.19.16 Domestic Garages/Outbuildings

Dwellings commonly have garages and/or curtilage outbuildings which serve purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling, such as storage needs. These are normally visually subservient in terms of size, scale and bulk to the dwelling served. For this reason, the nature of garage/outbuilding development appropriate to serve a large estate house would be very different to that appropriate to serve a small cottage.

Provided that a subservient and proportional relationship between dwelling and ancillary outbuilding is maintained, the landscape will normally be able to accommodate garage/outbuilding development without detriment to visual amenity.

In recent years there has been an increasing demand for larger garages, often incorporating first floor accommodation. Some resemble industrial and commercial buildings complete with roller shutter doors while others resemble dwellings that are complete with curtains and blinds. In essence, this has resulted in structures which have a very significant visual impact in the rural landscape and add to the scale and bulk of the dwelling. In order to protect the landscape character of rural areas from the combined visual impact of houses and garages and to protect the residential amenities of adjoining dwellings, the Council considers it necessary to limit the scale of domestic garages as provided for in the following policies.

Policy

SS 61 To accommodate new detached domestic garages and detached domestic outbuildings in the countryside only where the visual impact of the resultant additional building on the site is one where:

- a. The design is coherent and the form is appropriate to the context of the existing dwelling,
- b. The structure is separate from the house and sited in such a manner as to reduce visual impact,
- c. The structure is visually subservient in terms of size, scale and bulk to the dwelling that it will serve,
- d. The structure does not result in a poorly proportioned or intrusive form of building in the landscape,
- e. The structure does not undermine the dominance of the landscape through an unacceptable cumulative level of domestic related development at the site,
- f. The structure is used for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling and not for any other purposes.

SS 62 To facilitate garages integral to the dwelling only where the visual impact of the resultant garage is one where;

- a. The gross floor area does not exceed 25 square metres,
- b. The design is coherent and the form is appropriate to the context of the existing dwelling,
- c. The structure is visually subservient in terms of size, scale and bulk to the dwelling that it will serve,
- d. The structure does not result in a poorly proportioned or intrusive form of building in the landscape,
- e. The structure is used for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling and not for any other purposes.

2.19.17 Roadside Boundaries

The protection of the rural landscape, wildlife and the dense network of hedgerow boundaries are very important to landscape protection, biodiversity, conservation and environmental sustainability. It is recognised that the accumulated effect of the removal of hedgerows to facilitate one-off houses in rural areas can result in a very significant loss of habitats, flora and fauna and detract seriously from the aesthetic value of the landscape.

Normally, there is some alteration and removal of roadside hedgerows and ditches required as part of development, in order to provide for an access. Such alterations are often essential in the interest of road safety and in achieving sightlines at entrances. While road safety is of paramount importance, it is also important to strike a balance between these two issues. Too often, however, it has been the practice to remove all roadside hedgerows and ditches just to enable the new

Chapter 2
Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy

dwelling to be seen and to facilitate the construction of inappropriate boundary walls and entrances.

Planning permission may not be considered favourably where excessive lengths of roadside hedgerow or trees need to be removed to facilitate the development. Any planting required shall be carried out concurrently with the development of the dwelling or in the first planting season following commencement of works on site.

See also Green Infrastructure Strategy Appendix 14, Volume 2 (b).

Policy	
SS 63	To require that new accesses are located having regard to both road safety and the protection of existing roadside hedgerows, trees and boundaries.
SS 64	To require, where it is necessary to modify or remove the existing roadside boundary in the interest of traffic safety, that the new boundary is located behind the visibility sight line and that a new boundary consistent with the nature and character of the area is planted behind the visibility sight line.

2.19.18 Wastewater

Groundwater and surface water are vulnerable and can easily be contaminated from the disposal of effluent from wastewater treatment systems. Concentrations of treatment systems in areas add to this risk. Therefore, applicants shall satisfy the Council that the method of disposing of wastewater whether by means of a conventional septic tank and percolation area or other wastewater treatment system, is fully in compliance with the guidelines and requirements of the *Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 'Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses, 2009'* and meets with the policies and criteria as set down in Chapter 8 of the Plan relating to Environment.

See also Chapter 8 – Environment

Policy

SS 65 To protect groundwater and surface water from contamination from domestic effluent by ensuring that all sites requiring individual waste water treatment systems are assessed by suitability qualified persons in accordance with the recommendation contained in the “Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment Systems for Single Houses”, published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2009.

2.20 Rural Housing Design and Siting Criteria

Landscapes in County Louth vary greatly from upland areas in the northern and southern ends of the County, the rolling farmlands of mid Louth, Drumlin landscape towards the west of the county and exposed coastal landscapes to the east of the County. Variations in vernacular house design in the past were normally a direct response to the local environment.

In the past, buildings were orientated to make best use of shelter and sun, using natural features such as the lie of the land, combined with hedgerows and shelter belts to protect them from the elements. In more modern times, with the advent of excavation machinery and modern building materials and methods, there has been much less importance placed on the need for shelter from the weather and maximising sunlight for light and warmth. This has resulted in much exposed and prominent development which in addition to being unsustainable in terms of energy use, has also detracted from the visual attractiveness of many areas of rural Louth. Many modern houses are positioned on site ‘to be seen’ and appear to have been ‘dropped’ into rural landscapes from an urban setting.

2.20.1 Site – Sensitive Design

A great deal can be learnt from examination of traditional methods of site layout which appear more integrated in the landscape. Less sensitive sites can take much more individualistic houses, whereas, more prominent or sensitive sites require greater skill and care. In this regard the following site sensitive design parameters ensure that the new development appears visually integrated and sympathetic with its surrounding landscape.

2.20.2 Build into the Landscape

- Study the alignment and orientation of older houses in the area, such as the gable face westwards to the wind in order to maximise shelter and reduce exposure. Choose the most sheltered part of the site selected,
- Use areas already sheltered by trees, hedgerows, ditches and walls,
- Build below the skyline,
- Look for a naturally occurring shelf and make use of natural folds on the landscape - set house into landscape,

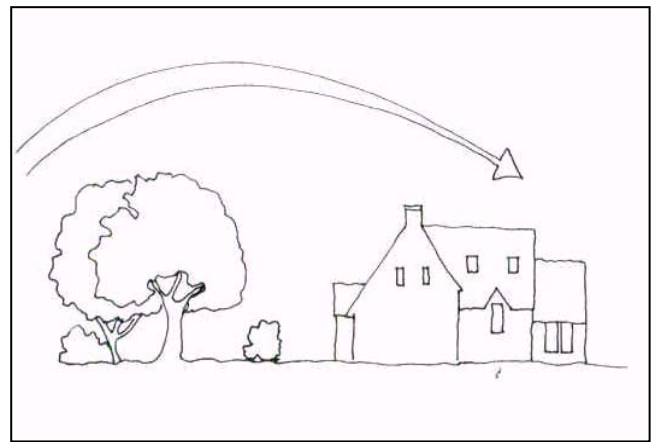
Chapter 2
Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy

- Set back from the road, retain the frontage and other boundary hedgerows and treatments,
- Create secluded and private gardens. Avoid a 'sea' of lawn. Suburban layouts and garden treatments should be avoided. Rural gardens should provide enclosure, privacy and semi-wild habitats. Hedging to comprise native and local species. Leylandii, conifers and pampas grass are unsuitable,
- Avoid parking and manoeuvring areas to the front and large platforms of tarmac. Place driveway to the side or rear,
- Planting zones between path and house softens appearance.

Figure 2.1 House Set into the Landscape



Shelter using the slope and tree planting



Shelter from prevailing wind



Shelter from wind using building forms

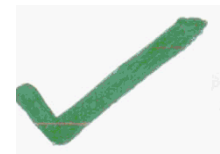


Figure 2.2 Breaking the Skyline



Figure 2.3: Secluded Site

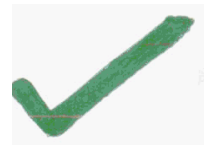
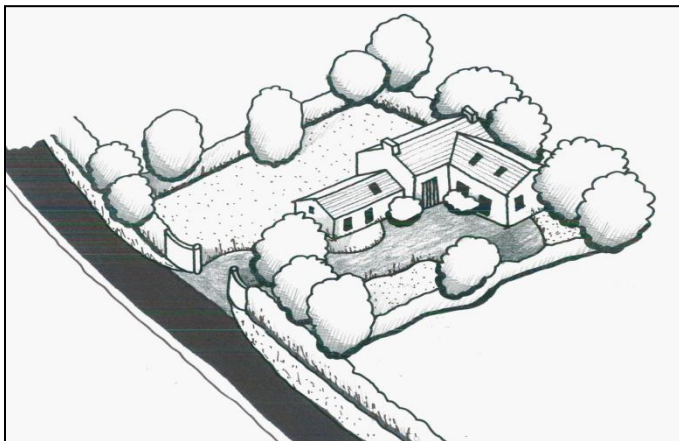
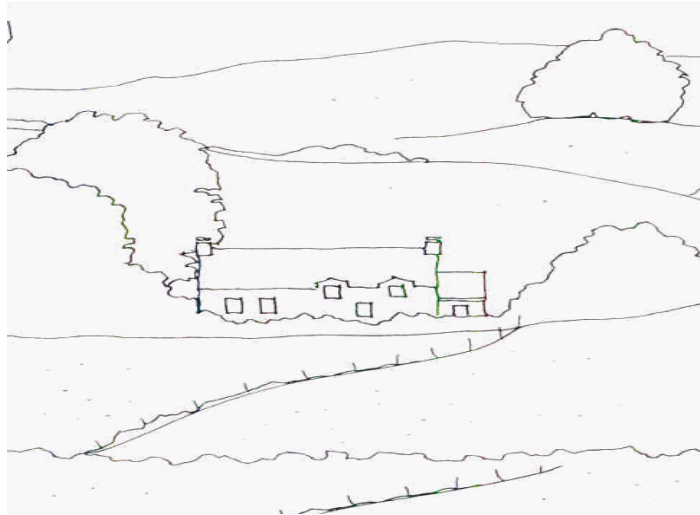


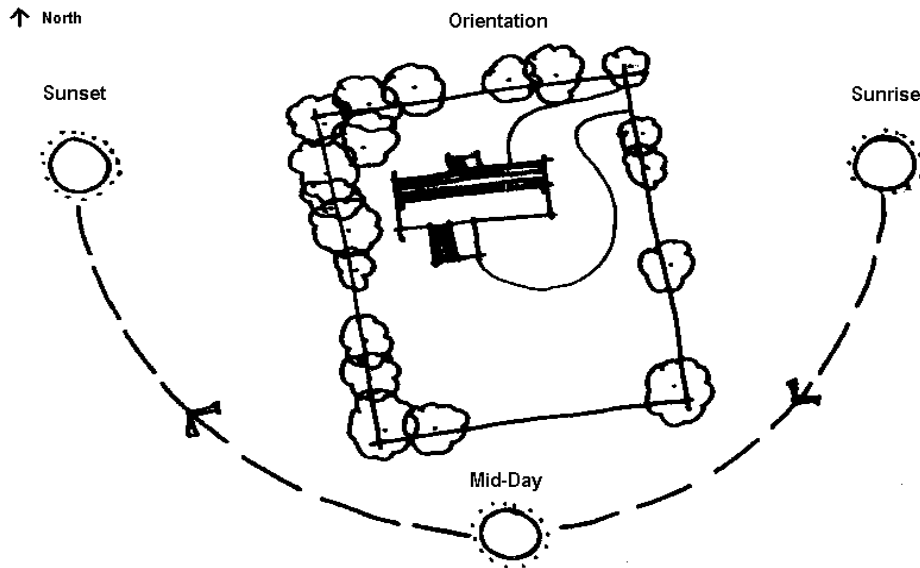
Figure 2.4: Dwelling set into the Landscape



2.20.3 Build, Shape and Plant to create Further Shelter

- Use shelter planting which will also soften the form of the house in the landscape.
- Use enclosing walls together with outbuildings to create, define and shelter gardens and yards.
- Orientate the house to maximise daylight and solar gain in order to create a brighter home and reduce fuel costs. 30% energy savings can be achieved if a house is orientated within 15 degrees of south. Glazed south facing elevations capture the sun's energy and limiting glazing on north elevations aids heat conservation.

Figure 2.5: Exploit the Sun



2.20.4 Presence in the Landscape - Scale and Form

- The scale of buildings must be appropriate to its setting. Single storey houses in uplands and coastal areas are preferable where they are traditionally prevalent.
- The width of the dwelling frontage shall not exceed 14 metres for a two-storey, 18 metres for a single storey or 20 metres where the roofline is broken or frontage is set back.
- The external gable depth shall not exceed 9 metres.
- Front elevations should not have any projections or returns other than a simple pitch roof storm porch if desired. In the case of 2 storey dwellings, a porch projected to first floor if central may be considered.
- A large house requires a large site.
- Only use simple forms as illustrated:

Figure 2.6: Simple Form

- a) Low eaves,
- b) Narrow plan,
- c) 35 to 40 degree roof pitch except where the gable depth is below 7.5 metres, then 45 degrees is acceptable,
- d) Modest scale,
- e) Vertical emphasis to gables,
- f) Sturdy and solid,
- g) Natural finishes,
Flat fronted.

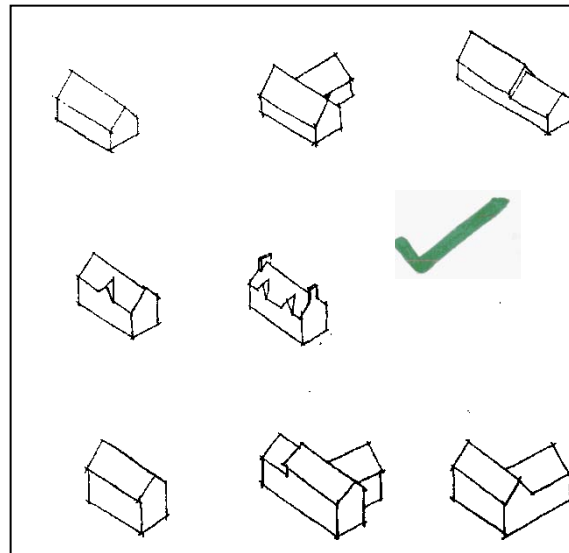
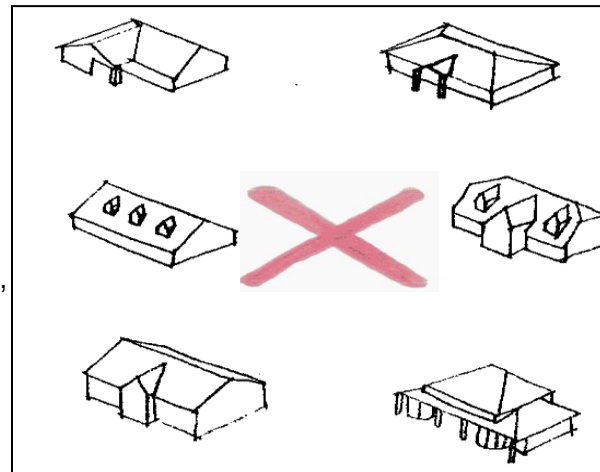


Figure 2.7: Complicated and Alien Forms

Complicated and alien forms as illustrated below should be avoided.

- a) High eaves,
- b) Wide gables,
- c) Low or no roof pitch,
- d) Bulky and squat,
- e) Awkward scale,
- f) Synthetic finishes for example
hallmark and bradstone finishes,
- g) Decorative and fussy frontages.



2.20.5 Proportions

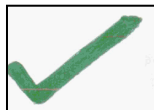
There are three essential factors:

- Height of the building relative to its openings. Openings should exhibit a vertical emphasis. Houses should be designed to minimise the distance between the top of the ground floor windows and the sill of the top floor window,
- A high solid-to-void relationship, that is, greater wall surface area than the area of windows and door openings,
- A simple, symmetrical arrangement of opening.

Figure 2.8: Proportions



Good Proportions



Poor Proportions



2.20.6 Materials

- Use materials and finishes that are traditional to the area and in keeping with the character of the landscape.
- Stone used on ancillary 'wings' or on other elements such as garden or boundary walls can provide an attractive contrast and help reduce the apparent size of the dwelling. Where it is proposed to use stone on the dwelling or to construct boundaries, where possible it should be of the locality so that there is a consistency in colour that links it successfully with other

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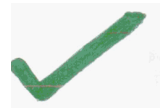
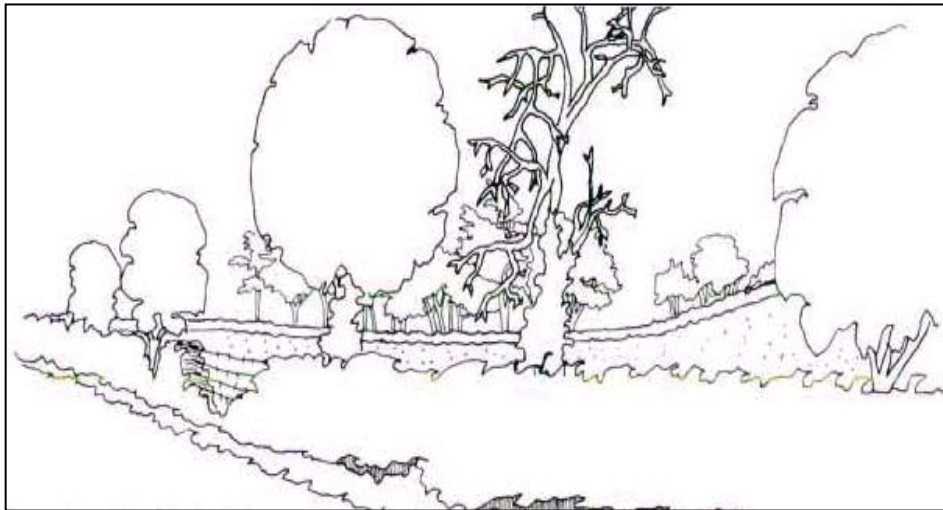
- stone structures, ditches, rock outcrops in the immediate vicinity. Stone alien in colour and type prevalent to the locality could appear incongruous and will not be permitted.
- Inappropriate use of stone including random bits for facing effects, two-dimensional facing panels and gable treatments and piers in stone walls is not considered appropriate.

2.20.7 Boundaries

Careful design can integrate new dwellings into the landscape, in particular where new vehicular openings in roadside boundaries are integrated with existing boundary treatments. Natural boundaries are also invaluable habitats for both plants and animals which contribute to the biodiversity of the County.

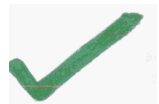
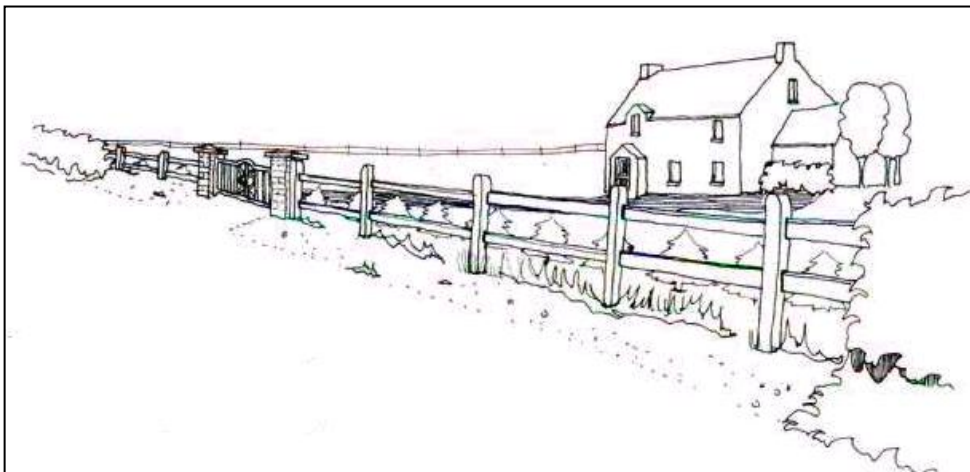
- Chose a site with at least two and preferably three existing boundaries, such as natural hedgerows or stone walls, to soften the impact of the dwelling.
- Preference must be given to accessing sites off an existing laneway or sharing an existing access, as an alternative to providing a new access directly off the road.
- New frontage should be incorporated carefully into existing roadside treatments using materials and landscape treatments which are compatible with the location, such as banks, hedgerows and dry stone work.
- Rendered stone walls, piers cast into oil barrels and diverse planting can create an enchanting entrance.
- Leave existing roadside hedgerows and ditches intact as much as possible. Carefully locate and shape entrance to achieve the required sight distances. Minimise damage by locating the entrance, for example, where the hedge is degraded and where sight lines can be achieved with minimal damage.
- Unsympathetic fencing, walls and planting should be avoided.
- Any sections of post and rail fencing and ranch style fencing will only be considered acceptable where they are back planted with a hedgerow of mixed native species matching those in the vicinity of the site.
- Within settlements, common roadside treatments should be provided.

Figure 2.9 Roadside Frontage



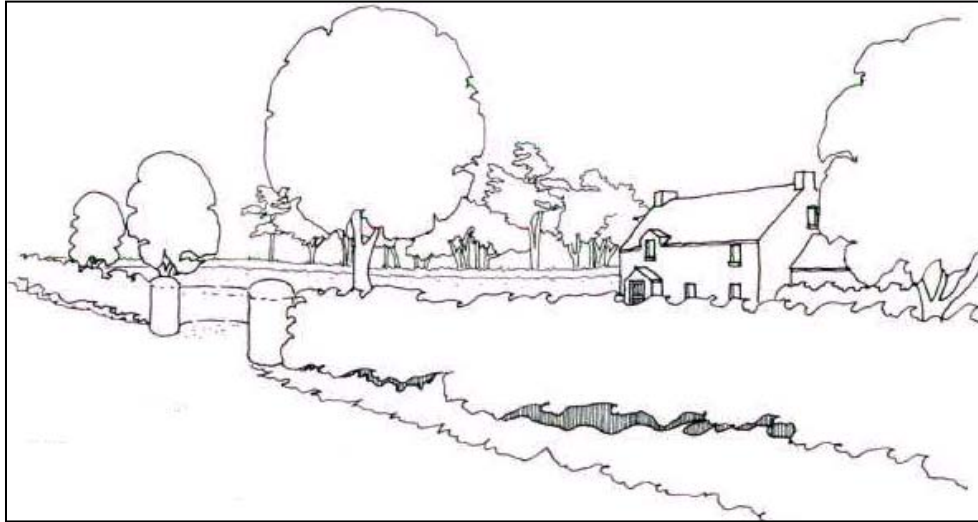
The new opening should integrate into the existing roadside treatment. The most favourable point of access is where an existing hedgerow is degraded, or a tree through age or condition requires removal.

Figure 2.10 Roadside Frontage Appropriate Design



All too often the opening appears as a gash in the hedgerow, filled in with an inappropriate boundary enclosure such as concrete fencing.

Figure 2.11 Roadside Frontage Judicious Design



Judicious design can minimise hedgerow and tree removal by carefully locating and shaping the entrance gateway to achieve the required sightlines.

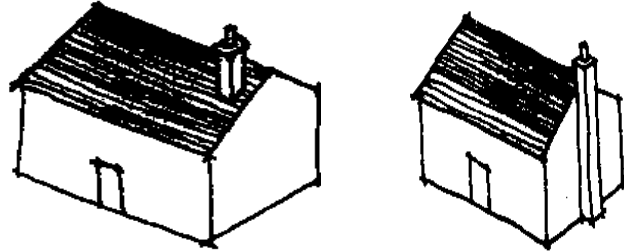
2.20.8 Details

Listed below are a number of design details which have important bearing on the appearance of rural houses.

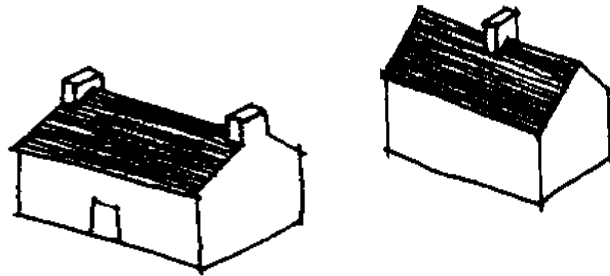
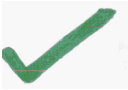
- Minimal eaves avoiding box soffit and fascia,
- Avoid thick tiles on small roofs,
- Chimney breast should be internal, with the chimney stack positioned centrally on the ridge, preferably at the gable end of the dwelling,
- Carefully proportion chimneys - through and across the ridge line and flush with the gable.

Figure 2.12 Chimney Detail

*Inappropriately proportioned
and positioned*



*Appropriately proportioned
and positioned*



*Through and access the
Ridge Line*

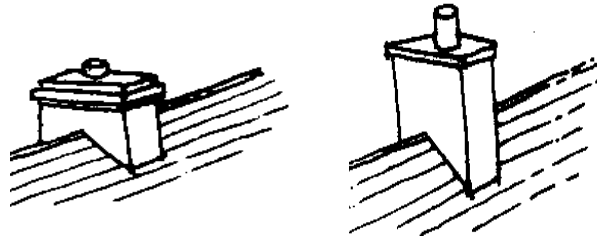
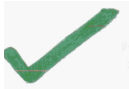
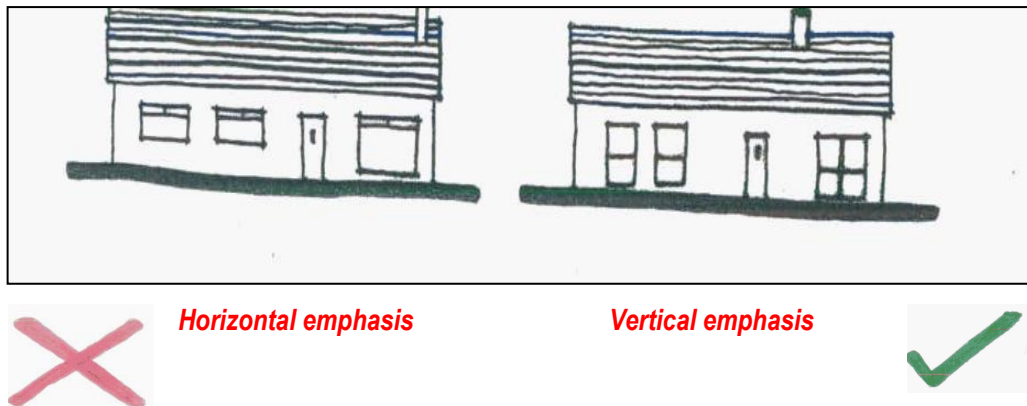
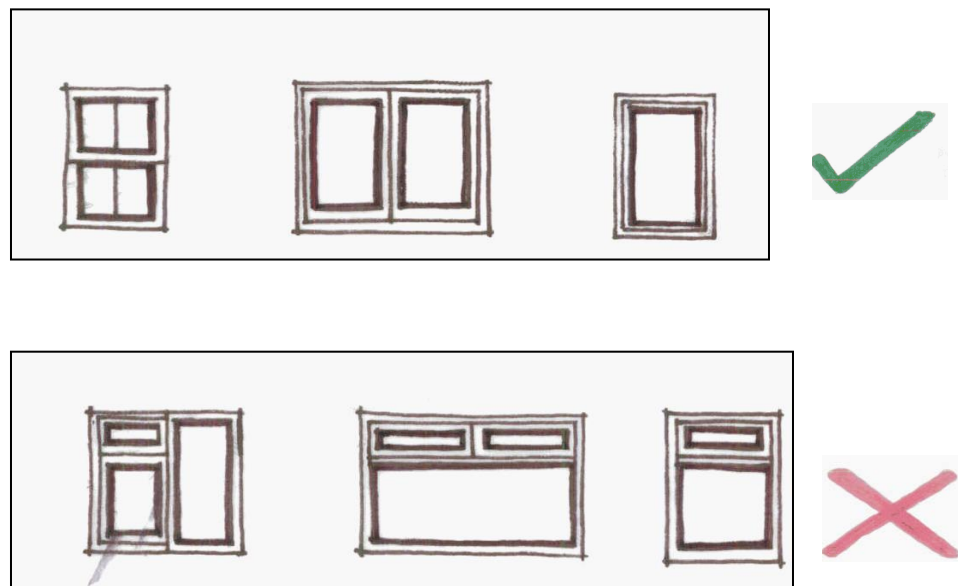


Figure 2.13 Window Arrangement



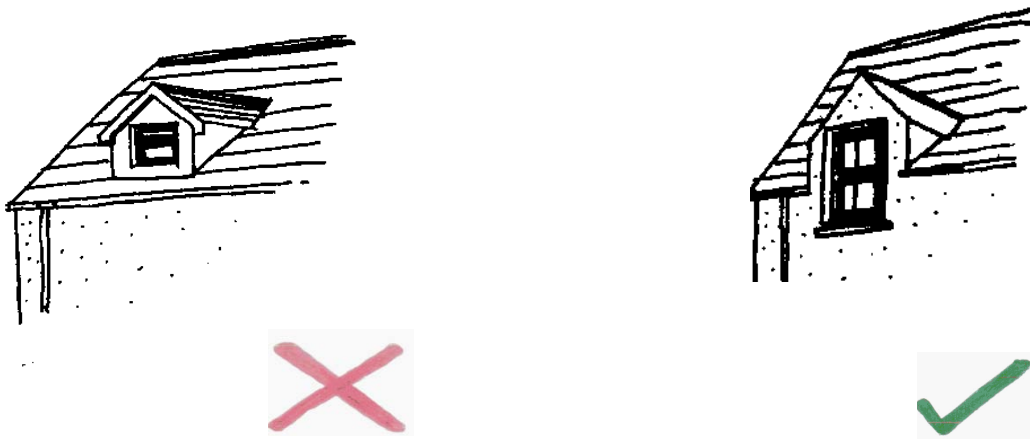
- The size, shape and arrangements of windows are important. The range of opening sizes should be kept to a minimum and the shape of openings simple, with a vertical emphasis generally preferable to horizontal. Windows should be centred either exactly on the axis of symmetry or purposely of it.

Figure 2.14 Window Glazing



- Window glazing should divide window exactly symmetrically horizontally and vertically with glass panes of an identical or as near as possible identical size. Mock Georgian glazing is inappropriate and should be avoided.

Figure 2.15 Dormer Windows



Inappropriate position and scale

Appropriate position and scale

- Flashings which allow roof lights to sit flush with the plane of the roof slope should be used.
- The design of doors to both house and garage should be simple. Mock Georgian, mock Tudor and PVC should be avoided.
- Where porches are proposed they must be simple in form and detail. Suburban type porches or the use of different materials is considered inappropriate.
- The shape of conservatories and extensions should be simple, consistent to the shape and in proportion to the dwelling to which it is attached.

Policy

- SS 66** To require that applications for one-off dwellings in rural areas demonstrate compliance with the requirements outlined in 2.20 to 2.20.8 of this Plan.
- SS 67** To require that applications for one-off dwellings in rural areas include full drawings, illustrations and details of all hard and soft landscaping associated with the proposed dwelling and all boundary specifications including those at the entrance to the site.
- SS 68** To require that where shelter landscaping and new boundary planting forms part of a development, that these works shall be carried out to the satisfaction of the planning authority in the first planting season (November to April) following commencement of development on site.

Chapter 3

Rural Development and Natural Resources

3.1 Introduction

Sustainable and diversified development in rural areas is key to keeping the countryside alive and prospering. The rural areas within County Louth are changing rapidly as a result of the changing nature of farming and the demands of modern agricultural practices, the impact of the growing demand for one-off houses in the countryside and the recreational needs of urban based populations. The increase in off-farm employment and trends towards rural diversification are becoming increasingly important and necessary to sustain rural communities.

This chapter sets out the Rural Settlement Strategy which is informed by the Core Strategy set out in Chapter 2 of this Development Plan and the **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022** and outlines how best to manage sometimes competing social, economic and environmental considerations.

3.2 National and Regional Policy

3.2.1 National Spatial Strategy

The **National Spatial Strategy (NSS)** outlines the future potential of rural areas beyond traditional uses and suggests how alternative employment can be developed by building on local strengths in tourism, agriculture, enterprise, local services and land based natural resources. In excess of €10 billion was allocated nationally to rural communities under the '**National Development Plan 2007- 2013**'.

3.2.2 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022

The **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022** recognise the importance of building on the indigenous strengths of the rural areas in order to achieve balanced regional growth and provide a long-term strategic framework for the sustainable development of the region, up to 2022. In terms of agriculture and rural development, new approaches towards agri-tourism, organic farming and eco-tourism may provide the way forward for many farmers in the region, who are facing a decline in income and seeking opportunities for off-farm supplementation.

3.2.3 Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020

The **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)** has commenced its preparations for Ireland's Rural Development Programme for the period 2014-2020. The Programme, which has obtained approval from the European Commission, will be co-financed by the **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)**.

Within an overall Common Agricultural Policy, the **Rural Development Programme Policy** in the period 2014 to 2020 is intended to contribute towards the following objectives:

- The competitiveness of agriculture,
- The sustainable management of natural resources and climate action,
- A balanced territorial development of rural areas.

Policy

RD 1 To support the implementation of the policies identified in the *National Spatial Strategy, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022, and the Rural Development Programme (or any subsequent programme adopted thereafter)* pertaining to the sustainable and balanced development of County Louth's rural areas.

3.2.4 Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS)

The **Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS)** was first introduced by the Department of Agriculture in 1994. It is designed to reward farmers for carrying out farming activities in an environmentally friendly manner and to bring about environmental improvements on farms.

The **Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS)** aims to protect the rural environment through sensitive farm management. It requires the modification of existing farm practices by farmers which are detailed in a plan specific to each farm. These are prepared by a planning agency approved by the **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)**.

In July 2009 the **Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) 4** was closed by the **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)** to new applicants. However, the number of farmers already participating in the scheme nationally by 2009 was 62,000 and just over €257 million was paid to participants in 2011. In Louth, the number of participants in 2011 was 243 and a total of €2.2 million was allocated.

It is noted that Louth accounts for less than 1% of the number of applicants nationally. A possible reason for the low uptake in Louth is that, **Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS)** as it currently operates, does not suit livestock and tillage farming. Aside from the Cooley Peninsula, much of County Louth is characterised by intensive livestock, tillage and horticultural production. Nevertheless, the Council recognises that **(REPS)** is important both financially and environmentally to the County.

Policy

RD 2 To encourage farmers already in the REPS or any subsequent scheme, such as GLAS to continue participation in the interests of environmental protection and the safeguarding of sensitive and rural landscapes.

3.3 Rural Development Strategy

The Council's Rural Development Strategy is based on promoting sustainable rural development aimed at maintaining vibrant and viable rural communities while also seeking to protect the amenity, recreational and heritage value of the rural landscapes and countryside of the County.

The implementation of the Settlement Strategy, as set out in Chapter 2 and the conservation and protection measures in Chapter 5 Heritage (Built & Natural) are considered to be essential towards achieving this aim.

The designation of settlements with agreed development boundaries enables the Council to promote the strengthening of villages and settlements and to provide for the development of rural communities.

Agriculture, natural resources and rural enterprises make a major contribution to the economic and social stability of County Louth and as such should be maintained and promoted in the interest of the economic, social and environmental sustainability of rural communities.

3.3.1 Rural Enterprise

The development of rural enterprise and employment opportunities will be vital to sustain the rural economy. The location of such enterprise and employment opportunities will be encouraged throughout the County in locations and at a scale which are considered appropriate.

In the settlement hierarchy as detailed in Chapter 2, those towns which comprise Level 1 (Dundalk & Drogheda) and Level 2 (Ardee & Dunleer) include considerable tracts of lands zoned for commercial, industrial and employment uses. Large scale commercial/industrial development will be directed to these serviceable sites. Such uses will not be considered appropriate in unserved rural locations given their implications on the environment, traffic safety and damage to road structure by heavy vehicles and visual and residential amenity. Many of the settlements at Level 3 also have lands zoned for business and employment uses which have the potential of providing a spread of employment opportunities throughout the County.

However, it is recognised that the location of certain resource based and location specific developments of significant regional or national importance and critical

Chapter 3 Rural Development and Natural Resources

infrastructure projects in rural areas may need to be accommodated at suitable locations in rural areas outside of existing settlements.

Within designated rural settlements, the Council will promote the establishment of small incubator units to accommodate new enterprises. The Council will facilitate the development of alternative home based micro enterprises of appropriate nature and scale.

Low impact rural and marine resource based industrial, commercial, business and service uses which contribute to supporting diversification and growth of the rural economy may be considered. Such proposals must demonstrate that they are intrinsically linked to the rural area and cannot be operated from existing urban settlements in County Louth. Acceptable uses which may be considered can include but is not exhaustive of;

- Agricultural diversification proposals,
- Provision of tourism facilities. The type of facilities envisaged would be renovation of farm buildings for tourism purposes, walking, cycling, angling, pony trekking, bird watching etc,
- Development of niche tourism and educational services such as arts and crafts, specialty food provision, open farms etc,
- Development of farm shops selling home/locally grown and manufactured products,
- Organic food production,
- Small scale renewable energy projects,
- Marine based enterprises including mariculture,
- Low impact rural and marine resource based industry/commercial/business.

The scale of such enterprises should not be detrimental to surrounding residential amenity, prejudice road safety, compromise the Natura 2000 network or threaten surface water or groundwater sources. All such proposals will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Policy

RD 3 To secure vibrant and viable rural communities by promoting sustainable development and settlement patterns in rural areas, environmentally friendly agricultural practices and the protection of natural resources, environment, sensitive landscapes and landscapes of the countryside.

RD 4 To encourage the development of alternative rural based enterprises, including home based enterprises, where the scale and nature of such enterprises are not detrimental to the amenity of the area, adjoining dwellings and where the proposal can meet all other planning requirements. Any proposals must demonstrate that they have a site specific link

to the rural area, are appropriate for the site size and be of a scale commensurate with the rural area.

RD 5 To ensure that such new developments do not impinge on areas of special amenity value or on areas designated as sensitive landscapes.

RD 6 To facilitate the location of certain resource based and location specific developments of significant regional or national importance and critical infrastructure projects at suitable locations in rural areas.

3.4 Agriculture

Agriculture is an important source of employment and income in rural areas. The County's agricultural land bank is not only a source of value in terms of food production, but also a vital ingredient in the County's character. The 2011 Census illustrates that 2.75% of the population of County Louth is employed directly in the agricultural sector. This is equivalent to 902 persons, representing a slight increase from the 2006 census figure of 2.4% and a significant drop from 6%, as recorded in the 2002 Census.

Farming is the traditional form of economic activity in rural areas. However, traditional farming methods have undergone significant changes, through increased mechanisation and the emergence of larger commercial farm units. County Louth occupies an area of 82,613 hectares, of which 63,862 hectares is farmed. In Table 3.1 it is apparent that a significant proportion of farms in County Louth, some 46%, operate on farm holdings of less than 20 hectares. The average farm size in the county in 2010 was 36.6 hectares which is an increase from the average size of 35.1 hectares in 2006.

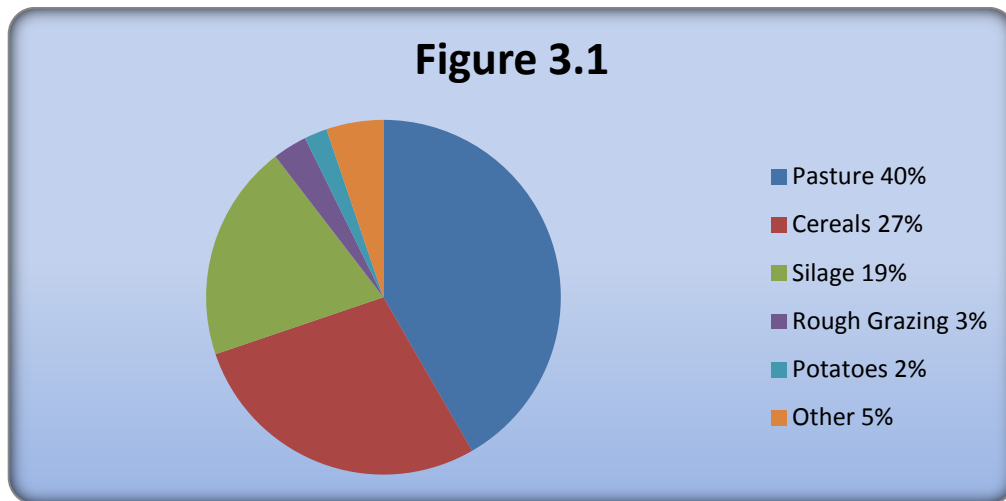
Table 3.1: Farm Sizes in County Louth

Area	<10ha	10-20ha	20-30ha	30-50ha	50-100ha	>100ha
No. of Farms	424	348	229	319	250	106
(%) of Total Farms	25%	21%	14%	19%	15%	6%

Source: www.cso.ie

Farm practices are experiencing a shift away from traditional agriculture activities such as dairying and livestock farms. Specialist beef production is now the main enterprise on some 40% of farms in County Louth which reflects a national shift to this type of farming.

Figure 3.1: Farm Types in County Louth



Source: CSO 2010

The changing pattern of employment in agriculture in the recent past necessitates a new approach to the sustainable use of our countryside. Farm diversification is promoted in both national and regional policy as a means of expanding the rural economy. Teagasc has identified 159 areas where opportunities may exist for farmers to generate supplementary income. Some of these include wind farms, production of dairy products (such as cheese and yoghurt), soft fruit production, forestry, horse livery and adventure tourism. Others would include micro enterprises, rural tourism, biomass production, organic food production, horticulture, specialist farming practices such as poultry, mushroom growing, and specialised animal breeding.

The Council acknowledges that farming will remain an important economic activity essential for the economic prosperity and well being of rural areas and will facilitate the development of agriculture subject to ensuring the protection of the environment, particularly water resources.

Policy

- RD 7 To maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable agriculture and associated activities as a cornerstone of rural development and prosperity.**
- RD 8 To facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.**

RD 9	To encourage and facilitate agricultural development whilst ensuring that such development does not result in a negative effect on the scenic amenity of the countryside.
RD 10	To encourage and facilitate agricultural diversification into related agri-businesses subject to the retention of the holding for primarily agricultural use and the proper planning and development of the area.
RD 11	To consider farm-based diversification which is complementary to the farm and is operated as part of the holding.
RD 12	To encourage rural diversification intended to supplement farm incomes such as production of dairy products, soft fruit production, forestry, horse livery, food production, agri-tourism and specialist farming practices.

3.4.1 Agricultural Buildings

Good quality, purpose built agricultural buildings are important for efficient and sustainable agricultural production. Agricultural buildings should be integrated into the countryside and in this respect the palette of materials used is important. Site selection, setting, landscape features and the maintenance of existing native hedgerows or the planting of new hedgerows is important in terms of screening farm buildings and thus blending these into the landscape in the least obtrusive manner.

Proposals for larger more intensive agricultural practices may require more stringent consideration, for example, mushroom and poultry units, or piggeries which may have a greater impact on the local roads and the environment. Such applications will be assessed on their merit subject to proper planning and sustainable development criteria.

Policy	
RD 13	To ensure that agricultural buildings are designed and appropriately sited to integrate into the landscape. Where new agricultural developments or extensions to existing authorised agricultural developments are proposed, it will be a requirement that the development is well screened by trees and hedgerows and of a palette which permits the structure to satisfactorily blend into its surroundings.

RD 14 To ensure that agricultural developments provide adequate waste collection and storage facilities and adhere to all legislation on water quality including the *Water Framework Directive, Nitrates Directive and Phosphorus Regulations*.

RD 15 To ensure that agricultural developments are designed and constructed in a manner that will ensure that watercourses and sources of potable water are protected from the threat of pollution.

3.5 Rural Tourism and Coastal Areas

Tourism can make a significant contribution to the development of rural areas. It is an aim of the Plan to support rural tourism enterprises that are developed in conjunction with established rural activities and to facilitate the development of agri-tourism.

See also Chapter 6 Economic Development, Retail & Tourism.

Policy

RD 16 To support sustainable tourism enterprises that are developed at appropriate locations in conjunction with established rural activities and to facilitate the development of agri – tourism.

3.5.1 Coastal Areas

The coastline of County Louth stretches from the County Down border, through Carlingford Lough, Dundalk Bay and as far south as Drogheda on the Boyne Estuary. The coastline is of high intrinsic and special amenity value and is home to a variety of natural habitats. **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)** and **Special Protection Areas (SPA)** designations cover much of the coastline. Termonfeckin Strand, Clogherhead, Port and Templetown are superb beaches which have considerable tourism potential. The latter three beaches were awarded Blue Flag status in 2015.

The coastline also contains economically significant sites which include the ports at Drogheda, Greenore, Dundalk and Clogherhead.

The coastline is susceptible to pressure for development which has the potential to encroach on sensitive sites and cause pollution. The coastal waters off County Louth provide an important resource, supporting and generating employment and recreational activities. It will be important to ensure that measures to offset coastal erosion are provided in the Plan to protect this important resource.

3.5.2 Irish Coastal Protection

The functions and responsibilities in relation to coastal protection, i.e. coastal flooding and coastal erosion were transferred from the **Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF)** to the **Office of Public Works (OPW)** on January 1st 2009. The primary role of the **OPW** in this regard includes:

- Undertaking risk assessments associated with coastal flooding and coastal erosion and further developing the **Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS)**,
- Provision of an advisory service in relation to coastal flooding and coastal erosion to support the preparation of annual coastal protection funding programmes, the CFRAM programme, and to inform broader policy development,
- Maintenance of Coastal Protection Schemes constructed under the **Coast Protection Act, 1963**.

3.5.3 Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS)

The knowledge of extreme water levels along the coast is a key element in the development of a coastal protection strategy. The Office of Public Works (in 2009 commissioned a series of studies to establish extreme flood extents along the Irish coastline, known as the **Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS)**.

This study used numerical modelling of combined storm surges and tide levels to derive extreme water levels along particular stretches of coastline. This facilitated an estimation of the extreme water levels of defined exceedance probability to be established along the relevant sections of coastline, i.e. predicted coastal flood extent and flood depth maps for the coast.

Strategy Study – Phase 3 North East Coast

Phase 3 of the **Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS)** examined the North East Coast stretching from Dublin to Greenore and illustrated that coastal flood hazard exists predominantly in or near coastal settlements. Seven primary areas of potential coastal flood hazard were identified, four of which lie in County Louth, detailed as follows:

- Drogheda to Laytown,
- Annagassan to Cruisetown,
- Dundalk,
- Carlingford to Greenore.

Catchment Flood Risk Assessment & Management Studies (CFRAMS)

The ongoing Office of Public Works **Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Studies (CFRAMS)** are due for completion in 2016. These **(CFRAMS)** will provide design solutions for Flood Protection options within a number of identified areas, known as **Area of Further Assessment (AFA)**. In Louth, these areas are;

- Carlingford,
- Greenore,
- Dundalk,
- Blackrock,
- Annagassan,
- Ardee,
- Termonfeekin,
- Baltray,
- Drogheda.

While the study is primarily a flood risk assessment, it will necessarily include coastal protection elements for any of these coastal **AFA's**.

Major Flood Defence Schemes

The **OPW** either works in association with the relevant local authorities or funds local authorities directly to undertake major flood defence works where such works are technically feasible, cost beneficial and environmentally compatible.

Minor Flood Defence Schemes

The **Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Scheme** was introduced by the **OPW** in 2009.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide funding to local authorities to undertake minor flood mitigation works or studies to address localised flooding and coastal protection problems within their administrative areas. The scheme generally applies where a solution can be readily identified and achieved in a short time frame. Under the scheme, applications are considered for projects that are estimated to cost not more than €500,000 in each instance. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for approved projects.

Louth County Council has already obtained funding in 2014 for a number of coastal repair works at Blackrock Sea Wall, Whitestown, Carlingford Sea Wall, Ballagan, Greenore and Annagassan. The Council will endeavour to secure additional funding for coastal protection works and storm damage repairs as and when they are required.

See Also Chapter 8 Environment.

3.5.4 Development on the Foreshore

The **Foreshore Acts 1933 - 1998** require that a lease or licence must be obtained from the **Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG)** before undertaking any works or placing structures or materials on, or removal of material from, any state owned foreshore which falls below the high water mark, where the high water mark is defined as the level reached by sea water at high tide.

However, planning permission will be required for any development on the foreshore that is above the high water mark.

Policy

- RD17** To increase the quality of beaches in the County and in so doing contribute to the development of the tourism industry and to the enjoyment of the facilities, subject to compliance with the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- RD 18** To resist development along the coast which would detract from its visual appearance or conflict with its recreational and leisure functions.
- RD 19** To work closely with the Office of Public Works (OPW) in its work to identify and manage the risks associated with coastal flooding and coastal erosion.
- RD 20** To ensure that any development on the foreshore does not detract from the visual amenities of the coast and the public enjoyment thereof.
- RD21** To require all proposed developments within 100m of the coastline of Louth, outside the settlements and in Zone 3, to submit supporting documentation on coastal erosion. New development will be prohibited unless it can be objectively established based on the best scientific information at the time of the application, that the likelihood of erosion at a specific location is minimal taking into account, inter alia, any impacts of the proposed development on erosion or deposition.

3.6 Forestry

Forestry in Ireland is playing an increasingly important economic, environmental and social role. The forestry industry, comprising the growing, harvesting and processing of forest products makes a significant and increasing contribution to the Irish economy. In 2010, the total value to the economy of the forestry growing sector was €673 million, while the overall forestry sector contributed an estimated €2.2 billion.

Forests presently account for 10.8% of the total land area of the Country and support a vibrant, export-oriented forest product sector with over 80% of wood based panels being exported. Harvest from Irish forests was 2.88 million cubic metres in 2010. Forestry also plays an increasingly important role in rural development not only through the diversification of farm income but also through the provision of rurally based

employment both of which contribute to rural stabilisation and viability. Coillte, a commercial private limited company operating in forestry, land based businesses, renewable energy and panel products, owns 55% of Ireland's forestry. In 2010 the total employment supported by the forest sector was estimated to be 12,000 persons (employed directly and indirectly) with the majority of jobs rurally based.

The overall national policy in relation to forestry was set out in ***Growing for the Future: a Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in Ireland, 1996***. This strategy aimed to develop the sector to a scale and in a manner which maximised its contribution to national, economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis compatible with the protection of the environment. A review of the National Forest Strategy undertaken by the Forest Policy Review Group resulted in the publication of, ***'Forests, Products and People, Ireland's Forest Policy – A Renewed Vision, 2014'*** whose strategic goal is to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector. This report outlines a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society. The main aims (amongst others) are to:

- Increase the forest area in accordance with sustainable forest management principles and in accordance with best practice,
- Ensure that afforestation, management of existing forests and development of the forest sector are undertaken in a manner that enhances their contribution to the environment and the capacity to provide public goods and services,
- Maintain a healthy forest environment through sustainable forest management, early detection and control measures for pests and diseases,
- Ensure that forest related legislation is relevant to the needs of the sector and underpins the principles of sustainable forest management while recognising the multifunctional nature of forestry.

According to the National Forest Inventory (NFI 2012) the total area of forest in County Louth is approximately 2,400ha, of which Coillte owns 50% with the remainder owned by private landowners. The NFI recorded that 25% of forests in Louth are categorised as broadleaf and 75% are categorised as conifer. Coillte also has three recreational sites within the County at Ravensdale, Slieve Foye Wood and Townley Hall.

Initial forestation is exempt under the provisions of the ***Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2015***. Replacement of broad leaf forests by conifer species where the area involved is less than 10ha is also exempt under these provisions.

Policy

RD22 To support national policy in relation to forestry in order to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society, subject to normal planning criteria.

3.7 Energy

The policy of the Council in relation to energy conservation and generation is detailed in Chapter 9, Energy and Communications. However, in a rural development context, particularly in relation to the production of renewable fuel sources such as wind farms, biomass and solar energy, renewable energy production provides a significant opportunity for the generation of rural based economic activity and employment. The Council will have regard to the relevant guidelines concerning such developments including the suitability of the proposed location, nature of use, scale and feasibility of the proposal and other normal planning requirements.

Policy

- RD 23** To support the development of renewable energy resources in rural areas where proposals are consistent with the landscape objectives of the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021, the protection of the natural and built environment and the visual and residential amenities of the area and other normal planning requirements.
- RD 24** To consider any individual renewable energy proposal on its merits having regard to the *Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities, the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG) Circular PL20-13* and any other relevant guidance.

See also Chapter 9 Energy & Communications

3.8 Extractive Industry and Building Materials Production

County Louth has significant deposits of high grade stone, sand and gravel quarries, with substantial building sand reserves in the Cooley area. The Council is aware that where such resources exist there will be a demand for their extraction. The Council will facilitate the recovery of this important resource subject to the overall protection of the environment.

Section 261 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) required the registration of all quarries within the functional areas of planning authorities. A total of twelve quarries have been registered in County Louth.

Section 261A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) required each planning authority to examine every quarry in its operational area to determine whether development was carried out which would have required an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), or an Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the Habitats Directive.

The document **Quarry and Ancillary Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG) 2004** provides guidance to planning authorities on how to manage the development of extractive industries in a sustainable manner.

The Council will seek to protect established or potential quarry resources from inappropriate development, that would jeopardise their recovery and to safeguard valuable, un-worked deposits for future extraction.

Policy

- RD 25** To ensure that all existing and proposed quarries comply with the requirements of the document *Quarry and Ancillary Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (DECLG) 2004*.
- RD 26** To prevent development that would hinder the efficient or effective recovery of the County's aggregate resources.
- RD 27** To ensure that the extraction of stone and mineral materials is carried out in a manner that is sustainable and has due regard to the protection of the environment.
- RD 28** To refer any application for development to the Geological Survey of Ireland, where it relates to mineral extraction, quarrying developments/extensions and any development involving excavations greater than 50,000m³ in volume or one hectare in area.

3.8.1 Development Management Criteria

In assessing applications for new quarries and extensions to existing quarries, the council will have regard to the following:

- Registration of quarries under **Section 261 (Control of Quarries) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)** and the *Regulation of quarries under Section 261A (Regulation of Quarries) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)*.
- Visual impact on sensitive landscapes.
- Environmental impact and mitigation measures proposed in the environmental impact statement (EIS) submitted with planning applications, where required.
- Require a detailed and progressive restoration and rehabilitation plan for the aftercare and re-use of the site, to be submitted as part of the proposed development.
- Minimising effects on residential amenity through the imposition of conditions regarding hours of operation, dust and noise emissions.
- Ensure that public roads are not unduly damaged by quarry and pit related traffic and to impose a special contribution under Section 48(2) in respect of any road works which the council is required to carry out to facilitate the development.

- Methods of extraction, noise levels, dust prevention, protection of rivers, lakes and other water sources.

The joint publication by the Irish Concrete Federation (ICF) and the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) of the document, '*Geological Heritage Guidelines for Extractive Industries*' 2008 is intended for Irish Concrete Federation (ICF) members so that they may follow best practice and receive clear information concerning geological heritage in relation to any proposed quarry or related development or land purchase. It is expected that members will operate their quarries in accordance with these guidelines.

3.9 Residential Development in Rural Areas

The Council has always recognised and accepted the importance of rural housing in meeting local housing needs and in sustaining rural services such as primary schools, post offices and village shops. The Council also accepts what it considers as the legitimate aspirations of people who are born and raised in the countryside wishing to reside within their own community.

Specific rural housing policies including qualifying criteria based on local needs is set out in detail in Chapter 2 of this plan.

See also Chapter 2 Core Strategy & Settlement Strategy

Policy

- RD 29** To apply a presumption in favour of granting planning permissions to bona-fide applicants for rural generated housing where the qualifying criteria set down in Chapter 2 are met and where standards in relation to inter alia siting, design, drainage and traffic safety set down in the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 are achieved.
- RD 30** To apply a presumption against urban generated housing in the rural areas of the county or where standards in relation to inter alia siting design, drainage and traffic safety set down in the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 are not achieved.

3.10 Development Zones

In order to ensure development in the countryside takes place in a sustainable and appropriate manner, the county area was divided into five development zones in the ***Louth County Development Plan 2009–2015***. The purpose of these development zones was to conserve and protect the amenities of rural areas and to promote development in a sustainable manner. These zones also assisted in the operation of the development management function of the Council with regard to planning applications for development in rural areas.

This Plan continues the approach taken in the **Louth County Development Plan 2009 – 2015**. Herein, some modifications to the development zone boundaries have been made in light of experience gained during the operation of the previous plan. In this regard a new Development Zone 6 has been introduced which covers the sensitive landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the Site of the Battle of the Boyne. The extent of this and the other development zones are as detailed on Map 3.1 .

See also Chapter 5 Heritage

In exercising its development management role, the Council will have regard to the strategic objectives of the Development Zones 1 to 6, specific aspects of siting and design and specific policies in relation to development management standards, roads, sanitary services and environmental constraints. In relation to rural housing, the council will be guided by design and siting criteria as set out in the document **“Building Sensitively and Sustainably in County Louth”** and the guidelines contained in Chapter 4 of this Plan.

3.10.1 Development Zone 1 - To preserve and protect the natural unspoilt physical landscapes

Zone 1 relates principally to the high mountainous areas of Cooley, Feede, and Ravensdale.

Due to the extremely sensitive landscapes of this zone which include proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), Special Conservation Areas (SCA) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) (Chapter 5) this unspoilt landscape must be protected from harmful development. As such, only very limited development and/or extensions to existing authorised uses appropriate to these sensitive landscapes will be considered.

Policy

RD 31 To permit only very limited development appropriate to these sensitive landscapes. This would include limited one-off housing* active recreational amenities such as pedestrian and cycle paths, equestrian trails, ecological corridors, small scale ancillary recreational facilities, agriculture and related activities. Certain unique, location tied or resource based developments and renewable energy schemes will be open to consideration. Such development will only be considered where it does not adversely impact on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites.

RD 32 Development of a commercial, industrial or other similar nature will not be considered appropriate.

***Refer to Section 2.19.1 for Qualifying Criteria**

3.10.2 Development Zone 2 - To protect the scenic quality of the landscape and facilitate development required to sustain the existing rural community

Zone 2 relates to areas that are to be found in the lower regions of the Cooley Mountains, in Upper Faughart, Ardee Bog, Hamilstown, Fieldstown, Monasterboice, Mount Oriel, Dunany Point and the Boyne Valley. The area covered by this development zone contains landscapes of high scenic quality which the Council considers should be protected. There is, however, a substantial existing rural population within these areas and the *Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021* supports the continued vibrancy and vitality of these communities.

Policy

RD 33 To permit only essential resource and infrastructure based developments and developments necessary to sustain the existing local rural community. Such development would include limited one-off housing*, agricultural developments, extensions to existing authorised uses and farms, appropriate farm diversification projects, tourism related projects (excluding holiday homes), active recreational amenities such as pedestrian and cycle paths, equestrian trails, ecological corridors, small scale ancillary recreational facilities, and renewable energy schemes.

RD 34 Multi-unit residential, large scale intensive industrial, agricultural and commercial developments or other developments of a similar scale or nature would not be considered appropriate within this zone.

***Refer to Section 2.19.1 for Qualifying Criteria**

3.10.3 Development Zone 3 - To protect the recreational and amenity value of the coast.

The coastline of County Louth stretches from the County Down border, along Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay to the Boyne Estuary outside Drogheda. It is of considerable intrinsic, special amenity and recreational value. Furthermore, the coastline is home to a variety of natural habitats and many species of flora and fauna. The coastline is protected by a number of statutory designations. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) designations cover much of the coastline.

Policy	
RD 35	To only permit development that would not be detrimental to the visual and recreational amenities of the coast. Such development would include limited one-off housing*, agricultural developments, extensions to existing authorised uses and farms, appropriate farm diversification projects, tourism related projects (excluding holiday homes), active recreational amenities such as pedestrian and cycle paths, equestrian trails, ecological corridors, small scale ancillary recreational facilities, leisure and recreation related projects, and renewable energy schemes.
RD 36	Multi-unit residential developments, large-scale intensive agricultural, industrial and commercial developments or other developments of similar scale or nature would not be considered appropriate within this zone.
*Refer to Section 2.19.1 for Qualifying Criteria	

3.10.4 Development Zone 4 - To provide for a greenbelt area around the urban centres of Dundalk, Drogheda, and Ardee

It is an objective of the Council to preserve a clear distinction between the built up areas of settlements and the surrounding countryside. In this regard, greenbelt areas are proposed surrounding the main urban settlements of Dundalk, Drogheda, and Ardee.

Policy	
RD 37	To permit limited one-off housing*, agricultural developments, extensions to existing authorised uses and farms, appropriate farm diversification projects, tourism related projects (excluding holiday homes), institutional and educational facilities, leisure and recreation related projects and renewable energy schemes.
RD 38	Multi-unit residential, large scale industrial and commercial developments, or other developments of similar scale or nature, would not be considered appropriate within this zone.
*Refer to Section 2.19.1 for Qualifying Criteria	

3.10.5 Development Zone 5 - To protect and provide for the development of agriculture and sustainable rural communities and to facilitate certain resource based and location specific developments of significant regional or national importance. Critical infrastructure projects of local, regional or national importance will also be considered within this zone.

Zone 5 encompasses an extensive area of land outside the greenbelts, extending from the eastern section of the Cooley Peninsula in the north, to the western boundary of the county, Drogheda in the south and the Irish Sea to the east. Over the past number of years, this area has been subject to increasing pressure for development of one-off rural housing and other commercial and industrial type developments due to proximity to Dublin and access to the M1 motorway. This area is extensively farmed and contains some of the finest agricultural land in the county.

It is an objective of this Plan, from both social and economic perspectives, that agricultural activity and local communities should be protected and permitted to develop and prosper in this area. This area also affords opportunities for certain resource based and location specific developments and critical infrastructure projects of significant regional or national importance. Such development proposals will be subject to the provision of adequate environmental and landscape protection and provisions relating to Interchanges (Chapter 6 Economic Development Tourism & Retail).

Policy

RD 39 To consider developments falling within the following categories; limited one-off housing*, agricultural developments, extensions to existing authorised uses and farms, appropriate farm diversification projects; developments to be used for leisure, recreation and tourism; holiday accommodation including cottages and lodges where these are part of an existing or proposed integrated tourism complex; hotels/ guest houses / B & B's (only where the proposal involves the re-use or diversification of an existing building); extensions to existing authorised commercial and industrial developments; renewable energy schemes, public utility infrastructure, certain resource based and location specific developments of significant regional or national importance, critical infrastructure projects, nursing homes/analogous services, ** and Economic Business Zone at Carrickcarnan* (for small scale commercial development linked to leisure, recreation and tourism, agricultural diversification and extensions to authorised developments).**

*** Refer to Section 2.19.1 for Qualifying Criteria**

**** In the location identified by red dot on Map 3.1 'Development Zones'**

***** In the location identified by light blue dot on Map 3.1 'Development Zones'**

RD 40 Multi-unit residential, conventional industrial and commercial development appropriate to existing settlements, developments directly adjacent to rural motorway interchanges would not be considered appropriate within this zone.

3.10.6 Development Zone 6 To preserve and protect the heritage and cultural landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the UNESCO (Tentative) World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the Site of the Battle of the Boyne.

This relates to the preservation and protection of the *Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)* of the cultural landscape of the *UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne* and the *UNESCO (Tentative) World Heritage Site of Monasterboice* (early medieval monastic site), in accordance with the relevant international and national guidelines and national legislation, to ensure that its significance, authenticity and integrity are not adversely affected by inappropriate and cumulative change and development.

Policy

RD 41 To permit only limited development appropriate to these heritage and cultural landscapes including only essential resource and infrastructure based developments and developments necessary to sustain the existing local rural community. Such development would include limited one-off housing*, agricultural developments, extensions to existing authorised uses and farms, appropriate farm diversification projects, tourism related projects (excluding holiday homes), active recreational amenities such as pedestrian and cycle paths, equestrian trails, ecological corridors, small scale ancillary recreational facilities, and renewable energy schemes.

RD 42 Pending the adoption of Framework Plan for this Development Zone, multi-unit residential, large scale intensive industrial, agricultural and commercial developments or other developments of a similar scale or nature would not be considered appropriate within this zone.

*Refer to Section 2.19.1 for Qualifying Criteria

3.10.7 Summary of Strategy Objectives for Development Zones 1 to 6

Table 3.2 sets out in summary the strategic objectives for the six Development Zones.

Table 3.2: Strategic Objectives for Development Zones 1 to 6

Zone	Strategic Objective
1	To preserve and protect the natural unspoilt physical landscapes.
2	To protect the scenic quality of the landscape and facilitate development required to sustain the existing rural community.
3	To protect the recreational and amenity value of the coast.
4	To provide for a greenbelt area around the urban centres of Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee.
5	To protect and provide for the development of agriculture and sustainable rural communities and to facilitate certain resource based and location specific developments of significant regional or national importance. Critical infrastructure projects of local, regional or national importance will also be considered within this zone.
6	To preserve and protect the heritage and cultural landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the Site of the Battle of the Boyne.

Chapter 4

Residential and Community Facilities

4.1 Introduction

In 2006 County Louth had a population of 111, 267 persons (2006 Census). The 2011 Census shows that this population growth had increased by 10% to 122, 897. The **Regional Planning Guidelines** set population targets for County Louth for 2016 and 2022. Based on the 2011 Census figures and growth rates, the population of County Louth is expected to increase to 141,073 over the Plan period. The 2006 Census indicates that the average household size in County Louth was 2.8 people per household, whilst the 2011 Census results indicate that this figure had dropped to 2.7.

An increase in population combined with a decrease in the average household size will create a demand for additional housing units. It is of paramount importance that additional housing of high quality meets modern living standards and can be easily adopted to accommodate the changing needs of residents.

Community facilities are important for all ages and abilities in society and are an essential requirement in the creation of sustainable and properly planned communities. It is therefore crucial that community infrastructure is located and distributed throughout the County in tandem with population and housing growth.

4.2 Housing Strategy

Louth County Council in conjunction with Future Analytics Consulting Ltd (FAC) prepared a Housing Strategy for County Louth to meet the statutory requirements set out under **Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)**. The period of the Housing Strategy corresponds to the lifetime of the forthcoming Louth County Development Plan. The Housing Strategy is available to view in Appendix 3, Volume 2 (b).

The overall aim of the Housing Strategy is to ensure that the Plan provides for the housing of existing and future population in the County and to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good design, suited to its needs, in a quality environment and as far as practicable, at the tenure of its choice. This also refers to households with specific needs, such as the elderly or those persons with disabilities while simultaneously acknowledging the need to meet the housing requirements of the homeless and travellers.

The Strategy intends that those who can afford to provide their own housing shall do so, whilst those who are unable should have access to social/specialist housing provided by Louth County Council. The principal options open to Local Authorities for the delivery of the latter is as follows:

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- **Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended),**
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), leasing initiatives and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP),
- In partnership with Voluntary Bodies and Housing Co-operatives,
- Casual Vacancies,
- Purchase of New of Second Hand Homes.

An essential requirement of any housing strategy is to identify as accurately as possible the quantum of households which will experience affordability problems during the lifetime of the Development Plan. Thus, it is necessary to *inter alia* identify housing demand from the projected population growth over the Development Plan period. In this regard, Louth is guided by the **Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022**, which set population targets for County Louth of 132,648 persons by 2016 and 142,800 persons by 2022. The projected growth figure for 2015-2021 is 10,688 or 1,781 per annum. The precise details of this are presented in the Housing Strategy, Appendix 3, Volume 2 (b).

By identifying as accurately as possible the number of households who can be classified as having an affordability problem over the study period, this will inform the necessary provision of these units. For Louth, the per annum shortfall, when expressed against envisaged total supply fluctuates between 11.5% and 13.9% over the period to 2021. The average over the period 2012 - 2021 is 12.2% and thus the Part V requirement is 12%.

The summary of anticipated social housing supply is set out in Table 4.1 below. It outlines a requirement to deliver 475 units over the period of the Housing Strategy 2015-2021, which is an average of 79 units per annum.

Table 4.1: Summary of Part V Anticipated Social Housing Need (County Louth) 2012-2024

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
New Household Formations	680	696	712	728	745	613	626	638	651	664	669	691	705
Social and Affordable Housing Requirement	95	93	91	90	90	73	73	74	75	77	78	81	83
Housing Shortfall as a % of Total Households Required	13.93 %	13.36 %	12.81 %	12.42 %	12.05 %	11.82 %	11.67 %	11.59 %	11.58 %	11.63 %	11.69 %	11.74 %	11.80 %

4.2.1 Methods of Providing Social/Affordable Housing

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) announced a review of Part V by the Housing & Sustainable Communities Agency which has been charged with considering how planning gain can still be captured while taking

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account of prevailing market conditions. It should also be noted that the Housing Policy Statement (2011) announced that in addition to a review of Part V, that there was to be a step down in specialist housing schemes which is to be undertaken in recognition of the current market conditions.

Louth County Council in reaching Part V agreements under **Section 96 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)** will have due regard to the Housing Strategy and the County Louth Development Plan objectives and at all times ensure that the 12% requirement is met. Louth County Council will encourage housing developers to whom the 12% quota applies to discuss the likely terms of the Part V agreement as part of pre planning consultation.

Policy

- RES 1** It is the policy of Louth County Council to ensure compliance with the Housing Strategy and to facilitate the provision of housing units to sufficiently cater for social and specialist housing needs as identified in the Housing Strategy over the Plan period.
- RES 2** It is the policy of the Council to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice.
- RES 3** Provision of social and specialist housing shall be progressed through partnership working with voluntary and co-operative housing organisations, the HSE and through agreements with private developers.
- RES 4** Require that 12% of all private residential development on lands zoned for residential or mixed uses (where residential is included) be provided for social /and or specialist housing under the provisions of Part V of the Planning Acts.
- RES 5** Within the overall 12% requirement, criteria to be taken into account will include the type and location of the housing units required by the Planning Authority at a given time, as defined by the Priority Housing List of the Housing Section.
- RES 6** To encourage and promote the creation of attractive mixed use sustainable communities which contain a variety of housing types and tenures with supporting community and residential amenities, and where Part V is visually and otherwise integrated into the overall development, thus counteracting undue segregation.

- RES 7** Continue to cater for the needs of persons with special requirements including persons with disabilities and the elderly, including the concept of independent living and the development of 'lifecycle housing' i.e. housing that is adaptable for people's needs as they change over their lifetime.
- RES 8** The preferred option for the delivery of social/and or specialist housing under Part V is through financial contribution.
- RES 9** In seeking to provide appropriate accommodation, the Council will implement the following:
- The National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities 2011-2016,
 - North-East Homelessness Action Plan 2014-2017,
 - Time to move on from Congregated Settings: A Strategy for Social Inclusion (HSE),
 - Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018.

Footnote

Planning legislation which has been enacted (Urban Regeneration & Housing Act 2015) since the preparation of reports provided to the elected members in consideration and subsequent adoption of the Louth County Development Plan, will require a variation to be proposed in due course. See Note 1.

4.3 Residential Development

The *Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)* published guidelines in relation to residential developments. These include the following - *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities, Sustainable Urban Design Guidelines—Standards for Apartments 2007, Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities and the Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* and its accompanying *Urban Design Manual*.

The Council will require that all residential developments are consistent with the Department's guidelines. In particular, the Council considers that the twelve assessment criteria grouped under the headings; Neighbourhood Area, Site and Buildings as detailed in the *Urban Design Manual* are valuable as a guide to development and should be adhered to. These are set out in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Assessment Criteria Urban Design Guidance

Scale	Policy Issue	Objectives
Neighbourhood Area	1. Context	To promote places that are locally distinctive having regard to their setting and context.
	2. Connectivity	To promote places that allow for ease of movement, permeability and integration.
	3. Inclusively	To promote places that are accessible to all in terms of social integration, provide physical access to all and respond to local needs.
	4. Variety	To promote places that contain a mixture of viable uses and are able to respond to local needs.
Site	5. Efficiency	To promote places that make efficient use of land and are designed to respond to the challenge of climate change.
	6. Distinctiveness	To promote places that build upon existing site assets, have a clear identity, are legible and easy to navigate.
	7. Layout	To promote places with layouts, streets and spaces that are people friendly.
	8. Public realm	To promote public spaces that have vitality, are safe and secure, attractive and accessible to all.
Buildings	9. Adaptability	To promote places that are designed to be adaptable through time.
	10. Privacy & Amenity	To promote the design of buildings that provide good standards of privacy and amenity.
	11. Parking	To promote the integration of car parking in the urban environment in a way that is well located, secure and attractive.
	12. Detailed Design	The design of the building should make a positive contribution to the locality.

Policy

RES 10 To ensure all new residential developments are consistent with the guidelines and best practice manuals issued by the DECLG in the planning for and provision of sustainable communities within new residential areas.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

4.4 Housing Layout Guidelines

4.4.1 Layout

The quality of where we live depends not only on the design of buildings, but on their layout and landscaping and in particular, how the new development relates to its surroundings. When designing the layout for a new development the following guidelines should be incorporated:

- Recognition of the existing character, street patterns, streetscape and building lines of an area. This is imperative in the case of infill sites or where new dwellings adjoin existing buildings.
- Encompass a hierarchy of interconnected roads/ streets which are permeable and easy to navigate. Pedestrian routes ought to be generated along existing/potential desire lines.
- Road considerations should not adopt a dominant role. The layout should incorporate a movement pattern that supports walking and cycling and includes traffic calming as well as, providing convenient access to public transport and have regard to the ***Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)***.
- The layout of the new development must essentially be well connected and integrated with the surrounding area.
- Facilitate the creation of active frontages whereby residential units front directly onto the street, corner buildings should be designed with dual frontage and extensive tracts of walling/fencing fronting on streets/ roads ought to be avoided.
- Takes cognisance of and protects both natural and built heritage features. In addition consideration of river flooding and drainage issues should be made in determining the setbacks and treatment of any linear park.
- Encourage passive surveillance through design by ensuring housing that overlooks streets, car-parking areas, open space and bus stops, to ensure passive surveillance and enhance perceived ownership of an area.
- Provide for movement of people with impaired mobility, which should include reasonable access to open space, public transport facilities and other public areas.
- The desirability of creating different urban forms will require a more varied building line in order to reduce the often regimented appearance of suburban layouts. However, where there are established building lines, particularly on infill development sites, these should be respected.

4.4.2 Dwelling Mix

For a residential development to be considered inclusive, it should make provision for housing of different types, sizes and tenures. This provides choice for people from different backgrounds and helps to create a balanced, sustainable community. The provision of a variety of different house types will create visual variety and interest thereby preventing residential development being homogenous in character. In particular Louth County Council will encourage developers to provide single storey dwellings for the elderly, those with impaired mobility and to facilitate downsizing.

Policy

- RES 11** To ensure that all applications comply with the guidelines outlined in Section 4.4
- RES 12** To encourage developers to provide for a mixture of housing types and sizes within residential development including single storey units to create sustainable balanced communities.
- RES 13** To encourage developers to provide for a mixture of housing types and sizes thereby creating visual variety and preventing residential developments that are homogenous in character.

4.5 Homezone Principles

Homezones are residential streets in which the road space is shared between drivers and other users and where the wider needs of the residents (including pedestrians, cyclists and children) are emphasised in the design. In these cases very low traffic speeds allow a sense of place to be prioritised over movement. The road layout within homezones shall have regard to the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)*.

Homezones can facilitate higher density development due to the provision of on street parking and by designing the streets as attractive public spaces, thus reducing the requirement for private amenity for each dwelling unit. As such they are most suitable for town and village centres and edge of centre sites. The principles are however generic and therefore applicable across a range of instances and may be suitable in certain circumstances, especially where higher density schemes are proposed. Home zone characteristics include incorporation of a wide variety of housing design and development layout, including variations in building lines, building heights, deviations in the width and alignment of vehicle paths, variety of surface treatments and extensive use of street furniture and planting. It is crucial that all residential development including those incorporating the home zone principles are of a high quality and sustainable design.

Policy

- RES 14** To encourage the use of homezone design principles in the design of residential layout having regard to the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)*.

See also Chapter 7- Transport

4.6 Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure

The building of new roads, road improvement schemes and new residential developments, presents opportunities for the provision of pedestrian and cycle routes. Pedestrian and cycle routes should be as direct as practicable between commercial and residential areas and major attractors such as shops, schools and other community facilities, including public transport. There is a preference for segregated pedestrian and cycle tracks where possible.

Pedestrian and cycle routes provide for a range and choice of transport alternatives. These are sustainable modes of transport which will reduce car dependency, reduce emissions that contribute towards climate change and encourage an active lifestyle which will bring health benefits to the community. Such connections and provision of these facilities which provide for alternative modes of transport to places, facilities and amenities, helps to support and encourage an improved quality of life.

Policy

RES 15 To require that master plans and planning applications for residential developments identify where appropriate, pedestrian and cycle paths within the site and externally to adjoining residential areas, existing services and community facilities.

4.7 Bus Routes and Stops

Within larger new residential developments, care should be taken to permit full penetration by public transport services when designing internal circular distribution routes. The overall layout should contribute to the efficient and logical movement of buses around the area. Bus routes should be identified and included in proposed layouts.

Careful consideration should be given to the provision of bus routes including the location of bus stops and lay-bys. Bus stops should be provided in locations where the majority of dwellings are at a maximum distance of 400 metres and should be located close to the main public road.

The design of surface treatments adjacent to bus infrastructure should highlight pedestrian needs and include dropped kerbs, tactile surfaces and clear signage.

Policy

RES 16 To require that master plans and planning applications for large scale residential developments identify where appropriate, bus routes, the location of bus stops and lay-bys in such a manner as to ensure that the majority of residents are no more than 400 metres from a stop.

4.8. School Transport

Traffic congestion, owing to journeys to schools has become a significant element in morning rush hour traffic. In relation to existing schools, environmental educational programmes such as “Green Schools” which advocate initiatives such as the “walking bus” in addition to cycling routes could provide safe and viable alternatives to the car.

Policy

RES 17 To ensure the provision of safe and viable alternatives to the car for school traffic, in any major planned housing development and in town and village centres.

See also Chapter 7- Transport

SITE

4.9 Density

4.9.1 Density Introduction

Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ 2007 (DECLG) and the need for higher densities therein was based on consideration for trends towards smaller average household sizes, the need to encourage the provision of affordable housing and to support a more efficient use of energy in residential developments.

The guidelines recommend that for towns and villages with a population of less than 5,000, new development should contribute to maintaining compact forms and its scale should be in proportion to existing development. The guidelines also require that new development should provide for easy connectivity to existing facilities especially by pedestrians and cyclists and that leap–frogging of development at some distance from the existing built up area should be avoided.

Having regard to the *Department of the Environment Community & Local Government (DECLG)* guidelines on residential density and the need to maintain compact urban form, residential development will comply with the density requirements set out in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Residential Density Targets

Towns and Villages with population less than 5,000	Densities per Hectare	Note
Centrally located sites	30 plus	Mainly residential schemes or mixed use schemes
Edge of centre sites	20 - 30	Include a variety of housing types – detached dwellings, terraced and apartment style
Edge of town and village	15 - 20	Densities lower than 15 units per hectare will be considered provided that this lower density does not represent more than 20% of the total planned housing stock and to reduce demand for scattered one off housing.
<i>The above are density targets. The Council will also aim to ensure quality living environments and compliance with the Urban Design Manual 2008.</i>		

These density guidelines will be refined as part of the review of the local area plans of the County.

Policy

RES 18 To apply density standards in respect of the County's towns and villages as set out in Table 4.3 and to carry out further refinement where necessary as part of the review of the local area plans.

4.9.2 Building Heights

In general, all new development should be consistent in height with adjoining structures. Within developments there should be a mixture of typologies and sizes. The Council considers that residential buildings should not exceed 3 storeys in height, including roof space development except in exceptional circumstances where the planning authority considers that the site can adequately accommodate 4 storeys (including roof space development) and where provision for higher buildings is provided for in any local area plan.

Policy

RES 19 To require that residential buildings shall not exceed 3 storeys in height, including roof space development except in exceptional circumstances where the planning authority considers that the site can adequately accommodate 4 storeys (including roof space development) and where provision for higher buildings is provided for in any local area plan.

4.9.3 Public Open Space

4.9.3.1 Qualitative Requirements

The provision of public open space within residential developments is a key requirement in the provision of high quality residential areas, contributing to the character and attractiveness of the development. The basic principle governing public open space is that provision should be made for both active and passive open space. It should be safe convenient and accessible for all sections of society particularly children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Accordingly, open space networks should be an integral part of an overall development and provide linkages to adjoining areas of residential and community facilities. Open space networks should be organised along passive green linear parks, with pockets of active open space, community facilities and schools located close to or along them.

In proposed developments public open space should be arranged to facilitate the retention of existing landscape features, such as mature trees, hedgerows, biodiversity rich areas, streams, rivers and archaeological features/remains. The provision of high-quality landscaping, including the provision of semi mature trees, should be an integral part of any residential development. Finished levels for public open space relative to adjoining areas and full details of hard and soft landscaping, play equipment and furniture should be provided as part of planning applications.

Passive surveillance, accessibility and linkages to other public open spaces, existing and proposed, should be incorporated into the layout. Peripheral areas, narrow tracks, back land areas and poorly proportioned areas will not be considered acceptable. No area of public open space should be less than 200 square metres in area and no boundary should be less than 10 metres in length.

It is recommended that public open space should be provided in a variety of forms to cater for the active and passive recreational needs of the community.

- Informal, flat kick-about areas,
- Playgrounds for a specific age group, that is, local equipped areas for play (**LEAP**) as specified by the National Playing Fields Association for 4-8 year olds or a neighbourhood equipped areas for play (**NEAP**) for 8-12 year olds,
- Circuit training facilities,
- Formal playing fields,
- Village greens in larger developments,

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- Landscaped gardens,
- Small parks or natural parkland utilising existing and enhancing native flora and fauna,
- Seating and rest areas,
- Paved areas should be designed using sustainable urban drainage principles (**SUDS**),

4.9.3.2 Quantitative Standards

The quantitative standards in relation to public open space within residential areas are as outlined in Table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4 Quantitative standards for public open space in residential areas

	Minimum Percentage of the Gross Site Area
Standard Requirement*	15 % *
Institutional Lands	20 %

**Where residential developments are in close proximity to public parks or other natural amenities or in the town centre, a relaxation of the above standards may be permitted. Where open space standards cannot be achieved, more intensive recreational facilities may be accepted by the Council in lieu.*

Policy	
RES 20	To require that in all new residential development that the quantitative public open space standards as set out in Table 4.4 and the qualitative requirements of Section (4.9.3.1) described above are adhered to unless otherwise provided for in any local area plan.
RES 21	In small housing schemes where the 15% requirement is less than 200 square metres the assessment of public open space shall be on a qualitative basis or as agreed with the planning authority.
RES 22	To ensure that no area of public open space is less than 200sqm in area and no boundary is less than 10 meters in length.

4.9.4 Amenity Schemes

The Council encourages and supports amenity schemes proposed at various locations throughout the County. The Council will co-operate where appropriate with other development agencies or community groups in carrying out schemes which will improve the stock of recreation facilities within the County, depending on the availability of funding.

Policy

RES 23 To co-operate, where appropriate, with development agencies and community groups in carrying out schemes designed to improve the stock of amenity and recreational facilities in the County.

4.9.5 Public Art

Public art should be provided alongside infrastructure and development schemes through the Per Cent for Art Scheme. The Council should be consulted on opportunities for permanent art to reflect the area's heritage and to enhance focal points within towns, villages and developments.

Policy

RES 24 To encourage planning applications for residential schemes in excess of seventy five dwelling units to incorporate works of public art.

BUILDINGS

4.9.6 Internal Space Requirements

The provision of sufficient living space within new homes is an important element of good housing design and a pre-requisite for basic living. Potential residents of new homes should be provided with sufficient space for basic daily activities and needs. If homes are to have longevity, they must offer functional and adaptable spaces that meet the evolving needs of families, children, older people and less abled residents.

The recommended minimal internal space requirements outlined in Table 4.5 are based on the *Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)* documents: *'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities' (2007)* and *'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments' (2007)*. Where an anomaly exists between the two sets of guidelines the higher space standard has been utilised.

In relation to apartment development and to ensure a high quality space, Table 4.6 and Table 4.7 provides minimum widths for main living / dining rooms and bedrooms respectively. Living and bedroom spaces should be well proportioned, in terms of floor shapes and ceiling heights, so as to provide a good quality living environment for the occupants. Table 4.8 provides details of the minimum floor areas for main apartment balconies. The provision of adequate levels of storage provision is also essential in all new residential units.

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It is important that the standards should relate to floor areas of different types of apartments and make provision for storage areas, balconies, patios and room dimensions. In line with the recommendations set out in the guidelines, the Plan requires that the minimum requirements for apartment sizes should not be taken as the norm and the majority of apartments in any scheme should exceed the minimum standard. It is considered that this is a reasonable and necessary requirement to ensure that new apartment developments will provide for a sustainable and attractive living environment for future residents. In this regard, the Plan sets out the following requirements:

Tables 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8, which are abstracted from the **Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)** guidelines set out the required space provision and room size requirements for typical dwellings and apartments. All proposed residential developments should be designed to comply with these guidelines.

Table 4.5: Space Provision and Room Sizes for Typical Dwellings

Dwelling Type	Target Gross Floor Area	Minimum Main Living Room	Aggregate Floor Area of living/ dining/ kitchen area*	Aggregate Bedroom Area	Storage
	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)	(m ²)
Family dwellings for 3 or more persons (P)					
4 bed / 7P House (3 storey)	120	15	40	43	6
4bed / 7P House (2 storey)	110	15	40	43	6
4bed / 7P House (1 storey)	100	15	40	43	6
4bed / 7P Apartment	105	15	40	43	11
3bed / 6P House (3 storey)					
3bed / 6P House (3 storey)	110	15	37	36	6
3bed / 6P House (2 storey)	100	15	37	36	6
3bed / 6P House (1 storey)	90	15	37	36	6
3bed / 6P Apartment	94	15	37	36	10
3bed / 5P House (3 storey)					
3bed / 5P House (3 storey)	102	13	34	32	5

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Dwelling Type	Target Gross Floor Area	Minimum Main Living Room	Aggregate Floor Area of living/ dining/ kitchen area*	Aggregate Bedroom Area	Storage
3bed / 5P House (2 storey)	92	13	34	32	5
3bed / 5P House (1 storey)	82	13	34	32	5
3bed / 5P Apartment	90	13	34	32	9
3bed / 4P House (2 storey)	83	13	30	28	4
3bed / 4P House (1 storey)	73	13	30	28	4
3bed / 4P Apartment	90	13	30	31.5	9
2bed / 4P House (2 storey)	80	13	30	25	4
2bed / 4P House (1 storey)	70	13	30	25	4
2bed / 4P Apartment	73	13	30	25	7
2bed / 3P House (2 storey)	70	13	28	20	3
2bed / 3P House (1 storey)	60	13	28	20	3
2bed / 3P Apartment	73	13	30	25	6
1bed / 2P House (1 storey)	44	11	23	11	2
1bed / 2P Apartment	45	11	23	11.4	3

*An enclosed (separate) kitchen should have a minimum floor area of 6.5sq.m. In most cases, the kitchen should have an external window.

Table 4.6: Minimum Widths for the Main Living / Dining Rooms

<i>Apartment Type</i>	<i>Width of living / dining room</i>
One bedroom	3.3m
Two bedrooms	3.6m
Three bedrooms	3.8m

Source: Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments 2007.

Table 4.7: Minimum Bedroom Widths

<i>Type</i>	<i>Minimum width</i>
Single bedroom	2.1 m
Double bedroom	2.8 m
Twin bedroom	2.8m

Source: Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments 2007

Table 4.8 Minimum Floor Areas for Main Apartment Balconies

One bedroom	5 sq m
Two bedrooms	7 sq m
Three bedrooms	9 sq m

Source: Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments 2007

Policy

RES 25 To require that all proposed residential developments including apartments comply with the internal space provisions as set out in Tables 4.5 to 4.8 (inclusive).

4.10 Lifetime Housing

Lifetime housing developments and units are designed to accommodate the changing needs of the groups, families and individuals who will occupy them over the lifetime of the house. These needs will vary as each individual's circumstances change and the homes are designed to be inherently flexible in this respect. Lifetime homes should be fully physically accessible and easily adaptable at minimum cost with minimum disruption. The principles of universal, inclusive, barrier free design must be demonstratively applied where possible.

4.10.1 Designing for Lifetime Needs

Housing should be designed to be flexible, allowing for extensions to be built at a later stage. Larger housing units designed to be split into separate residential units or workspaces may be acceptable to the Council if such an option is designed into the building at the outset. Appropriate provision of car parking and concerns regarding residential amenity would need to be addressed.

The characteristics and requirements of the households to be accommodated (families, young single people, the elderly etc.) will affect the types of residential units and also the internal layout of the dwellings. Dwellings should be designed to be flexible, adaptable and accessible in order to cater for the changing needs of a typical household which may include family members suffering temporary (or permanent) mobility problems.

The Council will support the development of a best practice brochure/manual for designing dwelling houses which includes the principles of universal design. The brochure/manual should be developed in conjunction with DKIT and Louth County Council. The best practice in town planning and design will also be considered in the design of the public realm.

Policy

RES 26 To ensure that a high degree of building flexibility is incorporated into the design of new dwellings within the County including adaptability to lifetime housing needs and provision of accessibility for the elderly and those with impaired mobility.

4.10.2 Private Amenity Space

The provision of an area of outdoor private amenity space, attaching or available to each residential unit is important for the quality of the residential environment. Therefore all new residential units will have access to an area of private amenity space. In apartment and innovate layouts, private amenity space may be provided in the form of shared private areas, courtyards, terraces, patios, balconies and roof gardens or any acceptable combination of these.

A relaxation of these standards for public and private amenity space will be permitted where development is proposed to Protected Structures or within Architectural Conservation Areas, where complying with these standards would conflict with protecting architectural features of special interest and where it can be demonstrated that alternative amenities and facilities are available within the neighbourhood – as long as privacy is not compromised.

See also Chapter 5 – Heritage.

Table 4.9 Private Amenity Space Standards

Dwelling Unit Type	Min. Private Open Space Standard (Square metres)
Houses - 1 and 2 bedroom (Greenfield/suburban)	60
Houses – 3 and above bedrooms (Greenfield/suburban)	80
Houses (Town Centre/brown field)	50
Apartments/Duplexes (Greenfield/suburban)	
1 bedroom unit	20
2/3 bedroom unit	40
Apartments/Duplexes (Town Centre/ brownfield)	
1 bedroom unit	10
2/3 bedroom unit	20

Policy

RES 27 To require that private amenity space is in accordance with the quantitative standards as set out in Table 4.9 above.

4.10.3 Privacy and Spacing between Buildings

The design and layout of a development should ensure sufficient privacy for its intended residents both within the dwelling and within an area of garden close to each dwelling.

A distance of at least 22 metres is recommended between the windows of habitable rooms above ground floor level which face those of another dwelling. In instances where windows of non-habitable rooms e.g. bathrooms and halls, are within 22 metres of another facing window, a window located above eye level or use of obscure glazing may be acceptable.

Roof terraces and balconies are not acceptable where they would directly overlook neighbouring habitable rooms or rear gardens.

Where new buildings are located very close to adjoining buildings, the Council may require that daylight and shadow projection diagrams be submitted. The recommendations of *Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice (B.R.E.1991)* or *B.S. 8206 Lighting for Buildings, Part 2 1992: Code of Practice for Day Lighting* should be followed.

Policy

RES 28 To provide at least 22m between windows of habitable rooms above ground floor level which face those of another dwelling.

4.10.4 Car Parking Provision

Car parking provision is important particularly in low density suburban sites and less so within high density sites in town centres or close to public transport facilities. Car parking spaces should be provided in accordance with Table 7.6 Car Parking Requirements (Chapter 7 Transport) and designed to comply with the principles of passive surveillance.

These standards are applicable in respect to both conventional housing and apartments/duplexes. However, there may be instances where a relaxation of these standards may be considered which include for the following:

Chapter 4 Residential and Community Facilities

- Within town/village centres where infill development is proposed, the above standards may be relaxed and a financial contribution in lieu of the provision of car parking by the developer may be acceptable.
- A relaxation of this requirement may be considered in certain town/village centre sites where the applicant can demonstrate that there are satisfactory alternative transport modes readily available.
- A relaxation of these standards for car parking spaces will be permitted where development is proposed to Protected Structures or within Architectural Conservation Areas, where complying with these standards would conflict with protecting architectural features of special interest and where car parking requirements can be met by the provision of a parking permit within the town parking facilities.

See also Chapter 5 – Heritage and Chapter 7 – Transport.

Policy

RES 29 To ensure residential car parking provision as set down in Table 7.6 (in relation to residential development) is adhered to, with the exception of infill development in town and village centres where a financial contribution in lieu may be acceptable.

4.11 Energy Performance of Dwellings

In the interest of energy conservation and the reduction of green house gases the Council will encourage passive design principles in residential developments. Passive solar design refers to matters such as orientation, size of openings and glazed areas, internal layout and avoidance of overshadowing.

The **Building Regulations 1997-2014** require that a minimum of 25% of the energy requirements for all new residential developments including one off dwellings in the countryside are derived from active renewable energy sources. There are a range of small scale domestic devices or 'micro renewable technologies' which can be utilised including inter alia: wind turbines, solar photo-volvic panels, solar panels, ground source heat pumps, wood fuelled heating and micro CHP. In all cases passive solar design and micro renewable technologies should be used in conjunction with very high levels of building insulation.

The **EU Directive** on the **Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD)** contains a range of provisions aimed at improving energy performance of residential and non-residential buildings, both new-build and existing. As part of the Directive, a **Building Energy Rating (BER)** certificate, which is effectively an energy label, will be required at the point of sale or rental of a building, or on completion of a new building. The current minimum energy performance requirements for residential buildings are set out in the **Building Regulations 1997-2014**. The provisions of these regulations must be complied with.

See also Chapter 9 – Energy & Communications

Policy

RES 30 To require all applications for residential development including one off houses to demonstrate that a minimum of 25% of the energy requirements of the building is from renewable sources.

4.12 Waste Storage

Adequate provision should be made for the storage, segregation and recycling of waste and for convenient access for its deposit and collection as detailed in Table 4.10. Refuse enclosures should be designed in such a manner as to ensure their integration with the associated building or boundary enclosure and should be appropriately and adequately screened.

Table 4.10: Provision for Waste Storage

Units type	Provision requirements
Detached Semi Detached	Direct external access should be made available from the rear of the dwelling to the public road for collection.
Terraced Duplex	Communal bin storage facilities should be provided at secure, well screened locations convenient to the units served and for the purposes of collection.
Apartment	Communal bin storage facilities should be provided in a secure well ventilated space within the basement of the apartment block convenient to the units served and for the purposes of collection.

Policy

RES 31 To ensure that provision is made for the storage, segregation and recycling of waste and for convenient access for its deposit and collection

RES 32 To ensure that refuse enclosures are designed in such a manner as to ensure their integration with the associated building or boundary enclosure and should be appropriately and adequately screened.

4.13 Master Plans

Master Plans are a valuable tool in ensuring the sustainable development of large areas of land particularly where such land is in multiple ownership. Master Plans should be prepared by the applicant in consultation with the Council to ensure that all relevant aspects of the proposed development are included. Master Plans should be submitted for lands identified in the relevant local area plan or when requested through the Development Management process and shall be in compliance with SEA, Floods, Water Framework and Habitats Directive.

A Master Plan should address the key design assessment criteria outlined in the Urban Design Manual as indicated in Table 4.2 and consider *inter alia* the following:

- Consistency with policies and objectives of relevant plan,
- Context of surrounding area in terms of character, urban design and structure,
- Topography and land form,
- Protection of existing trees, hedgerows and nature conservation areas,
- Protection of archaeological remains, architectural conservation areas, protected structures and other historic buildings,
- Safeguard protected fauna,
- Flooding,
- Integration of the site with adjoining existing approved and proposed development,
- Roads, cycling and pedestrians paths and bus infrastructure provision,
- Inclusion of SUDS and water conservation measures,
- Phasing to ensure roll out of required physical and social infrastructure,
- Protection of scenic views,
- Road infrastructure and layout.

Policy

RES 33 To require the preparation of Master Plans to ensure integrated and coherent development of lands identified in the relevant local area plan or through the development management process.

4.14 Design Statements

The Council may require the preparation of Design Statements for certain sites or locations displaying specific issues that need to be addressed. Such sites or issues may include *inter alia* the following:

- Village location/village centre,
- Village expansion,
- Brownfield/infill site,
- Institutional lands,
- Natural features existing,
- ACA's/Protected Structures,
- Flooding.

The Design Statement should consist of both text and graphics (but not duplicate the planning application) and outline how the site is to be developed, including an appraisal of the distinctive characteristics of the site and its context, with particular reference to the issues specific to the site. The amount of detail required will be dependent on the nature, scale and location of the proposed development. The Design Statement should also address any local design considerations identified in local area plans and supplementary planning guidance.

Policy

RES 34 To require the preparation of a Design Statement for sites or locations where there are specific issues to be addressed, including, but not limited to those as outlined above in Section 4.14

4.15 Naming of Estates

The Council will require the naming of residential developments to reflect local or historical place names in accordance with the ***Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG)*** circular entitled '***Naming of Streets and Roads, Numbering of Houses and the Use of Irish***'. The naming of all developments shall seek and gain the approval of the Louth County Council Place Names Committee.

Policy

RES 35 To require that the naming of residential developments is in accordance with the DECLG Circular 'Naming of Streets and Roads, Numbering of Houses and the Use of Irish'. The naming of all residential developments shall be subject to approval of Louth County Council Place Names Committee.

4.16 Taking in Charge of Housing Estates

The Council is required under the provisions of **Section 180 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000 (as amended)** to take in charge of developments (which includes the construction of 2 or more houses) where requested to do so by the person carrying out the development or by a majority of the owners or occupiers of the houses involved. The Council's policies and procedures in relation to Taking in Charge of housing estates is set down in the policy document Louth County Council: **Taking in Charge Policy/Release of Bond for Completed Private Housing Developments**. This document is attached as Appendix 15, Volume 2 (b).

Policy

RES 36 To Take in Charge on request, housing developments of two or more houses where the development has been completed to the satisfaction of the Council in accordance with the permission and any conditions to which the permission is subject and having regard to the Policy document: Louth County Council: Taking in Charge Policy/Release of Bond for Completed Private Housing Developments.

4.17 Lighting in Residential Developments

Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI) is promoting the use of energy efficient lighting technologies as a means of achieving sustainable low energy consumption. The most effective energy consumption for public lights is currently achieved by the use of LED Lights. Therefore Louth County Council requires all new public lighting to be energy efficient and effective, with lowest whole life cost, resulting in long term economical, environmental and energy savings. As the Council incurs the energy costs of new residential developments when taken in charge, it is reasonable that the developer be required to agree the specification for public light provision and to undertake energy efficient design for public lights i.e. low energy lamps in accordance with a public lighting plan agreed with the Planning Authority. In this regard the Council requires the lowest energy usage light which can light the public roads to the required standard EN 13201. This would require the use of LED lights but the Council is conscientious of rapidly developing technology in that area.

Policy

RES 37 All new lighting in residential developments shall be high performance low energy lanterns with electronic gear requiring energy efficiency and effectiveness, with lowest whole life cost, and will thus require the use of LED lights (or any subsequent technical upgrade as agreed with the planning authority).

4.18 Community Facilities

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for inter alia the establishment of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) as a committee of Louth County Council. Louth County Council is required to develop a 6 year **Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)** for the County. It is intended that this will plan for the integration of economic and local community development at a local level. The Local Economic & Community Plan to be adopted by the Local Authority includes two elements:

- A local economic element (prepared by the Economic Development & Enterprise Support Strategic Policy Committee (SPC))
- A community development element (prepared by the Local Community Development Committee LCDC)

Successful communities require a wide range of local services and facilities. These include employment, shops, childcare, educational, health, civic amenities, community buildings and leisure based activities. All community facilities as far as is practical should be readily accessible from residential areas by safe, convenient and direct walking routes. In this regard, the layouts of new residential developments need to facilitate pedestrian and cycle movements.

The Council shall promote and encourage the provision of community, social, leisure and sports facilities in locations where they are accessible to and meet the needs of people. These facilities can range from small places such as meeting rooms, local community halls, indoor sports facilities and larger places of worship, to major sports and entertainment venues.

The primary role of the Council is to reserve sufficient lands to meet likely future demands for community infrastructure. Zoning of land for this purpose does not in itself ensure the timely provision of the necessary community facilities such as education and health facilities.

It is essential that new residential developments in the County are carried out in such a manner as to provide for the provision of childcare facilities, healthcare, nursing homes, community buildings, sports facilities and amenity schemes in tandem with the completion of houses. To facilitate this, applicants for planning permission for residential developments on sites over 1 hectare (2.47 acres) or for more than 50 residential units, will be required to submit an audit of community facilities as part of the planning application. This should provide details of all available community facilities in the locality and where a shortfall in facilities exist, demonstrate how this will be made good, either through provision on site or such other means as is acceptable to the Council.

Policy

RES 38 To require applications for residential developments on sites of one hectare or over (excluding Level 4) or for more than 50 residential units, provide an audit of existing community facilities in the locality and where a shortfall in facilities exist, demonstrate how this will be made good, either through provision on site or such other means as is acceptable to the Council.

RES 39 To identify and zone land within local area plans and settlements for the purposes of providing or extending community facilities where a demonstrated need exists.

4.18.1 Schools and Education

In July 2008, the *Department of Education and Skills (DES)* and the *Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG)* published a joint document entitled *The Provision of Schools and the Planning System - A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities*. This is part of a package of initiatives designed to facilitate the timely and cost-effective provision of schools, particularly primary schools and school related infrastructure. It includes new mechanisms for site identification and acquisition.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the *Department of Education & Skills (DES)* and the *City & County Managers' Association (CCMA)* on the acquisition of sites for school planning purposes has been agreed. This is designed to codify practice in relation to cooperation between this Department and local authorities in relation to the acquisition of sites suitable for the construction and development of buildings for educational purposes.

There are currently 78 primary and 17 post-primary schools located in County Louth as detailed in Tables 4.11 and 4.12. There are additionally 2 third level institutions, namely Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) and Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE) within County Louth.

Table 4.11 Primary Schools in County Louth

	Ordinary	Special	Total
Number of schools	74	4	78

Source: (DES)

Table 4.12 Post-Primary Schools in County Louth

	Secondary	Vocational	Community	Comprehensive	Total
Numbers in Co. Louth	11	5	1	-	17

Source: (DES)

In March 2012, the Minister for Education and Skills announced details of new major school projects which are to commence by 2015. It is proposed that work would commence on 2 new primary and 3 new post primary schools in County Louth and extensions/refurbishments to 1 existing primary and 3 post primary schools. A partnership agreement is in place between Louth County Council and the **Department of Education and Skills (DES)** whereby the Council will assist with the delivery of schools.

It is the role of the Council to reserve sufficient land within the identified settlement centres to meet likely future demands for community facilities including education facilities. In addition the Council will encourage schools to share use of existing recreational facilities with the wider community.

The Department of Education and Skills calculates that 12% of the population at any given time is of primary school going age and that 8.5% of the population at any given time is of post primary school going age. The Council will facilitate and encourage multi-school campus arrangements for primary and secondary schools.

Policy

RES 40 To co-operate with the *Department of Education and Skills (DES)* in the identification of need and provision of school sites and in accordance with relevant national guidance.

RES 41 To identify and zone lands as required in local area plans and settlements for schools and educational infrastructure as required.

RES 42 To facilitate and encourage multi-school campus arrangements incorporating both primary and secondary levels.

4.18.2 Childcare Facilities/Creche

Childcare may be defined as full day care, session facilities and services for pre-school children and school going children during out of school hours. Access to good quality childcare facilities contributes to the social, emotional and educational development of children. In addition childcare has an important role to play in fostering economic development particularly at local level.

Chapter 4 Residential and Community Facilities

The ***Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)*** advocate a more pro-active role by the Council in the promotion of increased childcare provision.

These guidelines recommend the provision of a twenty unit crèche or child care facility for every seventy-five houses within new developments. Where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that there are sufficient childcare spaces available in the locality, developers will be required, in lieu, to provide other community benefits by way of direct provision or financial contribution agreed with the Council.

The aforementioned guidelines state that the following criteria should be applied in the assessment of the suitability of childcare facilities irrespective of location:

- Regard to childcare (pre- school regulations 2006),
- Suitability of site for type and size of facility proposed,
- Availability of outdoor play areas and details of management of same,
- Convenient to public transport,
- Safe access and convenient parking for customers and staff,
- Local traffic conditions,
- Number of such facilities in the area,
- Intended opening hours of operation.

In accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy and sustainable development, crèche/childcare facilities shall be directed to Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 and generally will not be permitted in the countryside.

Policy

RES 43 To ensure that adequate and suitable childcare facilities are provided having regard to DECLG *Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001*. Crèche/childcare facilities shall locate in settlements contained within Level's 1, 2, 3 and 4 and will not generally be permitted in the open countryside.

RES 44 To seek the provision of additional community benefits by way of direct provision or financial contribution in lieu of the provision of childcare facilities where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that there are sufficient childcare spaces available in the locality.

4.18.3 Nursing Homes/Analogous Services

The demand for nursing homes and analogous services has grown over the last number of decades. Advances in the field of medicine as well as improved nutrition and quality of life have increased average life expectancy

Chapter 4 Residential and Community Facilities

The planning authority considers that nursing homes/analogous services should be located within Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee, Dunleer and the Level 3 Settlements where:

- Public utilities such as water and sewage facilities are available,
- Opportunities for greater social inclusion and integration to the community exist,
- Accessibility by means of public transportation is available,
- Visitors can combine trips to see patients and relatives with other trips such as shopping and worship.

There is a presumption against nursing home developments/analogous services in the open countryside for reasons relating to unsustainability, poor accessibility, social exclusion and visual intrusion.

In assessing planning applications for nursing homes/analogous services, the planning authority will have regard to the following:

- The zoning objectives for the area and the site's size, shape and adjoining buildings and its compatibility with other uses in the area,
- Accessibility – access must be provided in a manner that is safe and adequate to meet the pedestrian and vehicular traffic flows anticipated and adequate parking provision in accordance with the standards set down in this Plan. The location of nursing homes along public transportation routes is highly recommended in the interest of sustainability and to facilitate employees, relatives and visitors who depend upon public transport,
- Design and Layout – should respect the characteristics of the site and fit in comfortably within the landscape and with adjoining properties. Applicants should consult with the Health Service Executive (HSE) with regard to internal design and layout at design stage,
- Amenity- sufficient amenity space and landscaped areas should be provided to meet the needs of the residents and provide an attractive setting,
- Utilities – connection to public water supply and foul drainage will be required.

Policy

RES 45 To require that nursing homes/analogous services are located within Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee, Dunleer and Level 3 Settlements. In exceptional circumstances where suitable, the re-use of existing buildings shall be considered.

RES 46 To ensure that all applications for nursing homes/analogous services comply with the guidelines outlined in Section 4.18.3 above.

4.18.4 Primary Health Facilities

The provision of health care facilities is a function of the **Health Service Executive (HSE)**. The Council can assist however by ensuring that provision is made within development plans and local area plans for such facilities. It is desirable that good quality, accessible health care is provided in the local community.

Policy

RES 47 To facilitate the provision of primary health facilities within Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Dunleer, Level 3 and Level 4 settlements and within new large scale residential developments.

4.18.5 Community Buildings and Sports Facilities

Community buildings and sports and recreation facilities play a very important role in fostering a sense of community identity and well being. With the substantial increase in population in the County and projected further growth, it is important that the necessary facilities are provided throughout the County and in new residential developments.

The **Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006-2012** was prepared to establish a set of strategic objectives to increase opportunities for sport, recreation, play and leisure for the inhabitants of the County. This strategy will be reviewed during the Plan period, and the Council will seek to secure its implementation.

Policy

RES 48 To ensure that adequate provision is made for community buildings, sports and recreational facilities, including playing fields and children's play areas in master plans and residential proposals, having regard to the Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006-2012 and /or any revised Strategy prepared during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

RES 49 To resist the loss of existing social and community facilities and playing fields.

4.18.6 Persons with Disabilities

The Barcelona Declaration 2002, of which Ireland is a signatory advocates the right of less able people to equal opportunities and recognises their contribution to society and the environment in which they live. Under the terms of the Barcelona Declaration, the Council consulted with people with disabilities and adopted the **Louth Local Authorities Disability Implementation Plan 2008 -2015**. This plan outlines actions that the local

authority will take to ensure that persons with disabilities and impaired mobility have unrestricted access to their buildings and services.

In addition, **Part M of the Building Regulations 1997-2014** requires that all public and private buildings will have provision for suitable access for persons with disabilities.

Policy

RES 50 To assist the implementation of the Louth Local Authorities Disability Implementation Plan 2008 -2015.

4.18.7 The Library Service

The Council provides a countywide network of library services serving individual communities and the County as a whole. There are five libraries in the county; Dundalk Drogheda, Carlingford, Ardee and Dunleer.

Dundalk and Drogheda provide a regional service. Both libraries have hosted numerous visits by school classes, adult students and other groups. There has been much work carried out in the expansion of IT facilities for the public. These included courses for public use on terminals, public cards for use on public internet terminals and the provision of a wide selection of CD ROMs and talking books.

Additional services that have been introduced include RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) self service points/kiosks and free Wi-Fi access. The library service continues to expand its collection of eBooks and eAudio downloads. This service allows library members to browse the collection from home and download items to their computer or mobile device. The smaller libraries and mobile library service continue to improve library participation by reaching communities in the more local centres. The mobile library service has continued to extend its range of stops to suit the needs of the community, incorporating as many stops as possible both urban and rural.

Policy

RES 51 To support the continued improvement to the library service in County Louth to meet the current and future needs of all members of the community and to strengthen links with socially excluded members and groups of our society.

4.18.8 Emergency Services

Louth County Council Fire and Rescue Services are responsible for the provision of a fire and rescue service along with fire prevention and building control duties to the people of County Louth. All new residential development (including housing and apartments) shall be required, during construction phase to be hard wired for a smoke/heat/CO alarm.

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Louth County Council is also committed to providing an effective major emergency management service as published by the **Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG)**. A Major Emergency Plan has been developed to assist Louth County Council to respond effectively and efficiently to major incidents and is kept under constant review. Additionally the **Community Fire Safety Strategy 2013-2018** was adopted in early 2014.

Policy

- RES 52 To support continued improvement to the delivery of the fire and emergency services within the County and to review the Major Emergency Plan as required.**
- RES 53 To support the Community Fire Safety Strategy 2013-2018.**
- RES 54 All new residential development (including houses and apartments) shall be required during construction phase to be hard wired for a smoke/heat/CO alarm.**

Chapter 5

Heritage (Natural & Built)

5.1 Introduction

County Louth has a rich heritage, both built and natural, which contributes substantially to the County's character and identity.

'Heritage' includes all that we have inherited from our ancestors. It comprises valuable resources that can be used wisely to develop our society, economy and people and to create a better future.

The Heritage Act, 1995 did not define heritage, but it did list the following as comprising Ireland's heritage: monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways. The word 'heritage' therefore encompasses both natural and built resources and is extended to cover intangible and cultural heritage too.

Our natural heritage includes biodiversity, which comprises the diversity of all living things including people, animals, plants, micro-organisms, as well as the physical and geological landscapes which form our surroundings. The selection and designation of nature conservation sites (including geological sites) for protection is primarily the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the **Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG)**. The NPWS informs planning authorities which sites are to be protected. The planning authority also conducts its own surveys to identify such sites and works closely with other national agencies with responsibility for nature conservation.

The built heritage of County Louth refers to all the man-made features, buildings or structures of our varied and rich archaeological and architectural heritage. This built heritage includes isolated archaeological sites, buildings or groups of buildings in rural areas or along the coast and also those concentrated in historic towns and villages.

In broad terms, archaeology is concerned with how societies, communities and cultures developed, which is achieved through an investigation and analysis of the material and physical evidence left behind by them including, monuments, sites and objects, which can be located both above and below ground or underwater. Archaeological sites are identified and designated by the National Monuments Service (NMS) of the **Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, (DAHG)** which maintains the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) (a listing of all known 'Recorded Monuments').

The architectural heritage comprises visible buildings and other structures/ which are located above ground and were broadly (but not exclusively) constructed since 1700AD. The local authority has primary responsibility, under the Planning Acts, for the conservation of built heritage. The protection and management of this built heritage is achieved through the designation of 'Protected Structures' (inclusive of their attendant grounds, including designed landscapes, parks and gardens) and of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Buildings of

architectural importance can range from domestic houses of local importance to stately homes and buildings of national or international importance.

Local authorities also have responsibilities in relation to the protection of landscapes, views and prospects and other landscape features.

5.2 Heritage Plans

The National Heritage Plan (2002) sets out a vision for the management of the National Heritage and its aim is to “ensure the protection of our heritage and to promote its enjoyment by all”. A key objective of the **National Heritage Plan (2002)** is to promote the role that local communities play in protecting and enhancing local heritage. This is achieved through the preparation and adoption by the local authority of a local heritage plan, in which the public has an opportunity for consultation and participation.

5.2.1 Draft Louth Heritage Plan 2014 – 2018

The **Draft Louth Heritage Plan 2014 – 2018** is a strategic framework plan which aims to coordinate the conservation, management and sympathetic development of the County’s heritage. It comprises a five year joint work plan for a partnership of many individuals and organisations with an involvement in Louth’s heritage.

Policy

HER 1 To promote the implementation of the Draft Louth Heritage Plan 2014-2018 and any Louth Heritage Plan subsequently adopted during the lifetime of this Plan.

5.3 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

Natural heritage comprises the biological and geological underpinnings of our existence, our biodiversity and geodiversity, which express themselves through our farming, wildlife and landscapes (and to some degree, our built heritage).

Biodiversity (short for biological diversity) refers to the whole variety of life on earth. It includes habitats and ecosystems, covering all plants, animals and micro-organisms both on land and in the water. Biodiversity relates to both wildlife and to domesticated crops and animals. Wildlife conservation is a legal requirement of development plans and is good for people as well as for wildlife.

County Louth is rich in biodiversity, thanks to an extensive coastline (stretching from Carlingford Lough to the Boyne Estuary), marine environments, wetlands, woodlands, rivers and upland habitats. Together, these habitats support a rich variety of plant and animal species. The county of Louth is an internationally important destination for migratory wildlife, with Dundalk Bay being Ireland’s top location for wading birds. An area equivalent to more than one seventh of the County is designated under Irish and European legislation for wildlife protection, (including marine and inter-tidal areas). Some of the upland areas in the Cooley Peninsula are recognised as being amongst the most unspoilt in the Country.

These resources define the County's character. In many cases, they are non-renewable and are vulnerable to infrastructure and other development. It is considered that their unsustainable usage would cause irreparable damage to the County's economic prospects in the long term. This Development Plan has a fundamental role in facilitating necessary development while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

5.3.1 International, EU and Irish Policy on Biodiversity

The European Union's (EU) first wildlife conservation legislation was the **Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)**, supplemented by the **Habitats Directive Assessment (92/43/EEC)**. Since then it has built up a network in excess of 26,000 protected areas across all the Member States and with a total area of approximately 950,000 km² (including marine sites). There are 750,000 km² of terrestrial sites, representing 17.5% of total EU land territory. This vast array of Special Areas of Conservation SAC's and Special Protection Areas SPA's, known as the Natura 2000 Network - the largest coherent network of protected areas in the world, is a testament to the importance that the EU attaches to biodiversity.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, which Ireland signed and ratified and **The National Biodiversity Plan, 2002** aimed to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010, a target which has subsequently been extended to 2020.

The **National Biodiversity Plan 2002** required all local authorities to prepare local biodiversity plans. It has subsequently been replaced by a second **National Biodiversity Plan**, adopted in 2011. Louth County Council adopted the **Biodiversity Action Plan for Louth 2008 –2012** and this is now replaced with the **Draft Louth Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2018**.

Policy

HER 2 To promote and implement the objectives of the Draft Louth Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2018 and any Louth Biodiversity Action Plan subsequently adopted during the lifetime of this Plan.

5.4 Protected Biodiversity Sites in Louth

5.4.1 European Sites (SACs and SPAs)

There are 11 European sites (SACs and SPAs) wholly or partly within County Louth. These form part of the EU-wide Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network includes both *Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)*, established under the **Habitats Directive (1992)**, and *Special Protection Areas (SPAs)*, established under the **Birds Directive' (1979)**. These are the prime wildlife conservation areas in the country and are considered to be of significant importance at both European and Irish levels.

The planning authority is required, under the **EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011**, to carry out a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) of any planning application it receives. It may only grant permission, following screening, having established, on the basis of objective scientific information, that the application in question would not have a significant effect on a European site. If significant impacts cannot be excluded at the screening phase, the

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planning authority is required to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of the application, to which end it may require the applicant to furnish it with a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

“Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland; Guidance for Planning Authorities” (DECLG 2010) is intended to assist and guide local and planning authorities in the functions of undertaking Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects. These guidelines highlight the responsibilities of all the agencies of the State including planning authorities, to act diligently, to ensure that their decisions in the exercise of their functions, as well as their actions, comply fully with the objectives of the **Habitats Directive (1992)**.

County Louth contains 6 SACs, which are listed in Table 5.1 and illustrated on Map 5.1, and 5 SPAs, which are listed in Table 5.2 and shown on Map 5.2.

Table 5.1: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

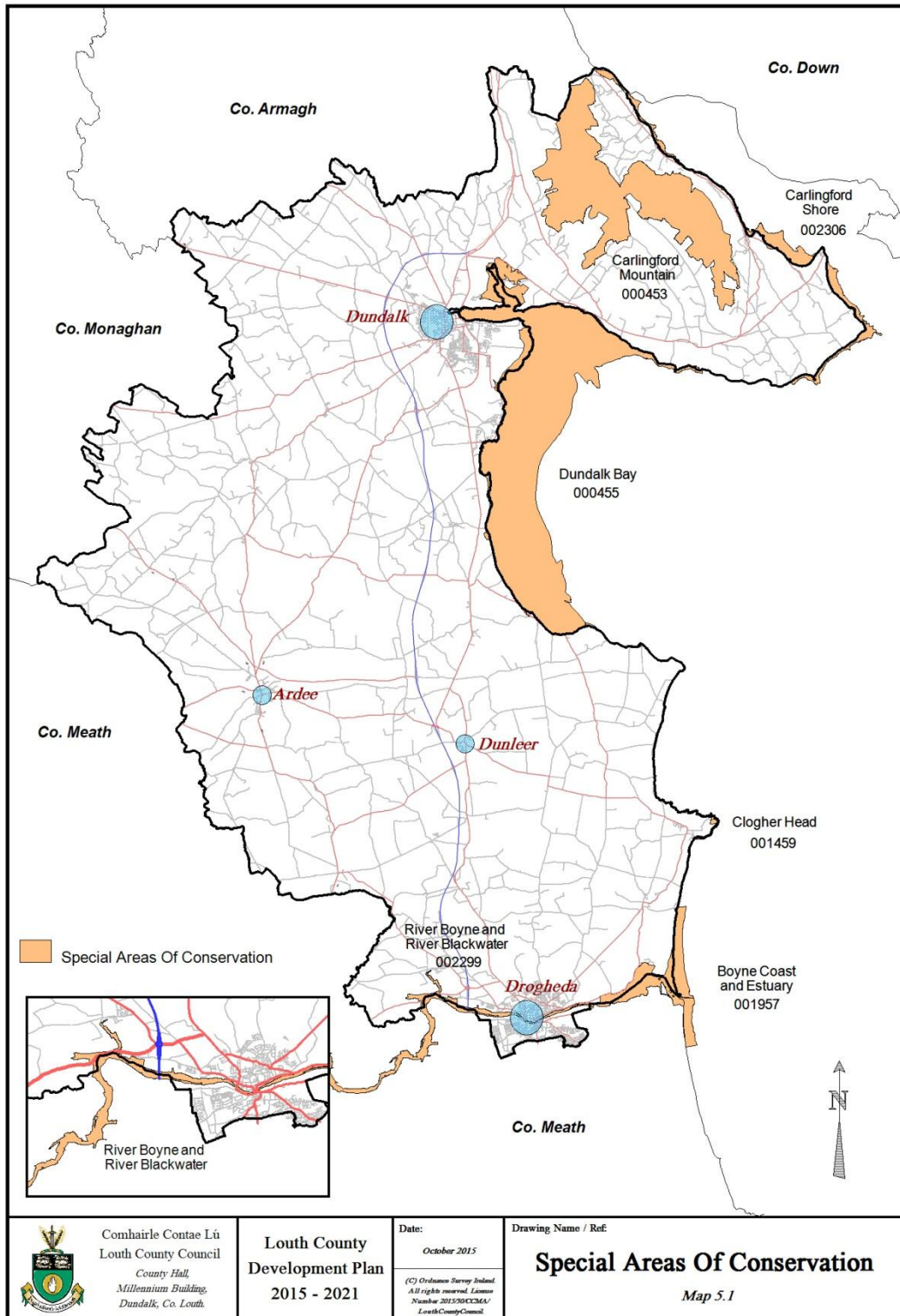
Ref Nr.	Name/Location
2306	Carlingford Shore
453	Carlingford Mountain
455	Dundalk Bay
1459	Clogherhead
1957	Boyne Coast and Estuary – shared with County Meath
2299	River Boyne and River Blackwater - shared with County Meath

Table 5.2: Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

Ref. No.	Name/Location
4078	Carlingford Lough (overlaps with County Down site)
4026	Dundalk Bay
4091	Stabannan and Braganstown
4080	Boyne Estuary (shared with Co. Meath)
4232	River Boyne and River Blackwater (shared with Co. Meath)

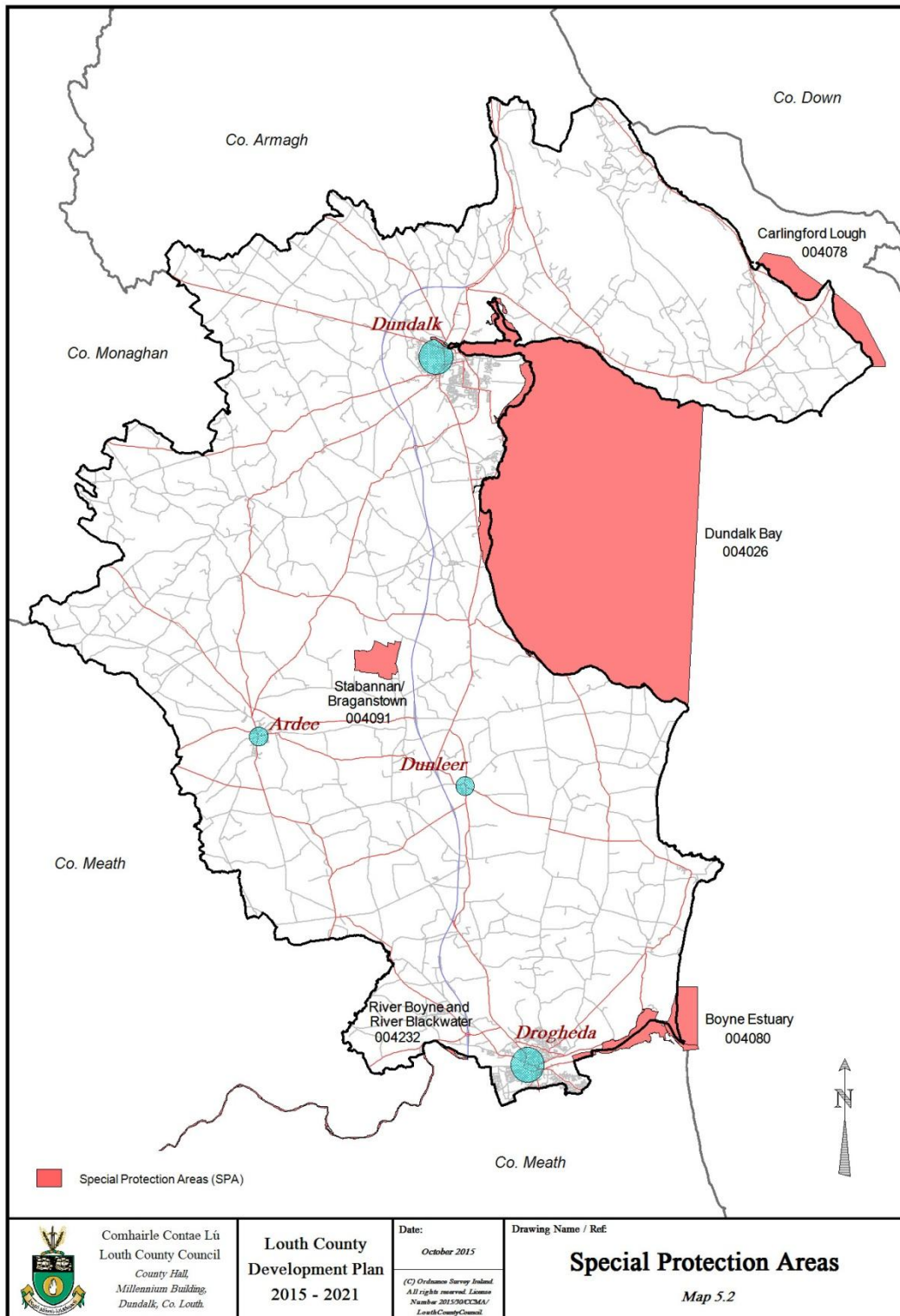
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Map 5.1: Special Areas of Conservation (ACAs)



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Map 5.2: Special Protection Areas (SPA's)



Policy

- HER 3** To ensure that all proposed developments comply with the DECLG “Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010”
- HER 4** The Local Authority will ensure that a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) on all plans and projects and or Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (NIS/NIR) where appropriate, is undertaken to make a determination. Natura 2000 sites located outside of the County but within 15 km of the proposed development site should also be included in such screenings. All screening assessments submitted to the planning authority shall include a written statement indicating control methods proposed to prevent the spread of invasive species onto a Natura 2000 site.
- HER 5** Any plans or projects that would have a significant adverse impact (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservations objectives of any Natura 2000 site will not be permitted.
- HER 6** To co-operate with the Regional Planning Authority and adjoining local authorities, public agencies and community interests to protect regionally significant heritage assets, environmental quality and to identify threats to existing environmental quality in a transboundary context throughout the region.

5.5 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA)

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NWPS) has proposed 24 ecological National Heritage Areas (NHAs) in Louth, under the *Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000*. NHAs are sites that support elements of our natural heritage which are unique or are of outstanding importance at a national level and include both ecological and geological sites. The 24 ecological sites are listed in Table 5.3 and identified on Map 5.3. The process of designation of these sites is ongoing. It is anticipated that some proposed NHAs will be given full designated status during the course of this Plan.

Table 5.3 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

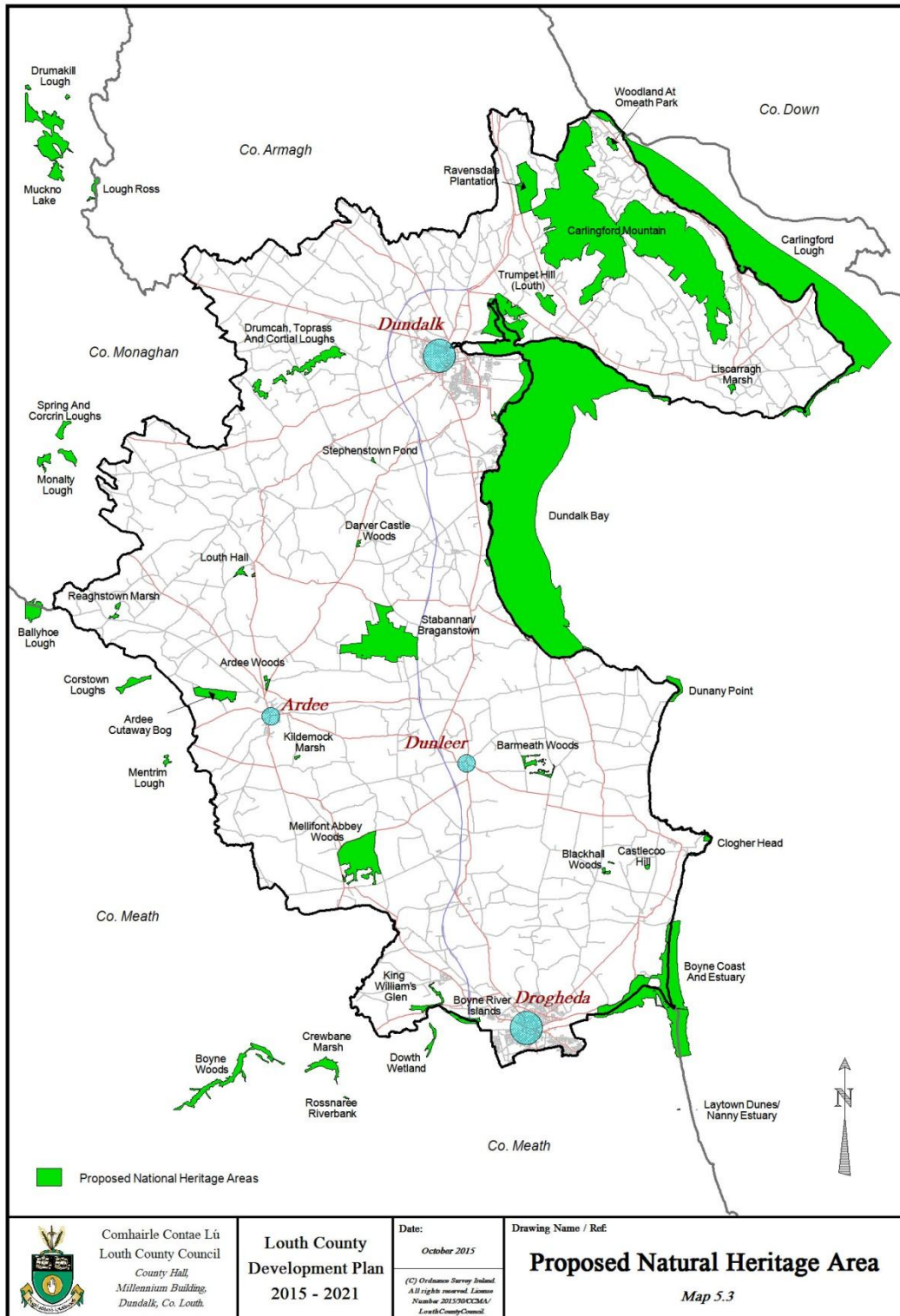
Ref. Nr.	Name/Location
NH1454	Ardee Cutaway Bog
NH1801	Barmeath Woods
NH1293	Blackhall Woods
NH1957	Boyne Coast and Estuary
NH1862	Boyne River Islands
NH452	Carlingford Lough
NH453	Carlingford Mountains
NH1458	Castlecoo Hill
NH1459	Clogherhead
NH1461	Darver Castle Woods
NH1462	Drumcah, Toprass and Cortial Loughs
NH1856	Dunany Point
NH 455	Dundalk Bay
NH1806	Kildemock Marsh
NH1804	King Williams Glen
NH1451	Liscarragh Marsh
NH1616	Louth Hall and Ardee Woods
NH1464	Mellifont Abbey Woods
NH1805	Ravensdale Plantation
NH1828	Reaghstown Marsh
NH456	Stabannan- Braganstown
NH1803	Stephenstown Pond
NH1468	Trumpet Hill
NH1465	Woodland at Omeath Park

Policy

HER 7 To resist any development that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats or a disturbance of species in the pNHA.

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Map 5.3: Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA)



5.6 Sites of Geological Interest

Louth also has a tremendously rich and interesting geological heritage (geodiversity) and the Council is committed to protecting this as far as is possible, in partnership with the national agencies with statutory responsibility for the designation of geological heritage. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Geological Service of Ireland (GSI), acting in partnership, selected what they considered to be the most important candidate geological sites in the County. Louth County Council appointed consultants to inspect and assess these sites in 2013, with match-funding from the Heritage Council. While some proposed sites were deleted from the list some new sites were added. The confirmed sites are listed in Table 5.4. It is intended that some of these candidate sites will eventually be designated by the NPWS as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), while others will be conserved as County Geological Sites (CGS). Many geological conservation sites are also of considerable importance for biodiversity conservation. The location of these confirmed Sites of Geological Interest is illustrated on Map 5.4.

Policy

- HER 8** To promote the designation of qualifying sites of geological interest listed in Table 5.4 as Natural Heritage Areas and the remaining sites as County Geological Sites.
- HER 9** To protect and promote awareness, where appropriate, of areas of geological interest, including the provision of access and interpretation where desirable and feasible.

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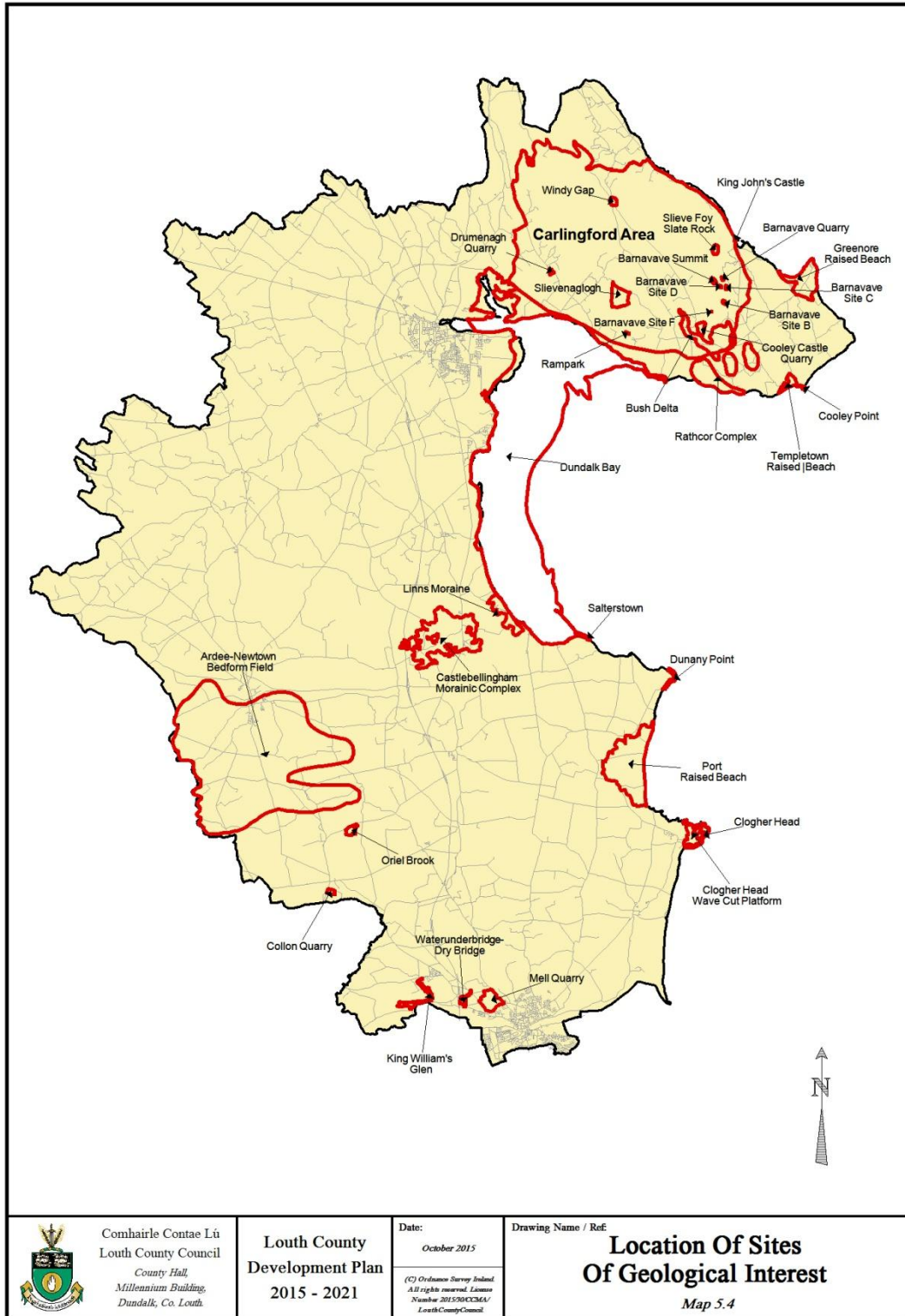
Table 5.4 Sites of Geological Interest

Note: Site numbers are as given in the report of the Geological Heritage of Louth Survey of 2013.
NHA sites are those considered to be worthy of designation as Natural Heritage Areas by the NPWS.
CGS refers to sites of lesser importance which should still be protected as County Geological Sites

Site Nr	Site Name	Site importance (proposed designation)
LH01	Ardee-Newtown Bedform Field	CGS
LH02	Barnavave Quarry	NHA
LH03	Barnavave Site B	NHA
LH04	Barnavave Site C	CGS
LH05	Barnavave Site D	CGS
LH06	Barnavave Site F	CGS
LH07	Barnavave Summit	CGS
LH08	Bush Delta	CGS
LH09	Carlingford Area	NHA
LH10	Castlebellingham Morainic Complex	CGS
LH11	Clogher Head	NHA
LH12	Clogher Head Wave Cut Platform	CGS
LH13	Collon Quarry	CGS
LH14	Cooley Castle Quarry	CGS
LH15	Cooley Point	CGS
LH16	Drumenagh Quarry	NHA
LH17	Dunany Point	CGS
LH18	Dundalk Bay	CGS
LH19	Greenore Raised Beach	CGS
LH20	King John's Castle	CGS
LH21	King William's Glen	CGS
LH22	Linns Moraine	CGS
LH23	Mell Quarry	CGS
LH24	Oriel Brook	CGS
LH25	Port Raised Beach	CGS
LH26	Rampark	CGS
LH27	Rathcor Complex	CGS
LH28	Salterstown	NHA
LH29	Slieve Foye Slate Rock	NHA
LH30	Slievenaglogh	CGS
LH31	Templetown Raised Beach	CGS
LH32	Waterunderbridge-Dry Bridge	CGS
LH33	Windy Gap	NHA

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Map 5.4: Sites of Geological Interest



5.7 Landscape Character Assessment

Ireland ratified the *European Landscape Convention in 2002* and must adopt national measures to promote landscape planning, protection and management.

In 2002, a *Louth Landscape Character Assessment (LLCA)* was completed for the entire County outside the major towns. This assessment was prepared in accordance with the Government's *Draft Guidelines for Landscape and Landscape Assessment (2000)*, the aim of which is to:

- Heighten awareness of the importance of landscape in all aspects of physical planning,
- Provide guidance to planners and others, as to how to deal with landscape considerations,
- Indicate specific requirements for development plans and for development controls.

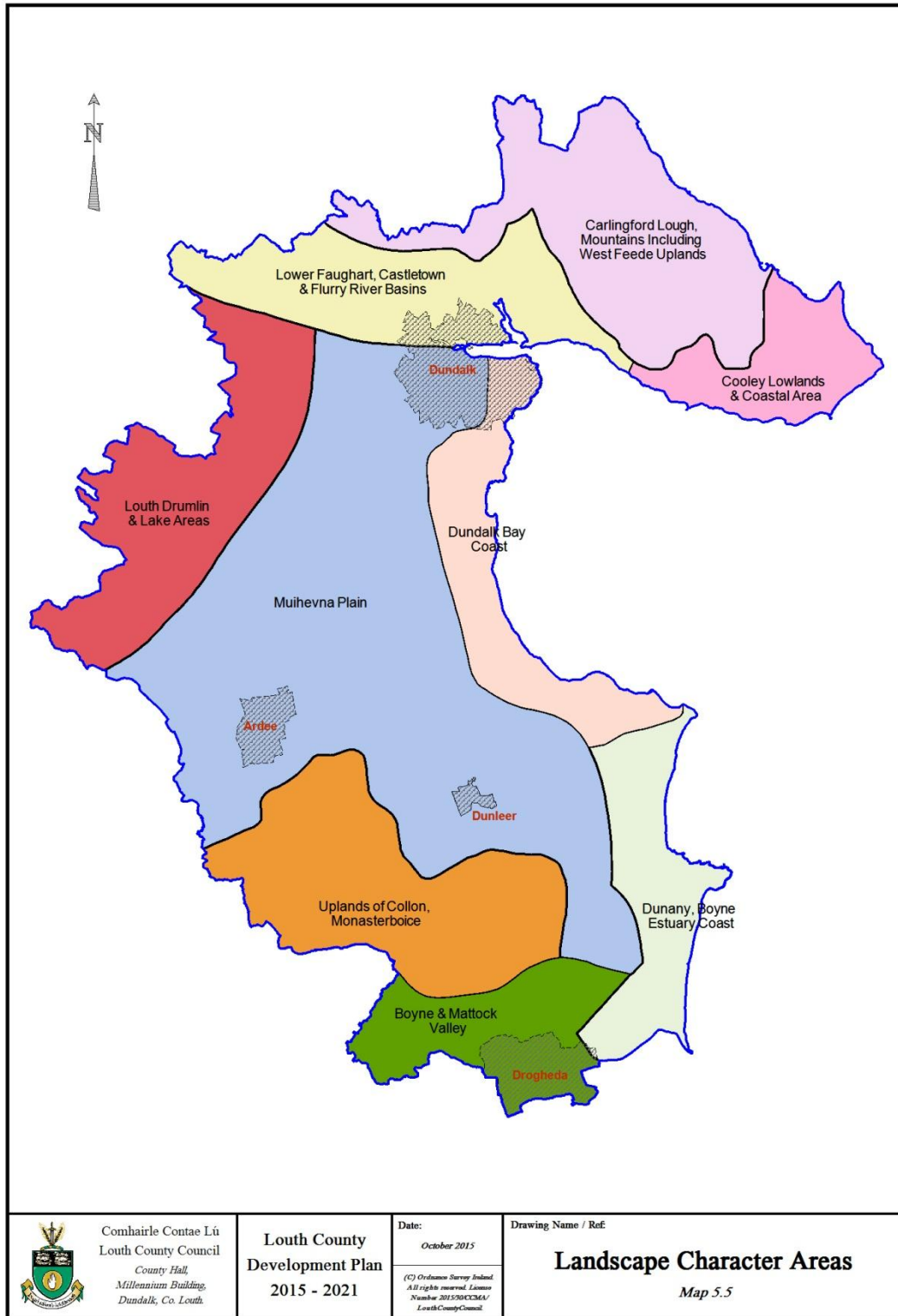
9 Landscape Character Areas were identified in County Louth. These represent geographical areas with a particular landscape type or types, and are listed in Table 5.5 and identified on Map 5.5.

Table 5.5 Landscape Area Classification for Louth

International Importance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carlingford Lough and Mountains including West Feede Uplands
National Importance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boyne and Mattock Valley
Regional Importance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundalk Bay Coast, • Dunany to Boyne Estuary Coast, • Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice
Local Importance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooley Lowlands and Coastal Area • Lower Faughart, Castletown and Flurry River Basins, • Louth Drumlin and Lake Areas • Muirhevna Plain

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Map 5.5: Landscape Character Areas



Source: Landscape Character Assessment 2002, Louth County Council

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The classification of each Landscape Character Area is based on a matrix of the following factors:

1. **Landscape Quality** – the interactions of the landscape and the condition of features and elements.
2. **Scenic Quality** – landscapes which appeal primarily to the visual senses.
3. **Rarity** – the presence of rare features and elements in the landscape.
4. **Conservation Interests** – the presence of features and particular wildlife, earth science, archaeological, historical and cultural interest which can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right.
5. **Wildness** – the presence of wild character within the landscape which makes a particular contribution to a sense of place.
6. **Recreational Opportunity** – the degree of open-air recreation within the landscape in proximity to centres of population.
7. **Cultural Association** – with particular people, artists, writers, historical events, legends etc.
8. **Tranquillity** – relates to low levels of built environment, traffic, noise and where artificial lighting (public and private) is at a minimum.
9. **Stakeholder Representative** – whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features and elements which are felt by stakeholders to be worthy of representation (stakeholder describes the entire range of individuals and groups who have an interest in the landscape).

Agriculture, increased population, forestry, rural housing, new roads, industrial and commercial development, tourism and recreation, overhead lines, telecommunication masts, wind farms, and quarrying are perceived in this study as the major forces for change in these rural landscapes.

Policy

- HER 10** To afford protection to the landscapes and natural environments of the County, by permitting only those forms of development that are considered sustainable and do not unduly damage or take from the character of the landscape or natural environment.
- HER 11** To co-operate with adjoining local authorities, both north and south of the border, to ensure that the environment is maintained in a sustainable manner and to support the co-ordinated designation of sensitive landscapes and policy approaches with adjoining areas and on all aspects of environmental protection, particularly where transboundary environmental vulnerabilities are identified.
- HER 12** To consider the designation of Landscape Conservation Areas to protect specific important landscapes.

5.8 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows contribute greatly to Louth's natural landscape and biodiversity. Many of Louth's surviving woodlands are located within large estates, where they were often planted as part of landscaping projects and contributed to designed landscapes. They provide visual amenity in the rural and urban environment, shelter and clean air and play a significant role in carbon storage. Our native trees, woods and hedgerows are also important habitats for many species of wildlife.

Ireland is the least wooded country in the EU and Louth's percentage coverage of native woodlands is one of the lowest in Ireland. In this context, conservation of existing woodlands becomes very important and the contribution of hedgerows to our landscape is heightened.

A licence is required to fell most trees, including those in commercial forestry plantations and the Forest Service is the state agency which issues such licences.

5.8.1 Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's)

The planning authority can also protect trees whose retention achieves public amenity benefits. The *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* sets out the legal framework and procedures to make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). The Council has made 4 TPOs which are listed in Table 5.6 and illustrated on Maps 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9.

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Table 5.6 Trees Protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

Ref.	Location
TPO1	Fox Covert, Ardee
TPO2	Ardee Golf Club (the TPO1 area falls entirely within this area)
TPO3	Red House Ardee
TPO4	Mell, Drogheda
TPO 5	One Mile Wood, Newtownstalaban

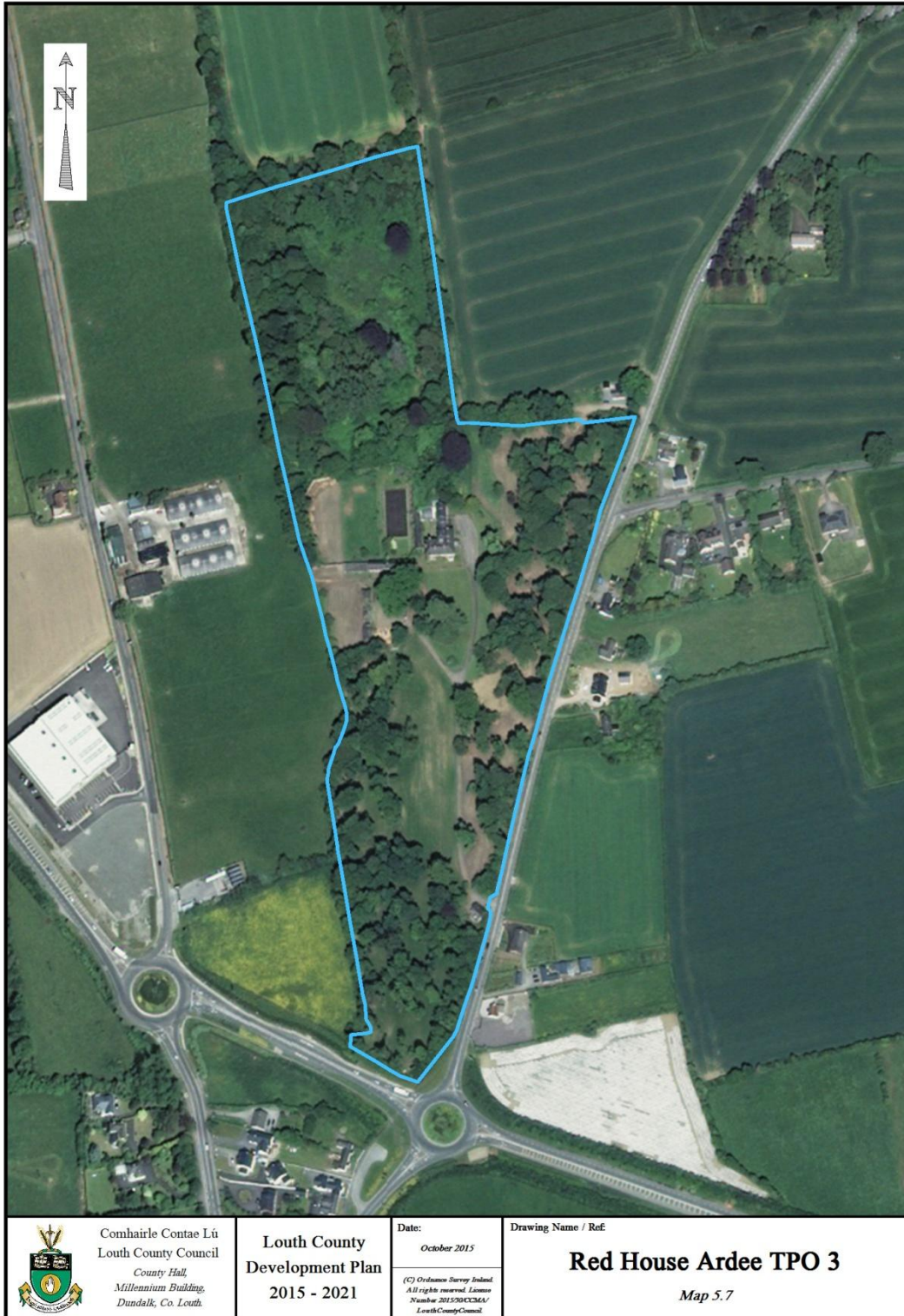
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Map 5.6: TPO 1 (Fox Covert, Ardee) and TPO2 (Ardee Golf Club)



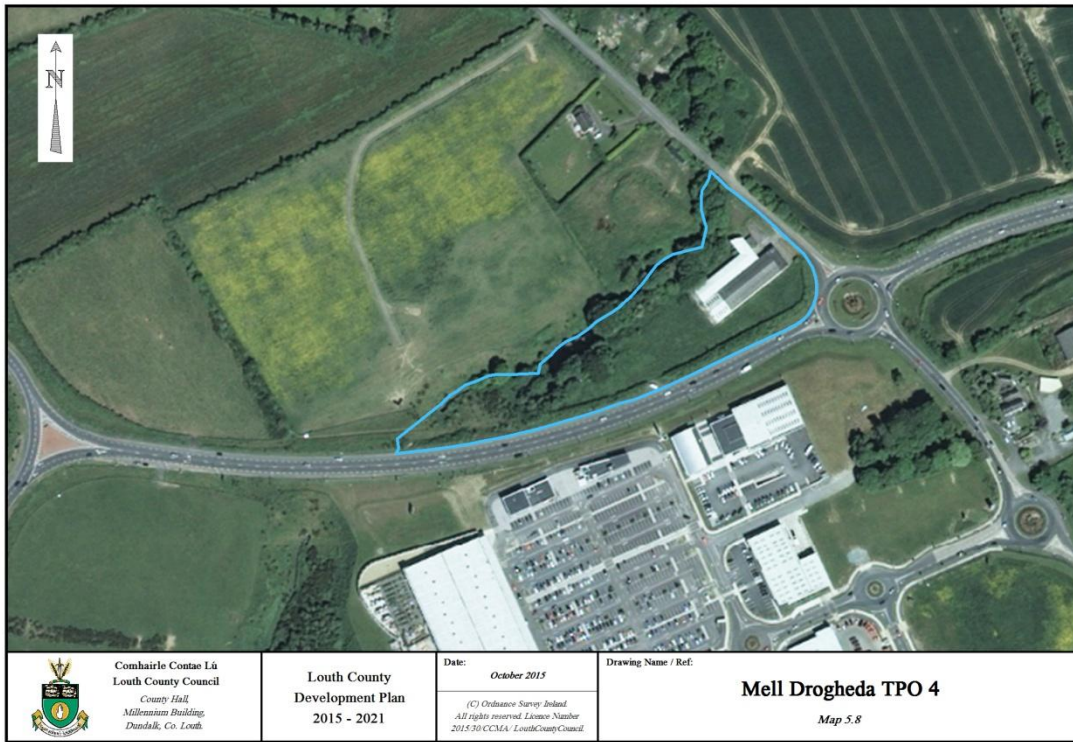
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Map 5.7: TPO 3 (Red House, Ardee)



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Map 5.8: TPO 4 (Mell, Drogheda)



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Map 5.9: TPO 5 (One Mile Wood)



5.8.2 Champion Trees

The Tree Council of Ireland and the Irish Tree Society initiated the Tree Register of Ireland (TROI) project in 1999 with the aim of compiling a database of trees in Ireland. "Champion Trees – A Selection of Irelands Great Trees" was published by the Tree Council. 21 Champion Trees were identified in the area of Louth as part of this project. It is considered that these trees are of significant environmental value to the County and that such trees should be protected from development where necessary. Champion Trees located in County Louth are as identified in Table 5.7

Table 5.7 Champion Trees located in Co. Louth

Species	Location	Dimensions
<i>Cedrus libani</i> (Cedar of Lebanon)	Red House, Ardee	7.41 @ 1.5 m × 36 m
<i>Acer Pseudoplatanus</i> (Sycamore)	Knockabbey	6.43x24m
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> (Tulip Tree)	Knockabbey	6.25x18m
<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i> (Wellingtonia Giant Sequoia)	Knockabbey	6.05 x19.5m
<i>Castanea Sativa</i> (Sweet/Spanish Chestnut)	Barmeath Castle, Dunleer	5.63x21m
<i>Taxus baccata</i> (Yew)	Knockabbey	5.42x13.5m
<i>Fagus sylvatica Atropurpurea</i> (Copper Beech)	Red House, Ardee	4.91 @ 1.3 m × 29.5 m
<i>Juglans regia</i> (Walnut)	Red House, Ardee	4.50 @ 0.6 m × 22m
<i>Abies procera Glauca</i> Group (Noble Fir)	Red House, Ardee	4.48 @ 1.5 m × 39 m
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> (Tulip Tree)	Red House, Ardee	4.46 @ 1.5 m × 23m
<i>Cedrus deodara</i> (Deodar Cedar)	Red House, Ardee	.81 @ 1.5 m × 31.3m
<i>Ulmus minorvar.minor</i> (Elm)	The Rectory Ardee	3.53x15.7m – 2 nd tallest of its kind in Ireland
<i>Juglans regia</i> (Walnut)	Clermont Park, Dundalk	3.49 @1.4x17.5m

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<i>Abies alba</i> (Silver Fir)	Barmeath Castle, Dunleer	3.38x42.5m
<i>Quercus Robur</i> 'Pendula'	Beaulieu, Drogheda	3.35x42.5
<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i> <i>Elegans Group</i> (Japanese Red Cedar)	Castlebellingham	3.17 @ 0.8 m × 17.7 m.
<i>Ulmus minor var. minor</i>	The Rectory Ardee	2.98x22m
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> (Locust Tree/False Acacia)	Knockabbey	2.96x17m
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i> (Holly)	Red House, Ardee	31 @ 1.5 m × 21.3 m.
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i> 'Albomarginata' (Holly)	Clermount Park, Dundalk	2.17@ 1x15.5m
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i> (Holly)	Kilineer House, Drogheda	1.94x16.5

Source: Tree Register of Ireland

5.8.3 Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value

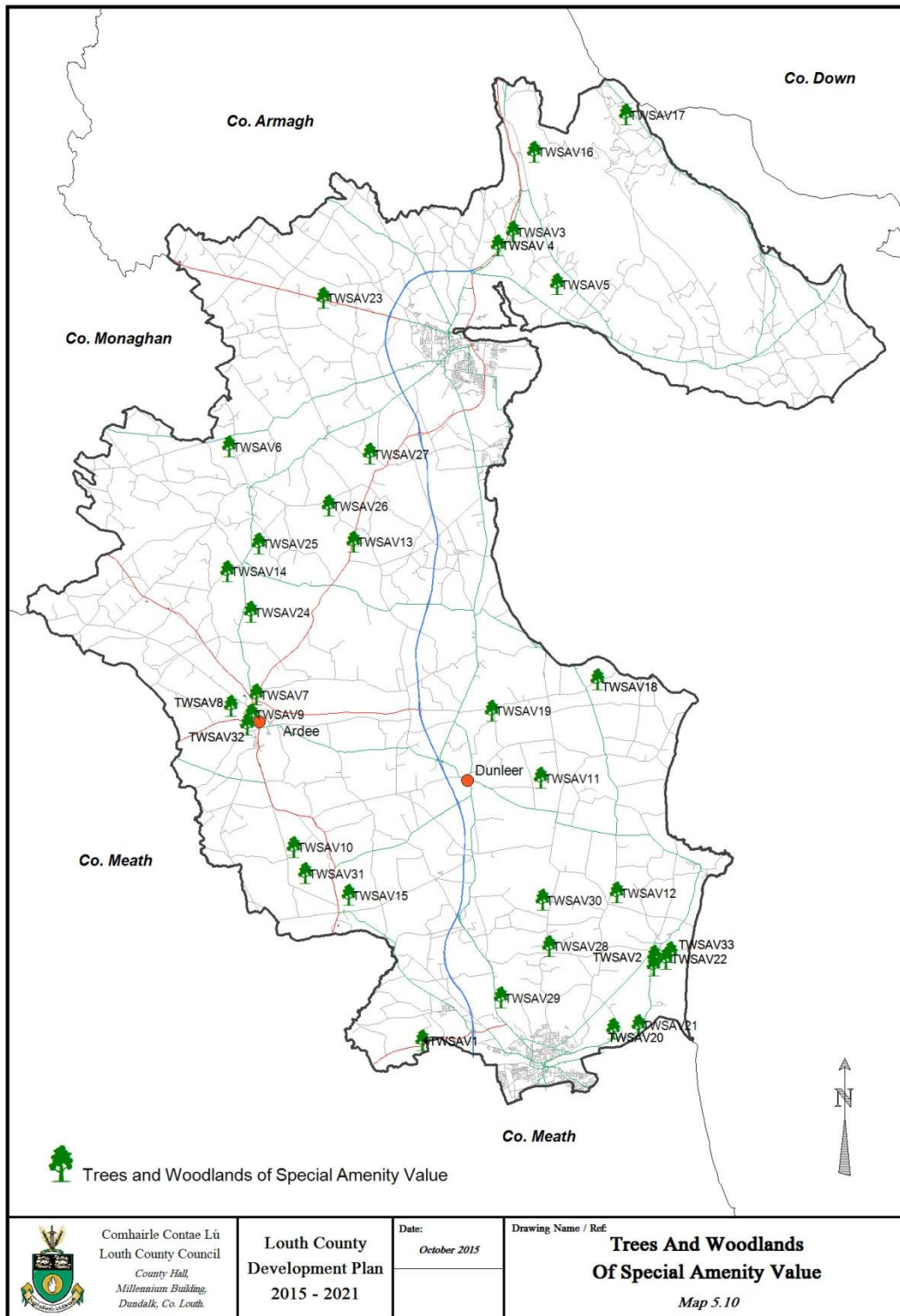
The planning authority considers the following trees and groups of trees to be of special amenity value and will require their conservation as part of any grant of planning permission. These are as outlined in Table 5.8 on the following page.

Table 5.8 Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value

Ref.	Location
TWSAV 1	Townley Hall / King William's Glen
TWSAV 2	Termonfeckin Village
TWSAV 3	N1 at Aghnaskeagh
TWSAV 4	N1 north of Greenore junction
TWSAV 5	Trumpet Hill
TWSAV 6	Monvallet east of ESB station
TWSAV 7	Red House, Ardee
TWSAV 8	Fox Covert, Ardee
TWSAV 9	St. Joseph, Ardee
TWSAV 10	Mullaghesh, Collon
TWSAV 11	Barmeath Woods
TWSAV 12	Blackhall Woods
TWSAV 13	Darver Castle Woods
TWSAV 14	Louth Hall
TWSAV 15	New Mellifont Abbey Woods
TWSAV 16	Ravensdale Plantation
TWSAV 17	Woodlands at Omeath Park
TWSAV 18	Salterstown
TWSAV 19	Drumcar
TWSAV 20	Beaulieu
TWSAV 21	Drogheda – Baltray Road
TWSAV 22	Newtown House (An Grianán)
TWSAV 23	Church at Milltown
TWSAV 24	Lisrenny House, Tallanstown
TWSAV 25	Rathbrist House, Tallanstown
TWSAV 26	Corderry House, Ready penny
TWSAV 27	Stephenstown Pond
TWSAV 28	Ballymakenny Church
TWSAV 29	South of Killineer
TWSAV 30	Piperstown House
TWSAV 31	North of Mount Oriel
TWSAV 32	The Rectory, Ardee
TWSAV 33	Trees East of Termonfeckin

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Map 5.10: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value



Policy

- HER 13** To protect trees and woodlands of special amenity value and to review and where appropriate make a Tree Preservation Order(s), in relation to trees of special amenity value (including those identified as Possible Tree Preservation Orders in the Level 3 Settlements) or any other tree(s) of amenity value where the planning authority considers such trees to be at risk.
- HER 14** To investigate the feasibility of carrying out a survey of all trees of special amenity value within the county.
- HER 15** To require an assessment of the implications of any proposed development on significant trees and hedgerows and streams located on lands that are being considered for development. Survey and protection procedures detailed in Appendix 16 will be required by the council.
- HER 16** Where in exceptional circumstances, trees and or hedgerows are required to be removed in order to facilitate development, there shall be a requirement that each tree felled is replaced at a ratio of 10:1 and each hedgerow removed is to be replaced with native species where feasible.
- HER 17** To increase native tree coverage in the County by promoting the planting of suitable trees along public roads, residential streets, parks and other areas of open space.
- HER 18** To promote such initiatives as private and community driven tree planting schemes.
- HER 19** To investigate during the lifetime of the Plan the addition of Trees & Woodlands of Special Amenity Value and where appropriate to include in Table 5.8 and Map 5.10

5.9 The Built Environment

The preservation and enhancement of Louth's built heritage is an important objective of the Plan. County Louth contains a rich archaeological resource of monuments and an extensive variety of built heritage sites. These range from megalithic tombs, souterrains, ring forts, mottes and ecclesiastical sites, to architectural heritage of notable town centre buildings, tower houses, churches, country houses, demesnes and vernacular buildings. The County also contains many items of industrial heritage such as mills, road and rail bridges and associated infrastructure.

5.9.1 Archaeology

The County's archaeological remains constitute important evidence of Louth's past and are a finite and fragile resource, very vulnerable to modern development and land use changes. The Council considers that the archaeology of the County is an important asset and that its preservation is a legitimate objective against which the need for development must be carefully balanced and assessed. The archaeological heritage consists of known ('recorded') and, as yet unidentified sites, monuments, objects and environmental evidence. These include round towers, high crosses, burial sites, ringforts, tower houses and souterrains. All known 'recorded monuments' (and any new archaeological sites, artefacts or other evidence subsequently discovered) are protected under Section 12 of the **National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994**.

There are three categories of monuments under the **National Monuments Acts, 1930 – 2004**. These include:

- National monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister or a Local Authority or national monuments which are subject to a Preservation Order,
- Historic monuments or archaeological areas recorded in the Register of Historic Monuments,
- Monuments or places recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

It should be noted that some 'Recorded Monuments' are also 'National Monuments.' These are afforded a higher level of protection by a requirement to obtain positive consent from the Minister before any works can be carried out that might affect them.

Monuments which may be defined as national monuments are also in the ownership or guardianship of local authorities, which have similar responsibilities under the **National Monuments Acts (1930-2004)** to **Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (DAHG)**.

Table 5.9 shows only those National Monuments in the care of the Minister of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and does not include National Monuments in the care of Louth County Council.

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Table 5.9 National Monuments in Louth in State Care

Name	Description	Townland	Legal Status	RMP No.	National Monument No.
Aghnaskeagh	Two Cairns	Aghnaskeagh	Guardianship	LH004-032----, LH004-033----	326
Athclare Castle	Castle	Athclare	Guardianship	LH018-040----	Unknown
Mansfieldstown	Church	Bawn	Guardianship	LH015-004001-	480
Carlingford Castle	Castle	Carlingford	Guardianship	LH005-042002-	249
The Mint (Carlingford)	Urban Tower House	Carlingford	Guardianship	LH005-042008-	242
Dún Dealgan	Motte	Castletown	Guardianship	LH007-118007-	388
Donaghmore	Souterrain	Donaghmore	Guardianship	LH006-060001-, LH006-060002	526
St. Laurence's Gate (Drogheda)	Town Gate	Drogheda	Guardianship	LH024-020----	511
Dromiskin	Church & Round Tower	Dromiskin	Ownership	LH012-046001-, LH012-046003-	92
Greenmount	Motte	Greenmount	Ownership	LH015-012001-	144
Carlingford Abbey	Friary (Dominican)	Liberties	Ownership	LH005-042013-	623
Lisnaran Fort	Ringfort	Linns	Guardianship	LH015-015001-	579
Mellifont Abbey	Abbey (Cistercian)	Mellifont	Ownership	LH023-002----	93
Monasterboice	High crosses, churches & round tower	Monasterboice	Ownership	LH021-062007-, LH021-062003-, LH021-062004-, LH021-062008-, LH021-062009-, LH021-062006-	94
St. Mochta's House	Church	Priorstate	Guardianship	LH011-115002-	312
Proleek	Portal Tomb & wedge Tomb	Proleek	Guardianship	LH004-074----, LH004-075----	476
Clochafamore	Standing Stone	Rathiddy	Guardianship	LH011-020----	474
Ravensdale Park	Cairn	Ravensdale Park	Ownership	LH004-004----	597
Castleroche	Castle	Castle Roche	Guardianship	LH003-029001-	460
Rockmarshall	Court Tomb	Rockmarshall	Ownership	LH008-033----	562
Roodstown Castle	Castle	Roodstown	Ownership	LH014-047----	298
Termonfeckin Castle	Castle	Termonfeckin	Ownership	LH022-041012-	178
Townleyhall	Passage Tomb	Townleyhall	Ownership	LH024-008002-	529

Source: www.archaeology.ie accessed on 25th June 2014

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The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) of County Louth contain the location of all Recorded Monuments which are protected under the National Monuments Acts, of which there are approximately 1,600 listed in the RMP for County Louth. Their distribution within the County, is shown in Table 5.10 below. Some are extensive and cover, for example, the historic core of towns. These extensive monuments, of which there are 13 in County Louth, including the towns of Drogheda and Dundalk, are referred to as Areas of Special Archaeological Interest. These are listed in Table 5.11 and outlined in the Maps contained in Appendix 17, Volume 2(b). All of these Recorded Monuments are protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004.

Table 5.10 Distribution of Recorded Monuments

Sheet	Sites	Significant sites
1	0	Cornamuckley, Lislea
2	11	Roche
3	72	Faughart, Kilcurry
4	178	Proleek
5	59	'Carlingford
6	153	Cortial, Kilcurly
7	107	Bellurgan, Balregan, Dundalk
8	131	Castletowncooley
9	16	Millgrange, Muchgrange
9A	0	Greenore Point
10	19	Aclint
10A	1	Rosslough
11	142	Stephenstown, Priorstate
12	73	Haggardstown, Dromiskin
13	36	Reaghstown
14	65	Louth Hall
15	29	Kilsaran, Stabannan
16	5	Salterstown
17	145	Ardee, Millockstown
18	71	Dromin, Dunleer
19	22	Port, Dunany
20	30	Collon, Belpatrick
21	81	Monasterboice
22	50	Termonfeckin
23	10	Mellifont
24	32	Tullyallen, Mell, Drogheda
25	9	Beaulieu, Baltray
Total	1547	

Table 5.11 Areas of Special Archaeological Interest

Ref.	Location
AR1	Ardee
AR2	Collon
AR3	Carlingford
AR4	Dunleer
AR5	Louth Village
AR6	Termonfeckin
AR7	Dromiskin
AR8	Grange
AR9	Castlering
AR10	Castleroche
AR11	Monasterboice
AR 12	Drogheda
AR 13	Dundalk

5.9.2 Walled Towns

Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda and Dundalk were founded in the late 12th/early 13th centuries and are all former walled towns. Each of these walled towns is regarded as a single recorded monument, listed as a 'walled town', 'town' or similar and are all Areas of Special Archaeological Interest.

Conservation and Management Plans have been produced for the walled towns of Ardee, Carlingford and Drogheda. Town walls and other defences are categorised as 'National Monuments' (rather than 'Recorded Monuments') under the **National Walled Towns Policy (DAHG 2008)**. In addition, upstanding remains in Drogheda, Ardee and Carlingford (there are no upstanding remains in Dundalk) are listed in Appendix 18 Volume 2(c) RPS, as protected structures. Maps of the Walled Towns are included in Appendix 10, Volume 2(b).

Policy

- HER 20** To protect archaeological sites and monuments, underwater archaeology, and archaeological objects, which are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and to seek their preservation in situ (or at a minimum, preservation by record) through the planning process.
- HER 21** To ensure that any development, both above and below ground, adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of a recorded monument or an area of special archaeological interest (including formerly walled towns) shall not be detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or its setting and be sited and designed with care to protect the monument and its setting. Where upstanding remains exist, a visual impact assessment may be required.

HER 22 Within areas of special archaeological interest and other sites of archaeological potential (including formerly walled towns), as listed in the RMP, the Council will require applicants to include an assessment of the likely archaeological potential as part of the planning application and may require that an on-site assessment is carried out by trial work prior to a decision on a planning application being taken.

5.9.3 Battlefield Sites

The conservation, management and protection of views and prospects of battlefields is complex and is an emerging area in Ireland. Studies are currently underway nationally regarding the future requirements for the protection of the sites of such important but transient events. Louth, lying between the national capital and Ulster, has been the scene of several major battles, particularly the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 and the Battle of Faughart in 1318.

It is the intention of the planning authority to propose a variation of the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021, if required, to incorporate ***The Irish Battlefields Project*** (in relation to the Battle of the Boyne and the Battle of Faughart) when completed and published.

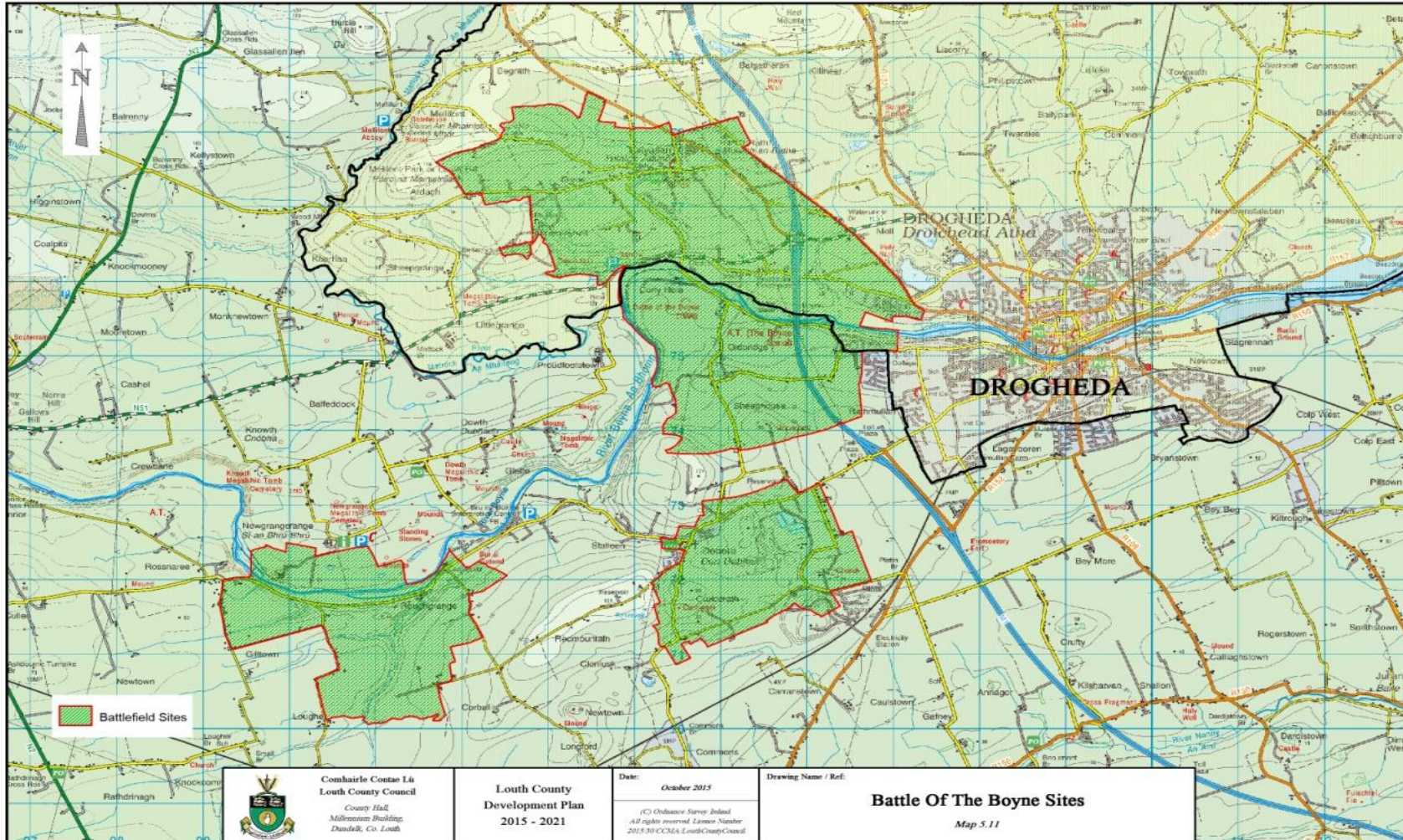
Policy

HER 23 To work in partnership with Meath County Council and the relevant agencies and the public to promote, understand, conserve and sustainably manage the Battlefield site of the Battle of the Boyne and to protect and enhance the cultural landscape of the Battle of the Boyne Battlefield Landscape.

HER 24 That a variation of the *Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021* will be proposed, if required, to make appropriate amendments to the Plan, as a result of any recommendations arising from the publication of *The Irish Battlefields Project*.

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Map 5.11: Battle of The Boyne Sites



5.9.4 UNESCO World Heritage Site - Brú na Bóinne.

Brú na Bóinne is one of the world's most important archaeological landscapes, and Europe's largest and most important concentration of prehistoric megalithic art, a fact recognised by its inscription in 1993 by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site (WHS). This WHS covers a Core Area and a Buffer Zone the majority of which is situated in County Meath. However, an area contained within the Buffer Zone, is located in County Louth in the townland of Littlegrange. The World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne is 4.8km west of Drogheda in County Louth and almost the same distance from Slane in County Meath. It is an archaeological landscape, also known as "The Bend of the Boyne" containing the three main prehistoric sites of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. The archaeological zone is to a large extent bounded by the River Boyne to the south and its tributary the River Mattock to the north.

5.9.5 Outstanding Universal Value

The inscription of the World Heritage Site obliges the State to protect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne to the highest international standards. The Outstanding Universal Value of a site is derived from statements on universal value, how it fits UNESCO criteria, and statements on authenticity and integrity. The OUV forms the basis for the protection, management and conservation of a World Heritage Site, its core area and buffer zones as identified in the inscription.

The Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne was assessed by UNESCO to be of Outstanding Universal Value, meeting three of the six criteria for cultural heritage:

- it represents a masterpiece of human creative genius,
- it bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared,
- it is an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

Brú na Bóinne represents an area of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) on a number of levels as outlined below:

Criterion (i): The Brú na Bóinne monuments represent the largest and most important expression of prehistoric megalithic plastic art in Europe.

Criterion (iii): The concentration of social, economic and funerary monuments at this important ritual centre and the long continuity from prehistory to the late medieval period make this one of the most significant archaeological sites in Europe.

Criterion (iv): The passage grave, here brought to its finest expression, was a feature of outstanding importance in prehistoric Europe and beyond.

5.9.6 The Management Plan UNESCO World Heritage Site - Brú na Bóinne.

The current Management Plan for the UNESCO World Heritage Site - Brú na Bóinne was published in December 2002 by **The Department of the Environment Community and Local Government (DECLG)** and is currently under review. Louth County Council, in conjunction with Meath County Council, **The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG)** other State Agencies and local community representatives are involved in this review.

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If required, Louth County Council will propose a variation of the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** to incorporate the revised Brú na Bóinne Management Plan, when completed.

The planning authority is cognisant of the potential irreversible and adverse cumulative impact of incremental piecemeal development in this unique landscape. It is critically important that further new development is not permitted to erode the heritage significance of this landscape. As outlined in Chapter 2 (Core Strategy & Settlement Strategy) and Chapter 3 (Rural Development & Natural Resources) a new Development Zone (Zone 6) has been introduced, which covers the sensitive landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the site of the Battle of the Boyne, to protect the heritage and cultural landscape. In this regard it is the intention of the Council to prepare a Framework Plan for this area.

Policy

- HER 25** To work in partnership with Meath County Council and the relevant agencies and the public to promote, understand, conserve and sustainably manage the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne to maintain its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
- HER 26** To protect the ridgeline to the north which frames the views Map 5.13 within and from the World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne from visually intrusive and inappropriate development, subject to the Development Assessment Criteria set out in Section 5.9.7 and using view-shed analysis as a tool to guide and inform development management.
- HER 27** To require that all development within Development Zone 6 be subject to Development Assessment Criteria set out in Section 5.9.7.
- HER 28** To encourage the retention, appropriate re-use and conservation of vernacular buildings in Development Zone 6 in preference to either their replacement or the construction of new buildings on green-field sites.
- HER 29** To maintain the Outstanding Universal Value of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, Louth County Council will seek to ensure that no development which might have significant, deleterious impacts upon the character of the World Heritage Site is permitted.
- HER 30** To prepare a Framework Plan for the protection, development and promotion of lands subject to Development Zone 6 (which include for the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice and the Battle of the Boyne Battlefield site).

5.9.7 Development Management Assessment Criteria for Development Zone 6:

- There should be no inter-visibility between the development site and the National Monuments of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, up to and including the apex level of the roof and minimum inter-visibility between the development site and the other National Monuments within the site;
- Development must not adversely affect the amenity, views and landscape setting of the National Monuments;
- Extensive screen planting, or earth moving which would alter and affect the landscape setting of the National Monuments will not be considered as adequate mitigation;
- Developments which would give rise to or exacerbate ribbon development will not be permitted.
- Development must be appropriately scaled and designed, to reflect the traditional vernacular style of the area, in terms of scale, height, massing, siting, form, materials and colour. Materials shall be appropriate to the site and its setting in the surrounding landscape.
- Residential extensions shall be subordinate in size and scale to the main building and shall be no more than 100% of the existing floor area, or a total dwelling floor area of 200sqm, whichever is the lesser, as per Policy SS36 in Chapter 2 (Core Strategy & Settlement Strategy).
- That appropriate services and infrastructure are capable of being provided without compromising the quality of the landscape,
- The cumulative impact of the development will be considered in the context of existing and permitted developments.
- Agricultural buildings in existing farmyards shall be appropriately sized, designed and sited
- Appropriately designed extensions to developments for the provision of public services.

Note for Applicants:

Applications within the ridgeline to the north Map 5.13 (including Development Zone 6) and any developments which may affect views to and from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne should be accompanied by the following:

- A comprehensive visual and architectural heritage impact assessment by an appropriately qualified multi disciplinary team, including drawings, photographs, photomontages or other visual material necessary, to show the proposed development and its relationship to, and potential visual and physical impact on;

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- The UNESCO Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site,
- The Battle of the Boyne Site,
- The Townley Hall ACA,
- The Oldbridge ACA. (Note This is in County Meath see Appendix 5, Volume 2(b).

In some cases, it may be necessary to place a sheeted pole structure (or large balloons) outlining the size and profile of the proposed building to eaves and ridge level erected on site and photographed as part of the visual impact assessment. The pole structure should be made available for inspection.

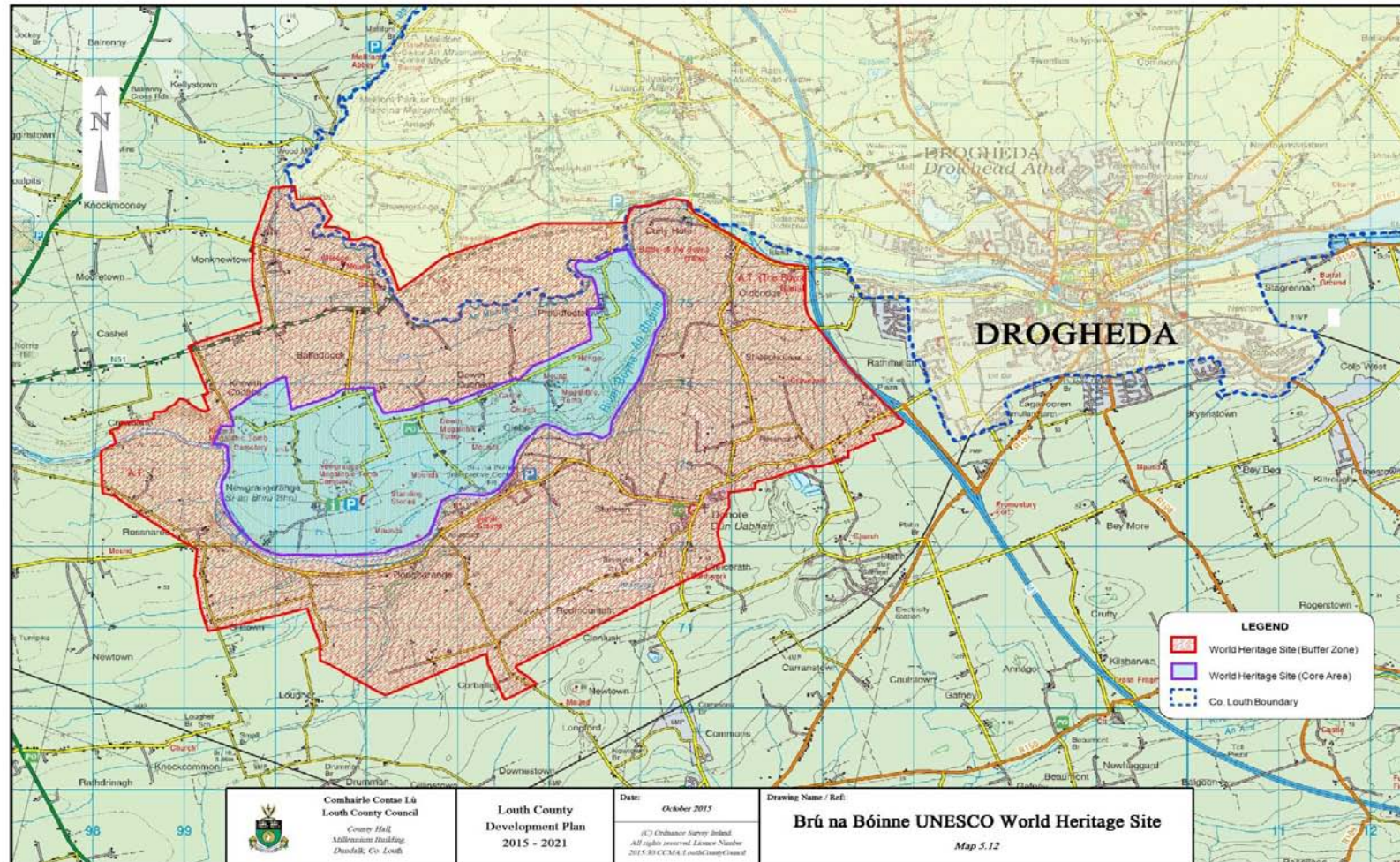
5.9.8 Exempted Development

Development is not exempt from the obligation of applying for planning permission if it would; interfere with the character of a landscape, or a view or prospect of special amenity value or special interest, the preservation of which is an objective of the Development Plan, or consist of the excavation, alteration or demolition of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological, geological, or historical, scientific or ecological interest, the preservation of which is an objective of the Plan.

As it is an objective of this Plan to protect and enhance the landscape, views and prospects in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne. Many developments which would be considered exempt in other areas may require planning permission. Those considering undertaking development works within the area of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne should first consult Louth County Council before commencement of any works.

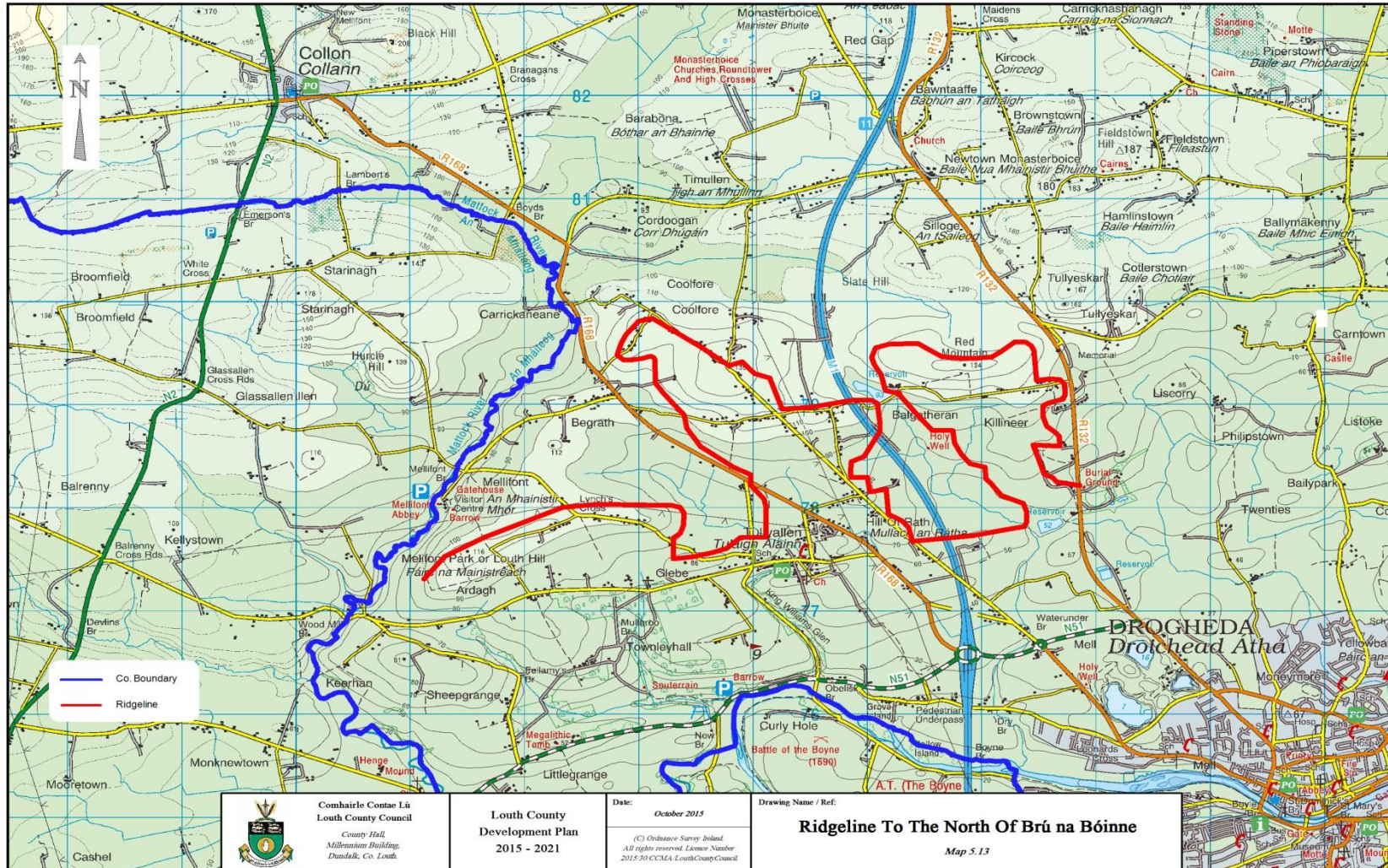
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Map 5.12: Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site



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Map 5.13: Ridgeline to the North of Brú na Bóinne



5.9.9 Tentative World Heritage Sites

A Tentative List is an inventory of properties which a country intends to consider for nomination to the World Heritage List. The new Tentative List was submitted to UNESCO in 2010. The nomination of any property from the new Tentative List for inscription on the World Heritage List will only take place after consultation with relevant stakeholders, interested parties and local communities. One site in Louth has been included on the Tentative List, which is:

- Early Medieval Monastic Sites (*including Monasterboice*).

While formal designation of Monasterboice and other sites is likely to be many years away, it is important that this Plan protect the landscape and other values contributing to the site's nomination and ensure that this is not damaged in any way.

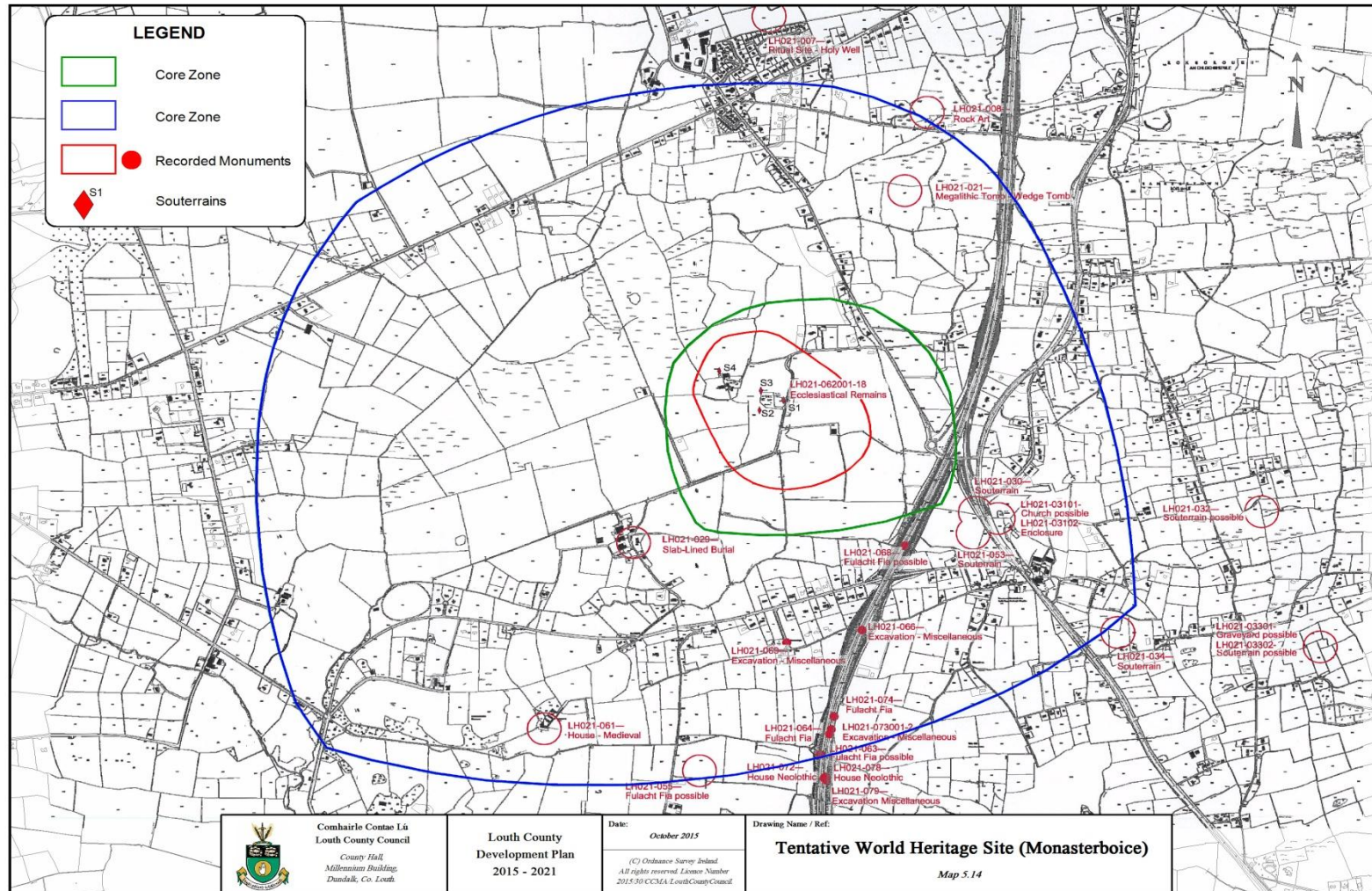
Policy

HER 31 To maintain the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Tentative Monasterboice World Heritage Site.

HER 32 Louth County Council will support the nomination of Monasterboice as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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Map 5.14 Tentative World Heritage Site Monasterboice



5.10 Architectural Heritage

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires local authorities to include in their development plans, policies and objectives for the protection, enhancement and preservation of the built heritage pertaining to the plan area.

5.10.1 Why Protect our Architectural Heritage?

Our architectural heritage is an irreplaceable resource and a valuable expression of our past, whose sustainable, appropriate maintenance and reuse has economic and environmental benefits and serves as historic evidence of social changes through time.

County Louth is fortunate in having a large number of structures that are considered to be of special interest. A number of these, including Townley Hall, Rokeby Hall, Barmeath Castle, and Beaulieu House are of national importance.

5.10.2 Legal Protection for Architectural Heritage - Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires every development plan to include a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) or parts of structures which are part of the architectural heritage and which are of special interest under one or more of the following categories:

- Architectural
- Historical
- Archaeological
- Artistic
- Cultural
- Scientific
- Social
- Technical

The full Record of Protected Structures (RPS) is listed and mapped in Appendix 18 ,Volume, 2 (c) of this Plan. This Plan now includes the full Record of Protected Structures for the County in its entirety, including the urban areas of Dundalk and Drogheda.

A protected structure, unless otherwise stated in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), includes:

- the exterior and interior of the structure,
- the land lying within its curtilage,
- any other structures and their interiors lying within that curtilage,
- plus all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures.

An up-to-date RPS, incorporating any additions or deletions within the lifetime of the Plan, will be maintained on the Council's website or can be checked at the Customer Service Desks at the Council Offices. Structures may be added to and deleted from the RPS outside of the Plan review process under Section 55 of the ***Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)***. Developers and persons proposing to purchase buildings are advised to check the updated Record of Protected Structures on the Council's website or in the Council's offices.

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Up-dating the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) has regard to:

- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2011,
- Ministerial Recommendations made as a result of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for County Louth,
- Additions to or deletions from the Record of Protected Structures is a Reserved Function of the Elected Members.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) places the onus on owners and occupiers of protected structures to ensure that the structure (or any element of the structure which contributes to its special interest) is not endangered either through neglect or inappropriate works. Owners and occupiers are encouraged to consult with Louth County Council if considering works to protected structures.

Protected structure status aims to retain the special character and features which makes these structures of special interest. This does not mean that development or alterations to a protected structure are not possible, but rather, if proposed works would materially affect the character of a protected structure, they will require planning permission.

Exempted Development Regulations may not apply to protected structures. Owners or occupiers of protected structures can seek a Declaration under Section 57 of the ***Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*** to list the type of works that do and do not affect the character and therefore do or do not require planning permission. Owners of protected structures are encouraged to consult with the planning authority as to the appropriateness of proposed works.

The legislation only allows permission for the demolition of a protected structure in exceptional circumstances. There is always a presumption in favour of retention and repair of a protected structure. If, in exceptional circumstances, demolition is proposed, the following is required to allow the planning authority to fully assess the proposal:

- A detailed written justification for the proposed demolition,
- A full condition and photographic survey of the structure,
- Detailed drawings of all floor plans and elevations.

The condition or disrepair of a structure is not justification for proposing demolition. Where this is put forward as the rationale then in addition to the above list the following information will also be required:

- Clearly marked photographs and drawings indicating the location of defects,
- A condition report from an architect or engineer with specialist conservation expertise outlining why repairs or remedial works are not possible in this instance.

Where only partial demolition is proposed of elements that do not form part of the significance of the structure, it must be demonstrated that it can be carried out without any adverse structural or architectural impact on the protected structure.

5.10.3 Proposals for Works to Protected Structures should be:

- Accompanied by appropriate documentation as described in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities* of the *Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltach (DAHG)*, to enable a proper assessment of the proposed works and their impact on the structure or area,
- In keeping with the character of the building and to preserve the special architectural or historical character and any features they possess,
- Of a quality of design and sympathetic in terms of scale and form to the original building and in the use of materials and other details of the period and style,
- Carried out in accordance with best practise *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities* and supervised by an appropriately qualified professional.

Policy

HER 33 To ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a protected structure and / or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, is compatible with the special character and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, density, layout, and materials of the protected structure.

HER 34 The form and structural integrity of the protected structure and its setting shall be retained and the relationship between the protected structure, its curtilage and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, designed views or vistas from or to the structure shall be protected.

HER 35 To prohibit inappropriate development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds of a protected structure. Any proposed development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds must demonstrate that it is part of an overall strategy for the future conservation of the entire complex including the structures, demesne and/or attendant grounds.

HER 36 To require that all planning applications relating to protected structures contain the appropriate documentation as described in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)* or any variation thereof, to enable a proper assessment of the proposed works and their impact on the structure or area.

- HER 37** To require the retention of original features, such as windows, doors, renders, roof coverings and other significant features which contribute to the character of protected structures.
- HER 38** To encourage the reinstatement of appropriately detailed features, such as windows, doors, renders, roof coverings and other significant features which have been lost, to restore the character of protected structures as part of development proposals.
- HER 39** To promote best practice and the use of skilled specialist practitioners in the conservation of, and for any works to protected structures.
- HER 40** To encourage the retention, sympathetic reuse and rehabilitation of protected structures and their settings, where appropriate and where the proposal is compatible with their character and significance. In certain cases, land use zoning restrictions and site development standards may be relaxed in order to secure the conservation of the protected structure.
- HER 41** To ensure that the protection of architectural features of special interest are retained as part of any proposed re-development, where there is conflict with other development plan requirements such as open space, car parking, etc.
- HER 42** To review and update the Record of Protected Structures to include all structures considered to be of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest when new information becomes available and to make additions and deletions as appropriate.
- HER 43** To permit the deletion of structures from the Record of Protected Structures and the demolition or significant modification of a protected structure, only in exceptional circumstances.
- HER 44** To seek funding streams for specific priority projects and to assist owners with the repair and conservation of protected structures.

5.11 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's)

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) empowers the planning authority to designate Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). An ACA is defined as “a place, area, group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures”.

An ACA can be a street, a terrace of houses, a town centre or structures associated with a specific building such as a country house demesne. An ACA aims to protect the character of what makes a place distinctive, by protecting elements such as public realm, planting, traditional settlement patterns and building materials, by controlling the nature of alterations and new development.

The protected status of an ACA applies to the exteriors and the streetscape, unless a structure within the ACA is also included as a protected structure in the RPS. Any works which would materially affect the character of an ACA requires planning permission. Changes to the buildings or the public realm, signage and public infrastructure can alter the character of an ACA and need to be assessed for the possible impact on its character.

Since the 2009 -2015 Development Plan the boundaries of the Ardee and Greenore ACAs have been extended and the Townley Hall Historic Demesne has been added as an ACA. The following ACAs are designated in County Louth:

1. Ardee
2. Carlingford
3. Castlebellingham
4. Collon
5. Greenore
6. Monasterboice – Monastic site
7. Newtown Monasterboice – Clachan
8. Salterstown
9. Whitestown
10. Townley Hall Demesne

The local area plans for Dundalk and Drogheda will contain details of the ACAs relative to these towns. Dundalk contains 8 ACAs and Drogheda contains 17 ACAs. The boundaries of the ACAs above are defined on maps contained in Appendix 5, Volume 2(b). Guidance Leaflets “**Guidelines for works in Architectural Conservation Areas**” can be found in Appendix 8 Volume 2(b) and “**A Guide to Architectural Conservation Areas in Louth**” in Appendix 9, Volume 2(b) on the Council's website or in the Customer Service Desk in the Council's offices. Objectives and a brief character appraisal particular to each ACA accompany each map. **Development Management Guidelines for ACAs** can be found in Appendix 4, Volume 2(b). Detailed Character Appraisals have been prepared as guidance documents for three aforementioned ACAs, namely Ardee, Clanbrassil Street in Dundalk & West Street in Drogheda. The Ardee Character Appraisal can be found in Appendix 7, Volume 2(b). (These are available to download from the Council's web-site). It is intended that further ACA Character Appraisals will be carried out during the life time of this Plan.

Policy

- HER 45** To require that any development within or affecting an ACA preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the architectural conservation area. Any development should respect the character of the historic and traditional architecture in scale, design and materials. Regard should be had to the character appraisal where available/ applicable.
- HER 46** To ensure that the redevelopment of the towns of historic interest includes the retention of existing street layout, historic building lines and traditional plot widths where these derive from medieval or earlier origins.
- HER 47** To retain any building in an ACA that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area. Demolition will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Applications for demolition shall be accompanied by a measured and photographic survey, condition report and architectural heritage assessment. An assessment of the impact of the replacement building on the character of the ACA will be required.
- HER 48** To require that any development proposal takes account of the Council's specific ACA objectives contained in Appendix 5, Volume 2 (b) and the objectives as set out in the ACA character appraisal, where applicable.
- HER 49** To require that any new development on the periphery of an ACA does not detract from the existing character of the designated ACA.
- HER 50** To ensure that the protection of architectural features of special interest within the ACA are retained as part of any proposed re-development, where there is conflict with other development plan requirements such as open space, car parking, etc.
- HER 51** To ensure that any new infrastructure (installed either by the Local Authority or by Public or Private Sector Utility Companies) shall not be located / positioned where it will be detrimental to the character of the ACA.
- HER 52** To ensure that any new trading bays and their associated signage shall not be located where it will be detrimental to the character of the ACA or any important building or vista in the ACA.

HER 53 To ensure that the external finish and painted finish of buildings in the ACA are appropriate to the character of the ACA. Changes which affect the special character of the ACA will not be acceptable. Any proposal for the alteration of the external finish requires planning permission. Muted colours will be preferable and garish colours or painting of shop-fronts or facades for brand identity shall not be permitted.

HER 54 To retain surviving medieval plots and street patterns in the ACAs, and other towns and villages where in evidence and in the course of development, to record and mark evidence of ancient boundaries and layouts etc.

5.12 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

Louth has a rich heritage of gardens and designed landscaped gardens. These consist of private gardens, public parks and the landscapes associated with country estates and demesnes. These landscapes often include tree-lined avenues, formal ornamental woods, water-features, planned gardens, a bowling green, grass lawns, terraces and other formal features. In some cases the house and buildings are gone, but the demesne and designed landscape remains.

Louth County Council recognises the importance of these historic gardens and designed landscapes and their role in providing the setting for protected structures and thus seeks to ensure that they are protected from encroaching or adjacent development. *The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)* has conducted a field survey which has listed 93 historic gardens and designed landscapes in County Louth which are listed in Table 5.12 and illustrated in Map 5.15.

Policy

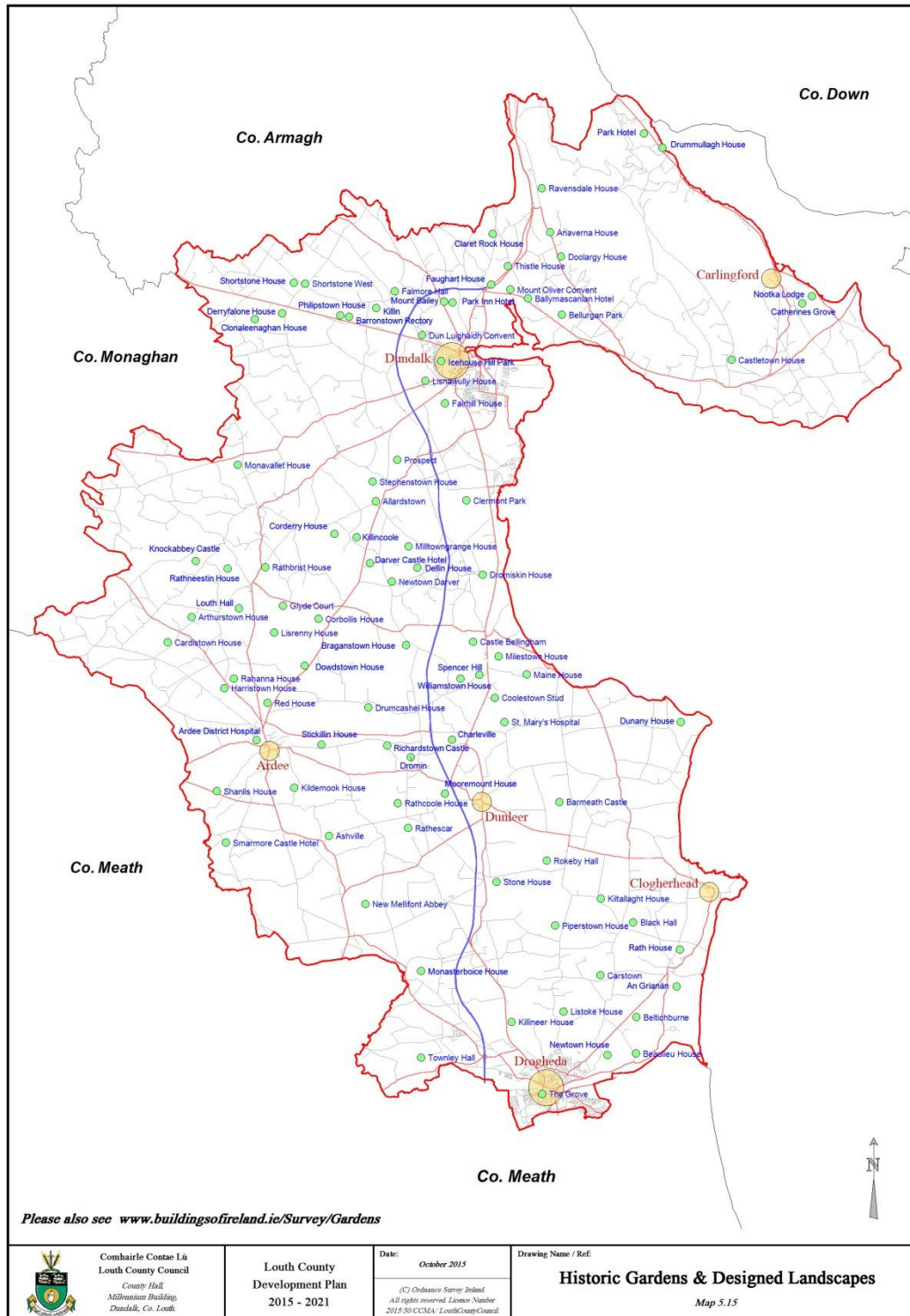
HER 55 To ensure that new development will not adversely affect the site, setting or views to and from historic gardens and designed landscapes.

HER 56 To require that any proposals for new development in designed landscapes and demesnes include an appraisal of the landscape, designed views and vistas, and an assessment of significant trees or groups of trees, as appropriate.

HER 57 To require applicants for proposed large scale developments within the Designed Landscapes and Demesnes utilise 3D Digital Survey Modelling tools to demonstrate that the proposed development does not adversely affect the site or its setting.

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Map 5.15: Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes



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Table 5.12 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

	Name	Garden ID	NIAH Buildings	RPS
1.	Allardstown	LH0032	NA	NA
2.	An Grianán (Termonfeckin)	LH0055	13834001	Lhs022-010
3.	Anaverna House	LH0001	13900422 - 13900425	Lhs004-006 – 006d
4.	Ardee District Hospital (Ardee House) St Joseph's & St Brigid's & Tower House	LH0002	13823032,13823033, 13823035, 13823036	Lhs017-035, Lhs017 - 037, Lhs017- 038
5.	Arthurstown House	LH0003	NA	NA
6.	Ashville (Funshog)	LH0075	13901702 13901703	NA
7.	Ballymascanlan Hotel	LH0004	13900416, 13900747 - 13900753, 13900756 - 13900760	Lhs004-024, Lhs007 - 007 - Lhs007 -013 Lhs007-022 - Lhs007-025
8.	Barmeath Castle	LH0005	13901816, 13901817	Lhs018-020
9.	Barronstown Rectory	LH0006	13900604	Lhs006-005
10.	Beaulieu House	LH0007	13902506 - 13902519	Lhs025-001 Lhs025-002 - Lhs025-002i
11.	Bellurgan Park	LH0008	13900746	Lhs007-014
12.	Beltichburne	LH0009	13902528 - 13902530	Lhs025-018
13.	Black Hall	LH0010	13902207,13902206	Lhs022-003 Lhs022-004
14.	Braganstown House	LH0011	13901517	Lhs015-048
15.	Cardistown House	LH0076	13901303,13901304	Lhs013-003 Lhs013-004
16.	Carstown House	LH0013	13902116,13902202, 13902203	Lhs021-010 Lhs022-027 Lhs022-028
17.	Castle Bellingham (Bellingham Castle)	LH0014	13826003,13826005, 13826008,13826009, 13826010,13826011, 13826012	Lhs015-005 Lhs015-009 Lhs015-033 Lhs015-008 Lhs015-007 Lhs015-006 Lhs015-011 Lhs015-010
18.	Castletown House (Castletown Cooley)	LH0077	13900809	Lhs008-015
19.	Catherines Grove (Mullatee Carlingford)	LH0016	NA	NA
20.	Charleville	LH0017	NA	NA
21.	Claret Rock House	LH0018	13900408	NA
22.	Clermont Park	LH0019	13901215,13901216	Lhs012-023,Lhs012-021, Lhs012-027

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23.	Clonaleenaghan House	LH0020	13900601	Lhs006-003
24.	Coolestown Stud Greenmount, Kilsaran	LH0038	13901509	Lhs015-045
25.	Corbollis House	LH0022	13901427	Lhs014-029
26.	Corderry House	LH0023	13901115	Lhs011-037
27.	Darver Castle Hotel	LH0024	13901118	Lhs011-028
28.	Dellin House (Dromiskin)	LH0080	13901203	NA
29.	Derryfalone House	LH0025	NA	NA
30.	Doolargy House	LH0063	13900433	Lhs004-038
31.	Dowdstown House	LH0082	13901416	Lhs014-008
32.	Dromin House	LH0081	13901833	Lhs018-003
33.	Dromiskin House	LH0083	13829002	Lhs012-036
34.	Drumcashel House	LH0084	13901402,13901403	Lhs014-011
35.	Drummullagh House	LH0027	13833006	NA
36.	Dun Luighaidh Convent	LH0015	13900737	D089 D090 D091 D092
37.	Dunany House	LH0028	139011902	Lhs019-009
38.	Fairhill House	LH0030	NA	NA
39.	Falmore Hall	LH0031	13900401	Lhs004-012
40.	Faughart House	LH0032	NA	NA
41.	Glyde Court	LH0012	13901425	Lhs014-007
42.	Harristown House	LH0039	NA	NA
43.	Icehouse Hill Park (Dundalk House)	LH0029	13704017	D179
44.	Kildemook House	LH0036	13901708,13901709	Lhs017-089, Lhs017-090
45.	Killin	LH0040	13900739	Lhs007-001
46.	Killincoole House & Castle	LH0084	13901116	Lhs011-026
47.	Killineer House	LH0041	13902428,13902429, 13902430	Lhs024-003 Lhs024-003b Lhs024-003c
48.	Kiltallaght House	LH0042	NA	NA
49.	Knockabbey Castle	LH0072	13901130	Lhs011-004
50.	Lisnawully House	LH0043	NA	D035
51.	Lisrenny House	LH0044	13901418, 13901419	Lhs014-023, Lhs014-005
52.	Listoke House	LH0045	13902432	Lhs024-015, Lhs024-018
53.	Louth Hall	LH0046	13901426	Lhs014-004
54.	Maine House	LH0047	NA	NA
55.	Milestown House	LH0048	NA	Lhs015-026
56.	Milltowngrange House	LH0037	13901208,13901209	Lhs012-044, Lhs012-045
57.	Monasterboice House	LH0049	13902101 -13902104	Lhs021-002Lhs021-002b Lhs021-002cLhs021-001
58.	Monavallet House	LH0050	13901105	Lhs011-007
59.	Mooremount House	LH0051	NA	NA
60.	Mount Bailey (Carnbeg)	LH0052	NA	NA

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61.	Mount Oliver Convent	LH0052	13900414	Lhs004-003
62.	New Mellifont Abbey	LH0021	13828001 Collon House	Lhs020-009
63.	Newtown Darver	LH0097	13901204	Lhs012-040
64.	Newtown House (Newtownstalaban)	LH0054	13902436	Lhs024-017
65.	Nootka Lodge (Carlingford)	LH0056	NA	NA
66.	Park Hotel Drummullagh, Omeath	LH0095	NA	NA
67.	Park Inn Hotel (Carnbeg)	LH0094	NA	NA
68.	Philipstown House	LH0057	13900603	Lhs006-004
69.	Piperstown House	LH0087	13902112	Lhs021-015
70.	Prospect (Cavan Hill)	LH0058	NA	NA
71.	Rahanna House	LH0065	13901408, 13901409,13901410	Lhs014-016, Lhs014-016
72.	Rath House	LH0059	13902201	Lhs022-011
73.	Rathbrist House	LH0088	13901121	Lhs011-038
74.	Rathcoole House	LH0060	13901828	Lhs018-047
75.	Rathescar House	LH0061	13901826 13901827	Lhs018-001, Lhs018-046
76.	Rathneestin House	LH0089	NA	NA
77.	Ravensdale House (Ravensdale Park)	LH0062	13900419, 13900420, 1390043	Lhs004-027 Lhs004-028, Lhs004-040, Lhs001-001 Lhs004-035
78.	Red House (Ardee)	LH0064	13901401	Lhs014-006
79.	Richardstown Castle	LH0090	13901712,13901711, 13901713	Lhs017-051
80.	Rokeby Hall	LH0066	13901801,13901802, 13901803,13901809, 13901810	Lhs018-019 Lhs018-019, Lhs018-035, Lhs018-036
81.	Shanlis House	LH0091	13901706	NA
82.	Shortstone House	LH0067	NA	NA
83.	Shortstone West	LH0096	13900305	Lhs003-005
84.	Smarmore Castle Hotel	LH0068	13901701	Lhs017-050
85.	Spencer Hill	LH0034	13901513	Lhs015-047
86.	St. Mary's Hospital (Drumcar)	LH0026	13901503	Lhs015-027
87.	Stephenstown House	LH0069	13901114	Lhs011-042
88.	Stickillin House	LH0098	13901716	NA
89.	Stone House (Mullary Cross, Dunleer)	LH0070	13902110	Lhs021-006
90.	The Grove Ballsgrove House & Gate	LH0101	13621018, 13621015	DB-220 DB-219
91.	Thistle House	LH0071	13900411	Lhs004-021
92.	Townley Hall	LH0073	13902411,13902412, 13902414-13902417, 13902419	Lhs025-001a - Lhs025-001j
93.	Williamstown House	LH0074	13901511, 13901512	Lhs015-003

5.13 Vernacular Architectural Heritage

Traditionally each country, region and locality had its own distinctive styles for everyday buildings, suited to its particular climate and environment and built using materials which were readily available in the locality. These styles reflect the way of life of the people of the area and are known as vernacular. Characteristics of vernacular buildings are as contained in Appendix 6, Volume 2(b).

Vernacular architecture refers to the traditional building forms and types using local materials, skills and building techniques which form a vital component of the landscape. This includes traditional domestic buildings such as thatched cottages but also include other traditional structures such as shop fronts, farmsteads, outbuildings, aspects of the industrial past, including lime kilns, mills, forges and their products, such as gates. These structures reflect the unique local history and character of a place. The loss of vernacular architecture may not only result from the removal of whole buildings but also the gradual erosion of details such as the replacement of roof coverings and openings with modern materials. Any changes proposed to a vernacular structure should be sympathetic to its special features and its character while ensuring its continued use.

5.13.1 Vernacular Architecture

Vernacular architecture concerns buildings constructed by ordinary people from the locality for their own use, within their own resources, to meet their own needs, with materials from the immediate locality unaffected by trained architects, formal styles or fashionable trends. Vernacular architecture is the expression of the culture of a community.

Vernacular structures are extremely vulnerable due to the changing needs and demands of the modern generation and are facing serious problems of becoming obsolete. In particular, thatched buildings and traditional farm buildings are under increasing threat as they are seen by some to be no longer economically viable.

See also Chapter 2 – Core Strategy & Settlement Strategy

5.14 Historic Building Stock

In the interest of sustainability, it is considered that the re-use and adaption of existing buildings is preferable to their demolition. ***The Government Policy on Architecture 2009 – 2015*** asks all public authorities to address the re-use of the existing building stock, regardless of protected status or otherwise.

HER 58 To recognise the importance of the contribution of vernacular architecture to the character of a place and promote where feasible the protection, retention and appropriate revitalisation and use of the vernacular built heritage, including structures that contribute to landscape and streetscape character and discourage the demolition of these structures.

HER 59 Existing stone kerbs and paving stones are to be maintained and refurbished as must as possible where new kerbs are necessary they are to be of high quality in character with the existing.

5.15 Environment and Amenities

Under the provision of Section 10(2)(e) of the *Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)* there is an obligation on the planning authority to include provision in the development plan for the protection of landscapes, including the preservation of views and prospects and amenities of places and features of natural beauty and interest. County Louth has a number of important areas of outstanding beauty and high amenity value in addition to views and prospects that require protection.

5.15.1 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

County Louth contains two distinct areas that have been designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) by reason of their unspoiled natural landscapes and spectacular scenic quality. These are listed in Table 5.13 and illustrated on Map 5.15

Table 5.13 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Reference	Area
AONB1	Carlingford and Feede Mountains
AONB2	Clogherhead and Port Oriel

The larger of the two areas is found in the north of the county and encompasses the Carlingford and Feede Mountains. Slieve Foye at 588m O.D and Black Mountain at 508m O.D are the highest points in the range. Much of the area remains in its natural state, covered in gorse, bracken and heather, parts of which are designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) under European and Irish legislation. Spectacular views are available from a number of vantage points over Carlingford Lough to the Mourne Mountains in Northern Ireland and the Ring of Gullion in County Armagh and over Dundalk Bay to central and south County Louth.

The second area designated as an AONB is located at Clogherhead and encompasses Port Oriel and the surrounding headland. Although less rugged and remote than the Carlingford and Feede Mountains, this area, nevertheless, contains equally spectacular views eastwards to the Irish Sea, southwards towards the Boyne Estuary and County Meath and northwards over Dundalk Bay to the Carlingford and Mourne Mountains. This area is encompassed within the boundaries of the Clogherhead Settlement Plan.

Both these designated areas are extremely sensitive environments and are therefore afforded a high degree of protection in the Plan.

Policy

HER 60 To protect the unspoiled natural environment of the AONB for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

5.15.2 Areas of High Scenic Quality

The Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ), whilst not quite possessing the exceptional natural beauty and landscape quality of the AONB, nevertheless add significantly to the stock of natural scenic landscapes within the county. These are as listed in Table 5.14 and illustrated on Map 5.16.

All of these areas are currently farmed, although the quality of the land for farming purposes varies considerably from area to area. The Council considers it important that AHSQ are protected from excessive development, particularly from inappropriate one-off urban generated housing, in order to preserve their unspoiled rural landscapes.

The Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015 added additional Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ's) at Dunany Point, Ardee Bog and made an adjustment to Mount Oriel AHSQ in order to include the pNHA to the east of Collon Village.

Table 5.14 Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ)

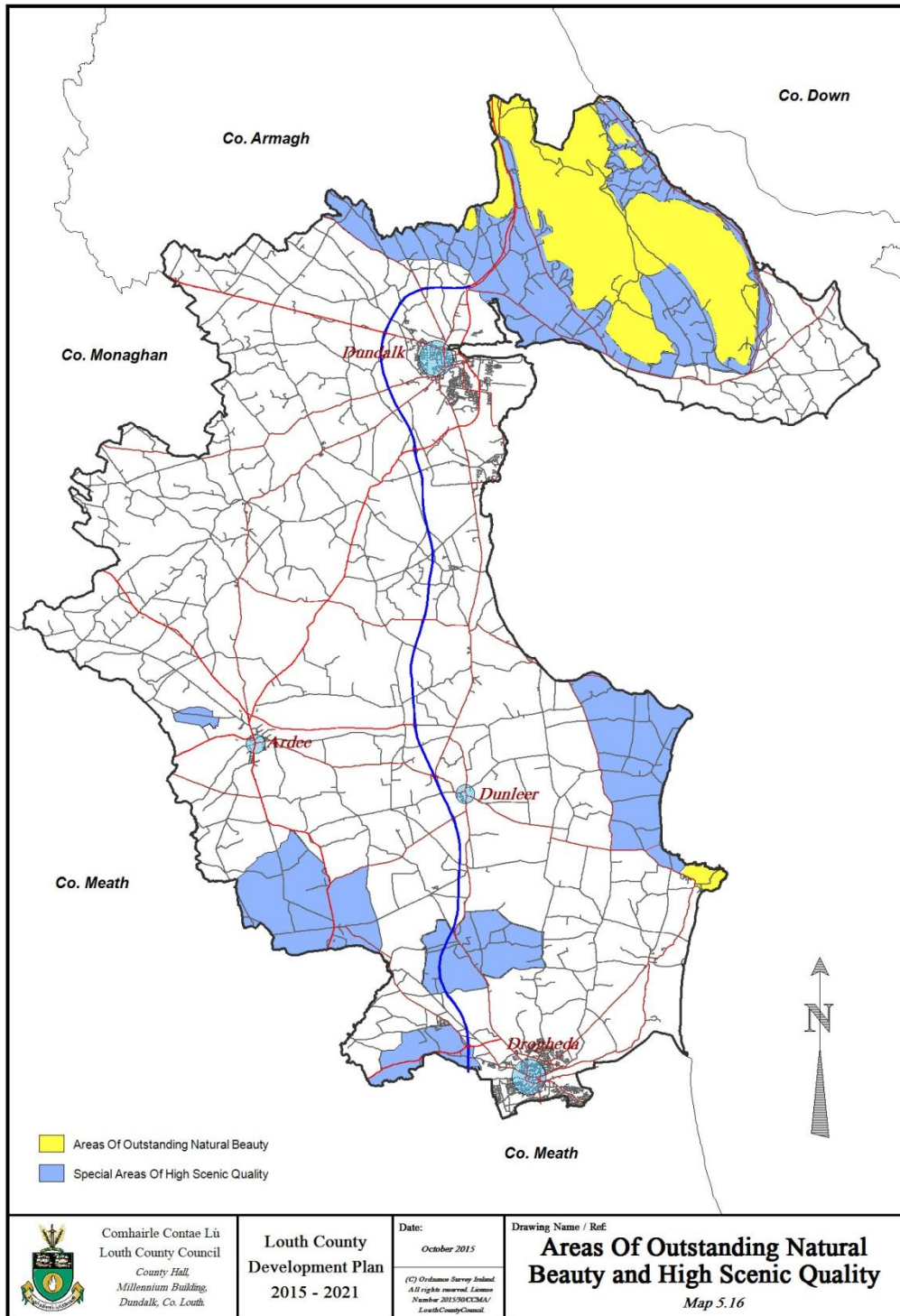
AHSQ 1	Feede Mountains and Cooley Area
AHSQ 2	Monasterboice
AHSQ 3	Boyne Valley / King Williams Glen
AHSQ 4	Collon Uplands
AHSQ 5	Dunany
AHSQ 6	Ardee Bog

Policy

HER 61 To protect the unspoiled rural landscapes of the AHSQ for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

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Heritage (Natural & Built)

Map 5.16: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Scenic Quality



5.15.3 Scenic Routes

A number of important scenic routes which require protection within the County are listed in Table 5.15. These scenic routes are also illustrated on Map 11.1 in Appendix 11 Volume 2 (b). Any development that would interfere with or adversely affect these scenic routes will not be permitted.

Table 5.15 Scenic Routes, County Louth

Ref:	Route
SR1	Faughart Hill, Faughart Upper
SR2	Ravensdale Road (Rockmarshall to Drumad)
SR3	Deerpark Road
SR4	Dromad via N1, Broughattin –Doolargy
SR5	Annaverna
SR6	Doolargy
SR7	Jeninstown (Minor and Hill)
SR8	Ballymakellett
SR9	Jeninstown to Piedmont
SR10	Jeninstown to Omeath via Windy Gap
SR11	Piedmont – Benagh -Spellickanee
SR12	Bush – Windy Gap – Edentober
SR13	Bush – Carlingford including Commons
SR14	Greenore – Carlingford-Omeath
SR15	Coast Road – Whitestown- Ballagan –Ballytrasna
SR16	Coast Road, Dromiskin
SR17	Townparks, Ardee
SR18	Castlebellingham – Annagassan -Clogherhead – Termonfeckin
SR19	Baltray – Queensborough-Beaulieu
SR20	Slane Road, Townley Hall
SR21	King Williams Glen
SR22	Mount Oriel (Collon – Belpatrick)

Policy

HER 62 To prohibit development that would interfere with or adversely affect the scenic routes as identified in Table 5.15

5.15.4 Views and Prospects of Special Amenity Value

A number of specific views and prospects of special amenity value are identified in the Plan and detailed in Appendix 11. These views and prospects are listed in Table 5.16 and illustrated on Map 11.1 (Appendix 11, Volume 2(b)). These views and prospects are reflective of Louth's unique scenic quality and are notable for their natural scenery and striking landscapes.

Chapter 5
Heritage (Natural & Built)

In addition to the views and prospects preserved in the ***Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015, Variation No 3 of the Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015 Plan*** included additional views within three of the settlements, now referred to as Level 3 settlements. Further proposed views and prospects may be proposed in the local area plans for Level 1 and Level 2 Settlements.

Table 5.16 Views and Prospects in County Louth

No	Name
VP1	Drummullagh
VP2	Clermontpase Bridge
VP3	Clermont Cairn RTE mast
VP4	Windy Gap
VP5	Carlingford Lough
VP6	Slieve Foye
VP7	Spelickanee
VP8	Glenmore – mountains and valley
VP9	Barnavave and Carlingford mountain
VP10	Jenkinstown Hill
VP11	Jenkinstown
VP12	Ballymakellett
VP13	Faughart Hill
VP14	Dungooly Crossroads
VP15	Views of Castle Roche
VP16	Hackballscross
VP17	Killin Golf Course
VP18	Dromiskin
VP19	North of Annagassan
VP20	Salterstown
VP21	Corstown
VP22	Lurganboy
VP23	Callystown to Clogherhead
VP24	Dardisrath
VP25	Brownstown
VP26	Newtown Monasterboice
VP27	Townley Hall Nature Walk
VP28	Drybridge Escarpment
VP29	Waterunder Plateau
VP30	Mount Oriel
VP31	N2 Funshog
VP32	Millockstown
VP33	Townparks
VP34	Funshog

In addition to those views listed above, the following Level 3 settlements also contain certain protected views and prospects Table 5.17, 5.18 and 5.19.

Table 5.17 Views and Prospects in Carlingford

No	Name
VPC 1	King John's Castle
VPC2	Taaffe's Castle
VPC3	Holy Trinity Heritage Centre
VPC4	Dominican Friary
VPC5	The Coast and Harbour

Table 5.18 Views and Prospects in Clogherhead

No	Name
VPCL 1	Clogherhead Harbour

Table 5.19 Views and Prospects in Tullyallen

No	Name
VPT1	Tullyallen
VPT2	Tullyallen

Full details of the above Views and Prospects are identified in Appendix 11, Volume 2(b).

Policy	
HER 63	To preserve the views and prospects of special amenity value as identified in Tables 5.16, 5.17, 5.18 and 5.19
HER 64	To improve, where necessary, public access to viewing points subject to the availability of resources.

5.15.5 Green Infrastructure

The term Green Infrastructure (GI) can describe a network of connected, high quality, multifunctional open spaces, corridors, and the links in between that provide environmental services and multiple benefits for people and wildlife. It is also used to describe a broad range of design measures, techniques and materials that have a sustainable character and have a beneficial environmental impact.

A **Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS)** has been integrated into the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** and is included in Appendix 14, Volume 2(b). This Strategy provides background and guidance on the green infrastructure within County Louth.

5.15.5.1 Strategic Objectives for Green Infrastructure in County Louth

The strategic objectives for the Green Infrastructure Strategy applicable to County Louth have been derived following a combination of consultation for the strategy, best practise guidelines and SWOT analysis of the county as outlined below:

- Flood risk management and climate change adaptation,
- An ecological framework,
- A sustainable movement network,
- A sense of place,
- River corridor and coastal management,
- Support urban regeneration,
- Community, health and enjoyment.

The **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** will support the following policies of the Green Infrastructure Strategy:

Policy

HER 65 To support the green infrastructure network of County Louth. To implement the green infrastructure network in any assessment of development proposals to prevent adverse impact on the ecological connectivity of County Louth's core areas.

HER 66 To require the use of the green infrastructure network as a supplementary guide for the protection and conservation of the Natura 2000 sites in County Louth.

HER 67 To utilise all information available on the Louth Baseline Assessment as evidence based decision making in the Louth Core Strategy.

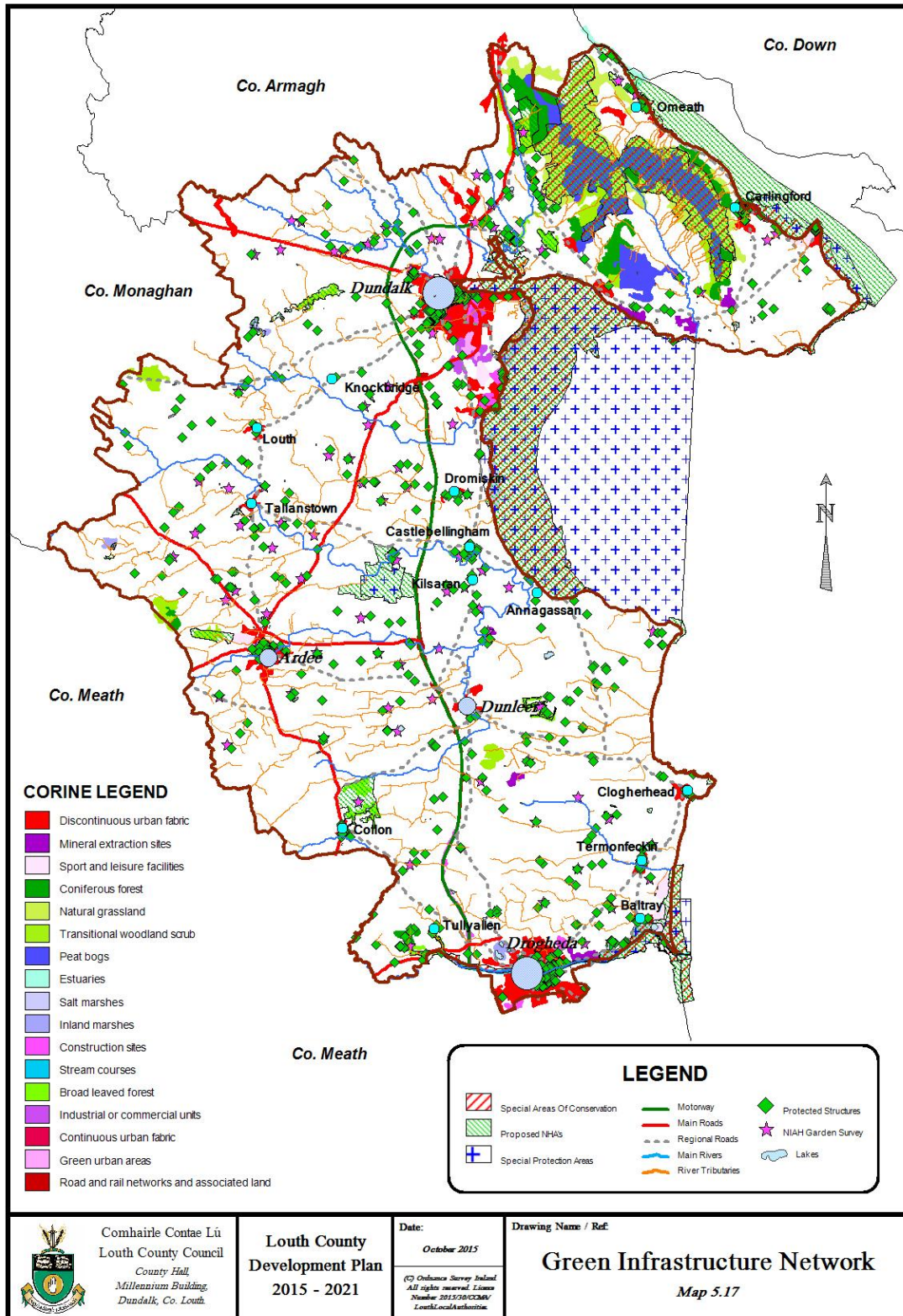
HER 68 To support the existing features of interest in the Level 3 Settlements of County Louth and promote and facilitate any areas identified for green infrastructure enhancement.

HER 69 A minimum of 20m wide riparian corridor shall be kept free from development (except for pathways) along the side of each bank of the river for the purposes of habitat protection, maintenance access requirements, flood alleviation and recreational requirements. Any proposed path should be located a minimum of 6m from the top of the river edge. All proposed coastal walkways will be required to comply with

the Habitats, EIA and SEA Directives.

- HER 70** Identified stone walls shall be incorporated into the overall development proposals. Where it is not feasible to retain the existing walls at the existing location, proposals submitted shall illustrate the removal and rebuild of the wall at a separate location.
- HER 71** To provide a detailed green infrastructure network for Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Dunleer integrated into the local area plan for each area.
- HER 72** To require future development proposals to integrate into the overall design any important biodiversity features including those listed in Table 16 (Green Infrastructure Strategy, Appendix 14, Volume 2(b) into the overall design.
- HER 73** To require development proposals to include native planting schemes in landscaped areas and open spaces.
- HER 74** To require the integration of Green Infrastructure in all areas of public space.
- HER 75** To require the integration of climate change mitigation measures in any future spatial plans and climate change adaptation measures in proposed developments.

Map 5.17: Green Infrastructure Network in County Louth



Chapter 6

Economic Development, Tourism & Retail

6.1 Introduction

Louth's unrivalled location between Dublin and Belfast at the heart of the eastern economic corridor brings with it numerous advantages. The region benefits from high quality road and rail infrastructure running on a north/south axis from Dublin to Belfast. The A1/M1 motorway is part of the strategic Euroroute 1 connecting the ports of Larne, Dublin and Rosslare providing convenient access to the UK and other EU markets. The M1 also provides rapid access to international airports at Dublin and Belfast. Additionally, Louth boasts three commercial freight ports, namely Drogheda, Dundalk and Greenore, the last of which is a deep sea port. The existing fishing port at Clogherhead is also of national importance.

Louth's other Key Economic Strengths include:

- The population living within 60km (one hour's drive time) from Drogheda and Dundalk is amongst the highest in the Country,
- Highly urbanised,
- Large and highly skilled commuter population,
- A growing number of residents have third level qualifications a large proportion of which are compatible with the development of internationally – traded services (social science, business, law and computing),
- Significant employment growth in foreign owned firms in the internationally traded services sector,
- Strong reputation as a centre for the development of renewable energy technologies,
- The high quality of life enjoyed by the residents of County Louth,
- Amongst Irish owned firms, employment growth has been concentrated in key sectors including food and drink,
- A Third Level Institution (DKIT) equipped to respond quickly to emerging training, business, educational needs with its Regional Development Centre at the core of the local entrepreneurial eco-system.

6.1.2 Employment Sectors

County Louth traditionally had a strong employment and industrial base centered primarily on the towns of Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Dunleer. The breakdown of sectoral employment within the County is set out in Table 6.1. Currently the majority of employment in Louth is in the wholesale and retail trade (18.13%), followed by health and social work and the manufacturing industries (11.97 and 11.17% respectively). A relatively low proportion of the county's population is involved in farming or agricultural activities, reflecting the highly urbanised nature of the county.

Table 6.1 Sectoral Breakdown of Employment in County Louth

Economic Sector	Number Employed	Percentage of Total
Wholesale and retail trade	8,021	18.13
Health and social work	5,289	11.96
Manufacturing industries	4,942	11.17
Education	4,146	9.37
Real estate, renting and business activities	3,625	8.2
Public administration and defence	2,676	6.05
Transport, storage and communications	2,675	6.05
Other community, social and personal service activities	2,383	5.39
Hotels and restaurants	2,353	5.32
Industry not stated	2,343	5.29
Construction	2,183	4.94
Banking and financial services	1,766	3.99
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1,357	3.07
Mining, quarrying and turf production	165	0.37
Electricity, gas and water supply	308	0.7
Total at work	44,232	100

Source: CSO 2011

In 1996 County Louth's unemployment rate was 22.3%. With the economic boom and associated increase in employment opportunities the County's unemployment rate decreased to 11.1% in 2006. Following the subsequent recession and downturn in the economy the 2011 Census revealed that the unemployment rate in County Louth was 23.8%. In 2011 the unemployment rate for the state was 19% (CSO 1996, 2006 and 2011). There are indications that the economy is beginning to improve and it is anticipated that the unemployment rate for the County and the State will decrease accordingly.

Policy

EDE 1 To work in partnership with national and local economic development and employment promoting agencies to support employment generating initiatives within the County.

6.2 Economic Development

6.2.1 The Border Regional Authority: Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022

The Border Regional Authority advocates that growth is shifted towards high value-added and export oriented sectors. The guidelines acknowledge that there is a progressive increase in off-farm employment and that rural diversification must be centred on locally based assets. They identify the following existing and potential areas for future growth and development of the region:

- Agri- food sector,
- Internationally traded services,
- Renewal energy and environmental products and services,
- Life sciences and tourism.

Other significant sectors that could prove important in the development of the region include the natural resource, creative, caring and retail sectors. The guidelines advocate that economic investment is prioritised within the key settlements of the border region.

Policy

EDE 2 To work in collaboration with other local authorities and agencies both within the border region and the adjoining regions to encourage economic investment and support employment generating initiatives.

6.2.2 Cross Border Economic Development

Through a joined-up approach, Newry and Dundalk have the critical mass to compete in the global economy, thereby appealing to higher value segments of the business chain by offering sizeable pools of suitably qualified workers, adequate supporting infrastructure, and good-quality public and commercial service. The Report *Newry-Dundalk Twin City Region: Supporting the Implementation of Cross-Border Collaborative Frameworks, 2009* advocates that both central and local government authorities on either side of the border work collaboratively to deliver new employment opportunities in Newry and Dundalk.

As an upshot of the Twin City Region concept a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed and signed by both Louth County Council and Newry Mourne & Down District Council. The MOU sets out the detailed workings which seek to support and promote the economic development and competitiveness of the region. Both councils agreed to strengthen existing co-operation and a number of projects have been developed under the following themes;

- Renewable Energy and Green Technology,
- Tourism and Recreation,
- Sustainable Economic Growth, Job Creation,
- Emergency Planning.

Table 6.2 Cross Border Themes and Projects

Themes	Projects
Renewable Energy and Green Technology	CONCERTO/HOLISTIC, Smart Eco Hub, INDICATE, ISLES project, STEM II project, Energy Management and Micro Generation.
Tourism and Recreation	Geo-Tourism, Narrow Water Bridge, The Loughs Agency Marine Tourism and Angling Development Programme, Tourism Management & Greenore to Greencastle Ferry.
Sustainable Economic Growth and Job Creation.	Plato Programme, Drogheda/Dundalk/Newry Cross Border Economic Zone, Life Science Programme, Aspire Programme, The IOTA Programme, Regional Innovation Programme, Smart Sustainable Inclusive Growth Strategy.
Emergency Planning	Major Emergency Management Service

A Joint Review of Cross Border MOU Emerging Themes is presently being drafted.

Policy

EDE 3 To co-operate with the appropriate authorities and key stakeholders in Northern Ireland to support joint economic initiatives and programmes for the promotion of the region on a cross border basis.

6.2.3 Economic Development in County Louth

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Louth sits within the Economic Development Unit of Louth County Council. The new LEO office which is an amalgamation of the former Louth County Enterprise Board and the former Business Support Unit of Louth County Council is located in the Council offices at Crowe Street, Dundalk and was officially opened in June 2014. The LEO Louth is the primary agency dedicated to the development of micro enterprise in County Louth with a range of support instruments both financial and non financial to assist small businesses in the County.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for inter alia the establishment of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) as a committee of Louth County Council. Louth County Council in accordance with the Local Development Committee Regulations 2014 shall develop a 6 year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for the County which will plan for the integration of economic and local community development at a local level. The Local Economic & Community Plan to be adopted by the local authority includes 2 elements:

- A local Economic element (prepared by the Economic Development & Enterprise Support Strategic Policy Committee (SPC))
- A community development element (prepared by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)).

The Louth Economic Forum (LEF) was formed in 2009 and brought together representatives of the business sector, the local authority management and all state agencies with the aim of stimulating economic activity in County Louth. A study entitled Louth County Economic Development Strategy 2009 – 2015 was commissioned by Louth County Council from Indecon International Economic Consultants. This study provides a blueprint for the Louth Economic Forum and the recommendations have shaped the work of the Forum.

A 10 Point Plan identifying 10 specific areas of action to be addressed was devised by the Louth Economic Forum. These action plans are as outlined in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 Louth Economic Forum 10 Point Action Plans

Action Plan	Objectives
Foreign Direct Investment	Attract 3,000 new jobs in foreign owned enterprises. Focus on pharmaceuticals, clean technology and internationally traded services sectors.
Sustainable Energy	Aims to make Louth the country's first smart green county.
Indigenous Industry	Capitalise on Louth's traditional strengths in engineering, food and drink. Promote new international services and products. Provide dedicated Business Support Unit.
Tourism and Heritage	Tourists see destinations, not counties. Identifies areas to be developed including The Boyne Valley and Cooley/Mourne/Gullion Region.
Age Friendly Business	Initiatives to position Louth as a leader in age-friendly business development.
Education and Training	Ensure that the education and training sector within the county addresses the changing needs of business and industry.

Agriculture Food and Fisheries	Development of the agriculture, food and fisheries section of the Region.
Broadband	The Draft Broadband Action Plan is due for launch in 2016
Making Louth the Best County to do Business	Drafting due to commence in 2016
The Drogheda, Dundalk Newry Economic Corridor	Drafting due to commence in 2016.

Policy

- EDE 4 To deliver support and co-ordinated services to start ups and small businesses across the County of Louth.**
- EDE 5 To facilitate the emerging local development role of Local Government and bring about better alignment of the work of local development companies with that of Louth County Council**
- EDE 6 To support initiatives contained within the 10 Point Action Plans.**
- EDE 7 To capitalise on the location, natural and people resources of County Louth (including Dundalk and Drogheda) in the pursuit of economic development and to support co-operation with adjoining authorities with regard to economic development within the M1 corridor.**
- EDE 8 To identify and zone lands, if required, for employment activities in the Local Area Plans and Settlements and encourage the reuse of derelict and brownfield sites for sustainable economic purposes where appropriate.**

6.2.4 Land Use Planning and Economic Growth

To achieve growth in the aforementioned emerging sectors it is necessary to ensure that there is an adequate supply of serviced land available within existing settlements to facilitate sustainable economic growth. The nature, location and quantum of lands identified for employment generating uses for each settlement and their ability to be serviced must reflect, and be consistent with, the settlement hierarchies as provided for in the Core Strategy. In accordance with the settlement hierarchy Dundalk and Drogheda are identified as Level 1 Settlements which are key settlements within the County with the aim of achieving critical mass and driving economic development. Ardee and Dunleer are located in Level 2 of the settlement hierarchy and as such the importance of these settlements as centres for growth and investment is recognised.

Chapter 6 Economic Development, Tourism & Retail

Notwithstanding this, it is necessary that the spatial planning framework delivers a development pattern that contributes to sustainable economic growth throughout the County and as such the following Level 3 Settlements are identified as being suitable for small scale business and enterprise:

- Clogherhead,
- Castlebellingham/Kilsaran,
- Tallanstown,
- Collon.

Whilst agriculture is an important form of economic activity in rural areas, the number of people employed fulltime in agriculture has declined, and as such there is a need to ensure that alternative employment opportunities are available and to facilitate the development of small scale rural diversification projects which would contribute to the sustainable economic growth of the County. The planning authority welcomes development proposals which involve the re-use of vernacular buildings, subject to normal planning criteria.

See also Chapter 2 – Core Strategy & Settlement Strategy

Policy

- EDE 9 To protect and enhance the status of Dundalk, Drogheda, Ardee and Dunleer as the principle centres of employment, industrial and commercial activity within the County.**
- EDE 10 To zone in accordance with the settlement hierarchy, an adequate quantum and range of sites (including brown field sites), thereby offering a choice of sizes and locations, to accommodate a wide and flexible range of economic development opportunities.**
- EDE11 To promote and facilitate the provision of local sustainable employment opportunities on land zoned for employment uses.**

6.2.5 Development at Motorway Interchanges

The M1 has the potential to act as a major stimulant of economic development and activity by providing high quality road infrastructure and connectivity to air and sea ports and thereby to domestic and international markets. Motorway interchanges are strategic locations much sought after by developers due to the desirability and benefits of having immediate access to the primary road network.

However, uncontrolled and poorly regulated development at interchanges can often be problematic. This can be due to such development being solely dependent on road transport, the

possibility of traffic congestion on national routes, the impact on rural landscapes and environments and the costs involved in the provision of other infrastructure such as piped services, electricity and gas. Such development can also detract investment from existing towns and settlements that are much in need of renewal and development.

In order to maximise the benefits accruing to the County from the motorway and to regulate development in a sustainable and appropriate manner along its route, the following policies will be applied.

Policy	
EDE 12	To promote and facilitate development at urban-related* interchanges in accordance with the zoning provisions of the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009 -2015 and the North Drogheda Environs Local Area Plan 2004 and any subsequent local area plans adopted.
EDE13	To resist development at rural-related** motorway interchanges.

**Urban-related interchanges are Ballymascanlon (Junction 18), Castleblayney Road (Junction 17), Dundalk South interchange (Junction 16) and Drogheda North (Junction 10).*

***Rural-related interchanges are Carrickcannon (Junction 20), Drumleck (Junction 15), Charleville (Junction 14), Mooremount (Junction 13) and Woodlands (Junction 12).*

6.3 Development Management Guidelines for Industrial and Commercial Developments

Louth County Council will require that industrial and commercial lands be developed to a very high standard in campus style settings, combining aesthetics with enterprise to attract high calibre business occupiers. In spatial terms this will mean the development of a series of innovative landmark buildings set in attractive landscaped grounds. New development proposals should aim to provide design excellence realised within a hierarchical road structure and a hard and soft landscaping framework.

Where appropriate, applicants should have regard to policy in relation to road infrastructure as set out in the Transport Chapter.

See also Chapter 7 – Transport

6.3.1 Landscaping and Amenity

Commercial and Industrial development should present a pleasant aspect aided by high quality landscape design, including tree planting within both public and private domains. The existing landscape framework and its associated topography should be respected and preserved where appropriate.

Landscaping should ensure that the buildings will not be dominated by extensive areas of parking, hard standing and roads, thereby detracting from the quality of the environment. A detailed, high quality landscape plan, planting schedule and planting programme will be required with all applications. Planting shall include semi-mature indigenous trees in order to reduce the visual impact of structures on surrounding areas.

The provision of a buffer zone up to (15m) in width will be required where industrial and other sensitive land uses adjoin, to ensure amenities of adjacent properties are not adversely affected. There should be no significant amenity loss (by way of noise, smell or other nuisance) to immediate neighbours or the area in general resulting from the nature of the proposed business, the amount of traffic generated or the servicing arrangement.

See also Green Infrastructure Strategy, Appendix 14, Volume 2(c)

6.3.2 Surface Water Drainage

Adequate measures should be taken by commercial/industrial users and developers in the treatment and disposal of surface water to prevent pollution. In the first instance Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) shall be required to be integrated into the development when designing surface water management arrangements.

See also Chapter 10 – Water Services

6.3.3 Sustainable Design

All commercial and industrial development should adopt a sustainable approach to design and building methods including passive design, use of solar energy, low energy performance buildings and the use of renewable energy supplies, in association with Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and having regard to the Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings.

See also Chapter 9 – Energy and Communications.

6.3.4 Car Parking, Loading and Unloading Provision

Car parking shall be provided in accordance with the standards detailed in Chapter 7 of the Plan. In order to encourage modal shift, a reduction in the car parking standards will be considered where alternative transport arrangements, involving greater use of sustainable transport solutions such as public transport, walking and cycling, is provided. In this event, a mobility management plan shall be submitted with the planning application for consideration.

All surface car parking areas should preferably be located behind the building line, out of view of the general public. Where this is not practical, parking areas should be suitably screened and landscaped. All car parking areas should be suitably surfaced and illuminated. Individual parking

spaces should be permanently marked and shall not be less than 5.0m X 2.5m in dimension and shall have appropriate access and circulation aisles.

Sufficient loading and unloading bays should be provided. These should be of sufficient size to accommodate loading and unloading operations without encroachment onto any public road or footpath or interfere with the safety and free flow of vehicular traffic or pedestrians. All loading and unloading bays should be located to the side or rear of buildings and should be suitably screened and landscaped.

See also Chapter 7 – Transport.

6.3.5 Design

Where two or more commercial or industrial buildings are being developed, a uniform design for boundary treatments, roof profiles and building lines is recommended. The scale, design and material utilised should be cognisant of its setting and be in keeping with the surrounding area and adjoining developments.

In the event that an industrial/ commercial development forms part of a larger area, including where such land is in multiple ownership, a Master Plan should be prepared. Master Plans should be submitted for lands identified in the relevant local area plan or when requested by the planning authority.

A Master Plan should consider inter alia the following:

- Consistency with policies and objectives of the relevant plan/local area plan,
- Topography and land form,
- Protection of existing trees, hedgerows and nature conservation areas,
- Protection of archaeological remains, ACA's, protected structures and other historic buildings,
- Safeguard protected fauna,
- Flooding,
- Roads, cycling and pedestrians paths and bus infrastructure provision,
- Inclusion of SuDS and water conservation measures,
- Phasing to ensure roll out of required physical and social infrastructure,
- Protection of scenic views,
- Road infrastructure and layout,
- Mobility management,
- Renewal Energy Strategy (RES),
- Advertising,
- Boundary treatments,
- Building design, materials and layout,
- Landscaping.

6.3.6 Site Coverage and Plot Ratios

The maximum site coverage permitted in industrial areas shall generally be 60% and the maximum plot ratio shall be 2:1.

6.3.7 Open Storage

Open storage areas where provided shall be located behind the building line and be adequately and appropriately screened from public view.

6.3.8 Roads and Footpaths

All applications for industrial or commercial developments within the 60km speed limit shall be designed in accordance with the ***Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)*** produced by the ***Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS)*** and ***Department of Environment Community and Local Government (DECLG)***. All applications outside the 60km speed limit shall be designed in accordance with the ***Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*** produced by the ***Department of Transport Tourism and Sport (DTTS)***.

See also Chapter 7 – Transport

6.3.9 Nuisance

In respect of all industrial and commercial developments, where conflict could arise with other established users, the 'Good Neighbour' principle shall be applied. In particular, noise emissions, whether from plant, machinery and operation or traffic, shall comply with the provisions of ***Noise Regulations (S.I. No. 140 of 2006)*** and the ***Louth County Council Noise Action Plan 2013-2018***.

See also Chapter 8 – Environment

6.3.10 Trade Effluent Discharges

All discharges of trade effluents to sewerage networks or receiving waters shall be subject to a Water Pollution Discharge Licence issued under the ***Water Pollution Act 1977 (as amended)***. Specified appropriate pre-treatment of trade effluents shall be required prior to discharge to sewers.

See also Chapter 8 – Environment

6.3.11 Fire Prevention

Adequate storage and hydrant capacity should be provided in consultation with the Fire Department of the Council, in compliance with ***Section 29(2) of the Fire Services Act, 1981***. ***The Building Control Regulations 1997 – 2014*** require a Fire Safety Certificate for most new buildings, extensions, changes of use and material alterations, with the exception of houses.

6.3.12 Building Regulations

Designers, developers and owners are required to ensure that all new buildings and structures comply with the requirements of the ***Building Regulations 1997 – 2014*** including the Disability Access Certificate to ensure compliance where required by Part M of the aforementioned regulations.

6.3.13 Public Artwork

Public art should be provided within an open space or focal point within new development schemes, through the Per Cent for Art. The Council should be consulted on opportunities for permanent art.

Policy

EDE 14 To comply with development management guidelines for industrial and commercial developments as set out in Section 6.3 above unless otherwise provided for in a local area plan.

6.4 Tourism

6.4.1 Introduction

County Louth's tourism assets include an unspoilt natural environment, a rich and varied heritage, numerous cultural and man-made attractions, a wide range of excellent quality accommodation and easy access to national roads, airports and ports. The future development of the tourism sector needs to capitalise on County Louth's unique location in relation to the Boyne Valley and the Mourne/Cooley/Gullion Regions. A fine balance needs to be struck between capitalising on the resources of the County whilst protecting them from harm and over-development.

6.4.2 Tourist Attractions

The broad range of tourist facilities and attractions of County Louth include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Scenic Quality,
- Boyne Valley Region: UNESCO World Heritage Site Brú na Bóinne and Site of the Battle of the Boyne,
- Archaeological sites and monuments including Mellifont Abbey and the Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice,
- Mourne /Cooley/ Gullion Region incorporating the Geotourism project,
- Historic walled towns of Drogheda, Ardee and Carlingford,
- Historic houses and designed landscapes,
- Dundalk all-weather horse racing track,
- Inland and sea fishing,
- Identified walks and cycle routes,
- Equestrian activity,
- High quality golf courses,
- 120 kilometres of clean coastlines including 3 blue flag beaches (2015) and water activities,
- High quality range of independent and multi-national retailers,
- Excellent hotels and conference facilities,
- Arts, crafts and food festivals,
- Places of recreation including cinemas, pubs, restaurants and theatres,
- Ornithological opportunities.

6.4.3 Overseas Visitors to and revenue generated in Republic of Ireland and County Louth

Fáilte Ireland's report Regional Tourism Performance in 2012 states that in 2012 revenue generated by overseas visitors to County Louth accounted for 1% of the total revenue generated in the State. There is therefore an opportunity to develop the Louth tourist product thereby attracting increased visitor numbers to the County. Recent research has shown that cultural tourism constitutes one of the central planks of the Irish tourism industry and is one of the fastest growing areas of tourism internationally. Louth has a rich array of cultural and heritage attractions to offer visitors.

6.5 Tourism Policy

6.5.1 The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2010-2020

The NSS states that the attractiveness and integrity of a world renowned landscape is central to Ireland's tourism industry and it acknowledges the need to maximise the potential of the tourism section to support balanced regional development.

6.5.2 Border Regional Authority Planning Guidelines 2010-2022

Tourism is identified as a potential area for future growth and development in the border region based on its historic strengths, existing natural and cultural amenities and excellent infrastructure.

6.5.3 Louth and Meath Tourism Development Study (2010)

The Louth and Meath Tourism Development Study commissioned in 2010 examined tourism performance in Louth and Meath and highlighted the potential that exists for tourism development. The study made a number of recommendations with regard to the creation of two destinations of excellence including:

- Holistic approach towards the development and marketing of identified themed destinations in Meath and Louth i.e. the Boyne Valley and Mourne/ Cooley/Gullion Region,
- Sharing of resources and services in development of the Boyne Valley including a Boyne Valley Tourism Officer,
- The Mourne Mountains, Cooley Peninsula and Dundalk should be marketed and developed with partners on a cross border basis,
- Co-operation and sharing of human, technical and marketing resources for Counties Meath and Louth and retention of existing county tourism companies.

The development of the Boyne Valley as a tourism destination had its groundings in the Louth Meath Tourism Development Study.

6.5.4 Boyne Valley Tourism Destination

Fáilte Ireland identified ten world class Tourism Destinations across Ireland. Tourism Destinations are generally characterised by a key attraction or activity that renders them market leaders and instantly recognisable as a must-see place. They are to be the core of the National Tourism Strategy and the focus of product development and marketing.

One such tourism destination identified by Fáilte Ireland is the Boyne Valley.

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The Boyne Valley comprises the counties of both Meath and Louth boasting one of Europe's primary collections of prehistoric sites and monuments coupled with a unique history and culture including:

- The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú Na Bóinne,
- The historic site of the Battle of the Boyne,
- UNESCO Tentative World Heritage Site of Monasterboice,
- Mellifont Abbey,
- The walled town of Drogheda,
- St Oliver Plunkett's Shrine.

There has been significant investment in the Boyne Valley in areas of enterprise development, marketing and destination development by Fáilte Ireland in conjunction with the County Councils of both Louth and Meath.

See also Chapter 5 – Heritage

6.5.5 Boyne Valley Tourism Plan 2012-2014

The **Boyne Valley Tourism Plan 2012-2014** was produced in conjunction with Louth and Meath local authorities. The aim of the Plan was to provide direction for tourism in the Boyne Valley Destination. The Plan examines existing tourism plans and work conducted by Louth and Meath County Council's, County Tourism Bodies and Fáilte Ireland. It conducted research into the travel trade, overseas markets and the tourism trade in Louth and Meath with the objective of identifying future business opportunities.

Policy

EDE 15 To co-operate with all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the Boyne Valley Tourism Plan 2012 - 2014, and any subsequent plans adopted.

6.5.6 Monasterboice

The **Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)** has published a draft tentative list of potential nominees to the World Heritage List. Monasterboice is one of a representative sample of Early Medieval Monastic sites in Ireland listed, which embody the Celtic Church's rich cultural and historical past, playing a crucial role in Europe's educational and artistic development.

See also Chapter 5 – Heritage

6.5.7 East Border Region Tourism Development Plan

The **Tourism Development Plan** was produced by The East Border Region Tourism Partnership (EBRTP) which is a cross border partnership comprising 10 local authorities which straddle the border region. The aim of this Plan is to support the development of tourism products that will attract domestic and overseas visitors and will contribute towards improving the performance of the tourism industry in the East Border Region. It recognises the Mourne Cooley Gullion region as a tourism opportunity and identifies key strategic tourism themes under the following headings:

- Christian heritage,
- Marine water sports and beach development,
- New technology for visitor servicing,
- Countryside tourism.

6.5.8 Mourne/ Cooley /Gullion Geological Tourism Project

The aim of this geo tourism project is to develop a competitive, internationally-recognised tourism destination within the region, taking advantage of the prized landscape and related cultural heritage of the Mourne/Cooley/Gullion Region. The overall aim is to increase visitor numbers, enhance the tourism potential and contribute towards people's appreciation of the surrounding beautiful landscape. This involves public education/consultation, access infrastructure, interpretation materials, events & tours, and targeted marketing initiatives. In this regard it will closely integrate tourism development with conservation and education.

6.5.9 County Louth Tourism and Heritage Action Plan 2011 and Beyond.

In the *Louth Economic Forum 10 Point Action Plan* which identified 10 specific areas to be addressed, one such area was tourism and heritage. The Tourism and Heritage Action Plan acknowledges that many of the major local tourist attractions are shared with other counties, such as The Boyne Valley and indeed some outside the state, such as the Mourne Cooley Gullion Region. It states that these challenges need to be addressed in order for the County to fully realise its development potential. The Tourism and Heritage Action Plan identifies the need for further development in the following areas:

- Activities/ leisure,
- Heritage/ culture,
- Food/festivals,
- Innovation,
- Clusters /packaging,
- Marketing /PR,
- Communications / funding.
-

Policy

EDE 16 To explain, promote and co-operate with all relevant stakeholders to facilitate the development of the Mourne Cooley Gullion Geo Tourism Project.

EDE 17 To support the implementation of the East Border Region Tourism Development Plan, Louth and Meath Tourism Development Study and the County Louth Tourism and Heritage Action Plan 2011 and Beyond.

EDE 18 To assist in the development and marketing of identified Tourism Destinations including the Boyne Valley and Mourne Cooley Gullion destinations, in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders.

6.5.10 Opportunities for Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable tourism development is defined as ‘tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities’. The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, natural heritage, landscape and the built environment should be promoted as important elements in the long term economic growth and development of the County.

Policy

EDE 19 To promote the sustainable development of County Louth as a quality tourist destination in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and associated agencies themed on heritage, culture and an unspoilt natural environment and support innovative tourism projects that would boost employment and promote County Louth as a tourism destination subject to compliance with the requirements of the Development Zones as detailed in Chapter 3.

6.5.11 Walk and Cycle Routes

6.5.11.1 The Great Eastern Greenway

In 2011, approximately three quarters of a million overseas visitors to Ireland engaged in hiking or cross county walking. Notwithstanding this, Ireland is underperforming in terms of attracting walkers and hikers due in part to the product, access cost and competing markets. In order to capitalise on this lucrative tourism market there is a need to develop iconic walks in County Louth.

Louth has a number of existing walkways including The Táin Way, Slieve Foye in addition to Slí na Sláinte routes in Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee and Carlingford. A new walking and cycling route called the Great Eastern Greenway, has been partially constructed along the old railway line between Omeath and Carlingford. In time it is anticipated that this will link with the existing tow path along the Newry Canal, terminating at Lough Neagh.

The Great Eastern Greenway will make a positive contribution to the local economy by attracting both domestic and overseas visitors spending money and thereby supporting local services and centres. It is therefore important that the route’s integrity, amenity and scenic quality is protected.

6.5.11.2 Walking Strategy for the Cooley Peninsula

A Walking Strategy for the Cooley Peninsula has been prepared by the Council. This strategy has identified looped walks at Slieve Foye, Maeve's Gap, Greenore, Templetown and in Cooley which will be developed in due course.

6.5.11.3 National Cycle Network Scoping Study 2010

The National Cycle Network Scoping Study 2010 identifies a comprehensive network of cycle routes throughout Ireland. In relation to County Louth cycle ways are proposed from Dundalk to Sligo (Route 1), Dundalk to Wexford (Route 5) and Drogheda to Trim (Route 3).

With regard to Route 3, Drogheda to Trim, the construction of a new cycle and leisure route along the Boyne has commenced linking the ramparts of Drogheda with the Battle of the Boyne visitors centre at Oldbridge. The development of this route will forge important physical and socio economic links between Drogheda and the wider Boyne Valley Region and it is anticipated that this will become an important tourist attraction in the Boyne Valley Region.

Policy

- EDE 20 To promote and facilitate the development of walkways and cycleways at appropriate locations throughout the County utilising disused transport links where feasible.***
- EDE 21 To promote and facilitate the development of cycle routes in accordance with *The National Cycle Network Scoping Study 2010*. ***
- EDE 22 To protect the integrity and scenic quality of existing and future walking and cycling routes and their setting. ***
- EDE 23 To work in conjunction with adjoining authorities including Newry, Mourne and Down, Monaghan and Meath County Councils to extend and design new walking and cycling routes, including towards Newry, Inniskeen and the eastern coastal route to Drogheda & Balbriggan as well as extending the Brú na Boinne Greenway. Ensure all proposals include appraisal of environmental impacts and take full account of the potential for negative impacts on Natura 2000 Sites through the process of Habitats Directive Assessment Screening. ***

***The above policies EDE 20-23 shall all be subject to compliance with all relevant EU policies such as the Water Framework, Habitats SEA & EIA Directives.**

See also Chapter 7- Transport

6.5.12 Events and Festivals

Events and festivals are an important means of attracting additional visitors to the County thereby increasing expenditure, reducing tourist seasonality and encouraging repeat visitation. The County presently boasts numerous events and festivals which make an important contribution to the tourism and economic development of the County.

Policy

EDE 24 To support existing, and facilitate establishment of new festivals and events throughout the County at various times of the year subject to normal planning criteria.

6.5.13 Narrow Water Bridge

The construction of a bridge between the Cooley Peninsula in County Louth and the southern section of the Mourne Mountains in County Down at Narrow Water would be a project of immense symbolic and historical significance. The primary objectives of the project are to :

- Facilitate improved cross – border access to the scenic beauty on both sides of Carlingford Lough.
- Enhance the tourist potential of the cross-border region and stimulate job creation,
- Improve the leisure potential of the region for the residents as well as tourists/ visitors,
- Promote interaction between the communities north and south of the border,
- Encourage pedestrian and cyclist activity and complement other visitor initiatives in the cross border region.

See also Chapter 7 – Transport

Policy

EDE 25 To co-operate with the relevant authorities and government agencies north and south of the Border in the provision of Narrow Water Bridge. Policy EDE 25 shall be subject to compliance with all relevant EU Policies such as the Water Framework, Habitats, SEA and EIA Directives.

6.6 Tourist Accommodation

Growth in the tourism sector will result in a corresponding need for more visitor accommodation and facilities across the County. The Council is keen to ensure that there is a range of high quality and affordable accommodation provided in order to meet the needs of visitors and tourists to the County. However, care will be needed to ensure that the unspoilt natural environment and landscapes of the County which have been identified as a major reason why tourists come to County Louth are not compromised by inappropriate tourist accommodation development.

6.6.1 Hotel, Guest House and Bed & Breakfast Accommodation

In 2013 there were 906 rooms and 2,083 beds available in the County across hotels, guesthouses and bed and breakfast (B&B's), with 87% of the identified rooms and beds provided for by hotel developments.

It should be noted that a substantial proportion of the accommodation stock in Louth is concentrated in the Cooley Peninsula area. A review of the location of hotels across the County reveals that 65% of the capacity is located in Dundalk and a further 10% is found in the towns of Omeath and Carlingford.

The business conference sector is a highly competitive market. Given Louth's strategic location along the Belfast to Dublin economic corridor and its easy access to public transport in addition to national and international port and airports, there is a significant potential for growth in this domain.

Custom built guest houses should be located within existing towns and villages to avail of and support existing services. Bed & breakfast accommodation is normally provided within existing dwellings and can be accommodated in both urban and rural areas.

Low cost, high quality guest houses and bed and breakfast accommodation are an important component in the range of accommodation choice required for a vibrant tourism industry.

Policy

EDE 26 To direct tourism-based development including Hotels, Guesthouses and B&B's to Level 1, 2 and 3 Settlements where there is adequate infrastructure to service the development, except where the proposal involves the re-use or diversification of an existing building, subject to normal planning criteria.

See also Chapter 3 – Rural Development and Natural Resources.

6.6.2 Self-Catering Accommodation

Self-catering accommodation is defined as '*purpose built self-contained residential units, which provide accommodation on a short term basis for visitors to the area*'.

In order to manage the provision of tourist accommodation in a manner that meets the needs of the tourist while at the same time supporting the local economy, it is considered important that the provision of self catering accommodation should be provided within the network of existing

settlements and be of a scale that the settlement can sustain. Therefore the Council will resist proposals for the development of self-catering accommodation in the countryside, except where existing buildings of character are to be converted or where the restoration of vernacular dwellings is proposed.

See also Chapter 3 – Rural Development and Natural Resources.

Policy

EDE 27 To facilitate the limited provision of self-catering accommodation in locations within existing towns and villages, of a scale that the settlement can sustain.

EDE 28 To prohibit proposals for the development of self catering accommodation in the countryside except where existing buildings of character are to be converted or where the restoration of vernacular dwellings is proposed.

6.6.3 Caravan and Camping Sites

The provision of caravan and camping sites is an important element in the accommodation of holiday-makers. There are presently 3 static caravan parks and 1 touring caravan park in County Louth. The provision of additional caravan and camping sites could potentially attract more tourists to the County and generate additional income. Notwithstanding this, caravan and camping sites along with their ancillary buildings can be very obtrusive features in the landscape detracting from its overall scenic quality and amenity.

In order to protect the visual amenity of the countryside new caravan parks and camp sites should be located within existing settlements. Such developments will generally not be permitted in the open countryside, especially adjacent to the coastline, the shoreline of an inland water body or a river. In exceptional circumstances, caravan parks or campsites maybe permitted were the proposal:

- Involves the re- development of a previous worked site,
- Is within a forest or woodland,
- Is within a demesne setting.

In all cases the proposal should be suitably screened, have an adequate road network to serve the development, in addition to adequate foul drainage.

See also Chapter 8 – Environment

Policy

- EDE 29 To encourage new caravan parks and camping sites to locate within existing settlements which are appropriately screened and which are served by an adequate and acceptable road network and foul drainage. In exceptional circumstances caravan and camping sites may be permitted in previous worked sites, forest or woodland or demesne setting.**
- EDE 30 To facilitate the upgrade of existing caravan parks and camping sites in approved locations.**

6.6.4 Budget Hostels

Hostel accommodation catering primarily for those travelling on a limited budget, occupies an important niche within the tourist accommodation market. Whilst the individual spend on this type of accommodation is by definition low, the ancillary spend by such tourists in the locality can be considerable.

Policy

- EDE 31 To facilitate the provision of budget hostels within existing Level 1, 2 and 3 Settlements ensuring high quality design and architecture, provision of adequate infrastructure, compliance with normal planning criteria and subject to the protection of the unspoilt natural environment and landscape amenity.**

6.7 Retail

The importance of retailing as the primary role of town centres for commercial and retail activity is recognised. The retail policies outlined in the Plan aim to preserve and enhance the viability and vitality of the town and village centres whilst recognising the need to provide for new retail formats to meet consumer demands. The town and village centres also act as a focus for a variety of other activities including business, social, leisure and residential uses.

The economic importance of retail in County Louth is evident from the proportion of the total labour force employed in retail. The 2011 Census shows that some 18.13% of those residing in County Louth are employed in the wholesale and retail trade.

The onset of the recession has led to a stagnation of physical development in the retail sector in the County reflected in the existence of extant permissions which have not or have only partially been realised coupled with vacancy rates within the town centres. Recent trends in retailing have seen the linking of retail and leisure facilities, higher floor plates and extended opening hours. The Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 aims to improve the vitality and viability of town

and village centres by retailing the primacy of town centres for new retail development ensuring the provision of supporting retail services and facilities.

6.7.1 Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012

The *Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)* in 2012 issued the *Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012*, (under the provisions of Section 28 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)* which require local authorities to prepare retail strategies and policies for their areas which are to be incorporated into their respective development plans. These replace the previous *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2000* (which were subsequently revised in 2005).

The Five Key Policy objectives contained within the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012* are to:

- Ensure retail development is plan led and follows the settlement hierarchy,
- Promote town centre vitality through a sequential approach to development,
- Secure competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling good quality development proposals to come forward in suitable locations,
- Facilitate a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking in accordance with the Smarter Travel Strategy
- Deliver quality urban design (Retail Design Manual)

In order to comply with the *Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012*, Louth County Council has prepared The Louth Retail Strategy 2014 (Appendix 12, Volume 2(c)). The purpose of this strategy is to implement the objectives of the Retail Planning Guidelines set out the strategic policy framework for the spatial distribution of retail floorspace within the County and inform the policies of the Development Plan. Accordingly the following was provided:

- Details of the retail settlement hierarchy within County Louth,
- Level and form of retailing activity appropriate to the components of settlement hierarchy,
- Boundaries of the core shopping areas of Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee and also location of any district centres,
- Broad assessment for the requirement of additional retail floorspace,
- Strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development,
- Identification of opportunity sites which can accommodate the needs of modern retail formats in a way that maintains the essential character of the shopping area,
- Objectives to support action initiatives in town centres,
- Identify relevant development management criteria for assessment of retail developments in accordance with these guidelines.

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The guidelines state that retail functions tend to reflect broad levels of urban development including:

- Metropolitan,
- Regional,
- Sub-Regional (including District Centres in larger urban areas), small towns and rural areas,
- Local Shopping.

The classification is indicative and below the metropolitan level, specific retail functions overlap in many respects.

The purpose of establishing a county retail hierarchy is to indicate the role and importance of each development centre and to guide retail development in accordance with the framework provided, thus enabling each centre to perform its overall function within the County's settlement hierarchy. The retail hierarchy for County Louth is illustrated in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4 Retail Hierarchy, County Louth

Level	Centre	
Level 1	Metropolitan	None
Level 2	Major town centres and county town centres	Dundalk Drogheda
Level 3	Town and/or district centres and sub county town centres	Ardee Drogheda District Centre : Mathews Lane Dundalk District Centres: Dublin Road & Ard Easmuinn
Level 4	Local centres, small town and village Neighbourhood centres	Dunleer Annagassan, Bellurgan Baltray, Castlebellingham/Kilsaran, Carlingford, Clogherhead, Collon, Dromiskin, Knockbridge, Louth Village, Omeath, Tallanstown, Termonfeckin Tullyallen Drogheda Neighbourhood Centres Dundalk Neighbourhood Centres
Level 5	Corner shops/small villages	Various

The Louth Retail Strategy in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines identify Core Shopping Areas within Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee which are primarily devoted to shopping. To retain the primacy of town centres for shopping purposes and to enhance their vitality and viability, new retail

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development should be located within or as close to these identified core retail areas where possible. Additionally, a number of opportunity sites were also identified for Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee which are considered to be suitable locations for modern retail format. This does not preclude additional sites suitable for retail development coming forward over the lifetime of the Plan.

A key requirement of the Planning Guidelines is to establish a broad assessment of the amount of additional retail floorspace required over the plan period. The indicative floorspace figures outlined in the Louth Retail Strategy are based *inter alia* on population targets, estimated expenditure, trade draw and leakage in addition to current vacancy levels. It should be noted that trade draw and leakage levels were established on the basis of the shopper and household surveys.

The estimate of future retail floorspace requirements contained within this retail strategy is intended to provide broad guidance only and should not be interpreted in an overly prescriptive manner. In this regard, the indicative floorspace potential for convenience, comparison and bulky goods is identified to 2021 and 2024. The floorspace requirement for each settlement is reflective of its status in the county retail hierarchy. In all cases the primacy of the town centres should be retained and prioritised for any new retail development.

The Retail Design Manual 2012 which accompanies the retail planning guideline's set out to provide evidence based quality principles to ensure that future planning for the retail sector is focused on the creation of vibrant, quality places.

The purpose of the policies outlined below is to support competitiveness and choice in the retail sector in conjunction with promoting the vitality and viability of County Louth's town centres and to promote the town centres as vibrant and attractive areas encouraging development in retailing and other complimentary land uses. The Council should also aim to realise the key recommendations and actions outlined in the town centre health checks over the lifetime of this Retail Strategy and beyond.

Broadly the policies included in the Louth Retail Strategy include for the following:

- To adopt a county retail hierarchy as indicated,
- Support applications for retail development which are in line with the retail hierarchy and accord with the scale and type of retailing identified for that location,
- To recognise the gateway of Dundalk as a regional shopping centre and the primary development centre of Drogheda as the principle locations for future retail development,
- Support shall be provided to planning applications which will maintain and enhance the supremacy of the core shopping areas as identified in Chapter 5 of this Retail Strategy, subject to compliance with the criteria for proper planning and sustainable development,
- To apply the sequential approach when considering any significant new retail development outside of the core retail area,
- Support shall be provided for appropriate retail developments on opportunity sites identified in Chapter 5 of the Retail Strategy, subject to compliance with the criteria for proper planning and sustainable development,
- To encourage large commercial developments to incorporate mixed uses,
- To require a high quality of design,
- To encourage the appropriate reuse/redevelopment of existing retail warehouse units within retail parks,
- To create town centres which are accessible by sustainable transport modes,

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- To ensure that a number of local centres be provided to meet the basic convenience and lower order comparison requirements of any expanding communities,
- To encourage and support the reuse and revitalisation of vacant (and derelict) shops and properties within the town and village centres,
- To promote the ***Retail Design Manual 2012***.

Policy

- EDE 32** To ensure that applications for retail development comply with the provisions of Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, Retail Design Manual 2012 and with the provisions and policies of the *Louth Retail Strategy 2014*.
- EDE 33** To promote a healthy competitive retail environment within County Louth and to maintain the vitality and viability of the town and village centres and their role as primary retail core areas.
- EDE 34** To support the development of Dundalk as a regional shopping centre and primary development centre of Drogheda as the principle locations for future retail development and to maintain the role of Ardee as a sub county retail centre and the retail function of all other settlements, commensurate with locally generated needs.
- EDE 35** To generally discourage permission for change of use from retail or service (including banks and similar institutions with over the counter services) to non-retail or non-service uses at ground floor level.
- EDE 36** To promote the provision of local retail centres serving small, localised catchment populations in new residential areas, commensurate with locally generated needs.
- EDE 37** To promote the improvement of the environment of town and village centres through good design, landscaping, street furniture, improve mobility through traffic management and co-operate with Tidy Towns Committees and other community groups in the implementation of environmental improvement schemes.
- EDE 38** To encourage and support the re-use and revitalisation of vacant (and derelict) shops and properties within town and village centres.

Note Core Retail Areas are diagrammatic at strategic level and are subject to refinement and review at respective local area plan stage.

6.7.2 Living over the Shop:

The Council will promote the provision and modernisation of residential accommodation over commercial premises in towns and villages in order to improve the vibrancy of their centres. This will be subject to the provision of good quality accommodation with separate and safe access from the street and the protection of residential amenities from any possible conflict with other uses.

Policy

EDE 39 To promote the provision and modernisation of residential accommodation over commercial premises in towns and villages in order to improve the vibrancy of their centres.

6.7.3 Shopfronts

The primary function of a shopfront is to identify a retail premises within a street using a combination of name, sign and window displays. The towns and villages of County Louth contain numerous examples of traditional shopfront design together with large numbers of more modern design, much of which reflects a certain amount of corporate harmonisation. The Council will encourage the preservation of authentic, traditional shopfronts and the provision of good quality contemporary designs.

6.7.4 Shopfront Design:

Shopfront design will be guided by the following principles:

Shopfront in Context: A shopfront is an integral part of the building to which it relates. The architectural context must be the starting point for the design of a shopfront, its relationship with the building overhead and to the adjoining buildings. Compatibility with individual buildings and with the streetscape will be considered more important than external uniformity between branches of one company.

Relationship to the Building Overhead: The design of the new shopfront should relate to the architecture of the building to which it forms part. It should relate to the upper floors in proportion, scale and alignment.

Relationship to Adjoining Buildings: New shopfront design must respect the scale and proportions of the streetscape by maintaining the existing grain of development along the street and respecting the appropriate plot width. Elevational modelling and vertical division or features should break up long horizontal facades.

Essential Elements: It is important to create a good visual frame for shopfronts. The frame will generally be formed by the cornice, pilasters, fascia, stall riser, windows and doors and should be treated as one coherent unit.

Policy

- EDE 40** To encourage the preservation of authentic, traditional shopfronts and good quality contemporary designs.

6.7.5 Shopfronts on Protected Structures and in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's)

The presence of well crafted and historic shopfronts is an important part of the character of some protected structures and ACA's and specific guidance in relation to these is contained in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2011 (DOAHG)*.

Policy

- EDE 41** To have regard to the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2011 (DAHLG)* when assessing applications for shop fronts on protected structures or in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's).

Whilst the Council recognises the need for sufficient security for commercial premises, the installation of security shutters can detract from the appearance, visual amenity and safety of town and village centres, particularly at night and weekends. The Council will discourage the mounting or location of rollers on the exterior of shop premises where such shutters would detract from the streetscape and ambience of the town. However, innovative solutions involving traditional wrought iron window guards or shutters which provide a high degree of transparency will be considered.

Policy

- EDE 42** To discourage the mounting or location of rollers on the exterior of shop premises where such shutters would detract from the streetscape and ambience of the town or village.
- EDE 43** To consider innovative solutions including traditional wrought iron window guards or security shutters which provide a high degree of transparency.

6.7.6 Canopies and Blinds

Blinds were traditionally incorporated into the shopfront fascia and designed to be retracted into it when not in use. This is still the best way to deal with a blind where one is required. Curved and dutch style canopies are unsympathetic to the traditional streetscape and will be discouraged.

Policy

EDE 44 To encourage the incorporation of blinds, where required, into the shopfront fascia so that they are capable of being retracted when not in use. Curved and Dutch canopies will be discouraged.

6.7.7 Architectural Conservation Areas and Protected Structures

Many of the towns and villages within the County have designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's) and a number of protected structures. Any proposed developments within an ACA or involving modifications to a protected structure shall comply with the requirements as set out in Chapter 5 of the Plan.

See also Chapter 5 Heritage

6.7.8 Height

The height of proposed buildings should respect the height of adjoining structures on either side. Normally buildings in excess of four storeys in height will be discouraged except at key locations or landmark sites where taller buildings may be acceptable or unless otherwise provided for in a local area plan. The height of new buildings should not detract from views of existing protected structures and landmark buildings.

6.7.9 Overshadowing and Overlooking

Where three or four storey buildings are proposed adjoining lower buildings, the Council may require that the developer submit daylight and shadow projection diagrams and demonstrate that the adjoining properties will not be unduly affected by the proposed development.

6.8 Signage

It is acknowledged that advertisements can contribute to the creation of a vibrant and competitive economy. Whilst the Council seeks to promote employment and support economic development, care must be exercised with regard to the visual impact of outdoor advertising upon the appearance of the building, structure, neighbourhood where it is displayed, or its impact over long distance views. In all cases, Louth County Council shall strive to obtain a high quality, attractive environment within its towns, villages and in the countryside.

6.8.1 Criteria for Assessing all Signage

When assessing all planning applications for signage the following criteria shall be considered:

1. The rationale for the proposed advertising structure will generally be resisted unless located on the same site or in close proximity to a particular commercial activity.
2. The effect the advertisement will have on the general characteristics of the area, including the presence of any features of historic, archaeological, architectural, landscape, cultural or other special interest. Large scale commercial advertisement structures are not acceptable on or near protected structures, within Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's), in parks, in residential areas or in areas of high amenity including along waterways and the coast and where it is considered that it would detract from the visual amenity of the area.
3. The size, scale, impact and siting of signage relative to the buildings and streets in which it is to be located. Signs should not interfere with windows or other façade features at any level.
4. The design and materials of the advertisement, or the structure containing the advertisement, and its impact on the appearance of the building on which it is to be attached, the site and adjoining buildings.
5. The concentration of existing advertising structures in the area and cumulative effect of the proposal and whether the proposal will result in visual clutter.
6. If illuminated the impact on the amenities of adjoining properties including its size, scale and levels of illumination and the potential for light pollution.
7. Signage will not be permitted where it interferes with the safety of pedestrians, the accessibility of the public footpath or roadway, the safety and free flow of traffic or if it obscures road signs. In general, advertisement structures will not be permitted at roundabouts, at traffic signalised junctions, at locations where they obstruct sight lines, compete with other traffic signs, give rise to confusion for road users or endanger traffic safety.

Subject to the criteria outlined above the planning authority shall look favourably upon applications for signage which rationalise the number of signs on a building or in an area and remove those which are redundant or excessive

6.8.2 Development Management Guidance for Signage

6.8.2.1 Signage in the Countryside

There is a need to protect the unique qualities of the countryside and protect it from the negative effects of advertising. The only advertisements which shall be acceptable in the countryside are those proposed on site and which relate to existing or approved commercial enterprises. These should be small in scale and not detract from the quality and character of the local landscape

6.8.2.2 Advertising Hoardings, Bill Boards, Tri-Vision and Three-Dimensional Signs

Advertising hoardings, bill boards, tri-vision and three-dimensional signs, if inappropriately located can be obtrusive and detract from the visual amenities of an area. Such advertisements will generally be resisted unless they are replacing an authorised sign or are utilised to screen a building site. In the event that planning permission is approved, it may be granted on a temporary basis.

6.8.2.3 Tourism Related Signage

The provision of directional and promotional signage is important in facilitating tourists and enhancing the overall experience and enjoyment of the visit. The provision of finger posts and other directional signs is a function of the local authority.

In addition to the road signs provided by the Council, **Section 254 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)**, makes provision, under licence from the planning authority, for additional road signage to facilitate existing significant activities, including tourist related attractions and amenities. Such signage should be suitably designed and appropriately located so as not to detract from the visual amenities of the area.

The Council will favourably consider the granting of licences for Fáilte Ireland approved finger post signage subject to the criteria outlined above.

6.8.2.4 Industrial/ Commercial Park Signage

The provision of signage at an industrial/ commercial park is essential to provide details regarding the nature and location of the units located therein. To avoid visual clutter only one such sign incorporating a number of uniform individual advertisements should be permitted at the entrance to the development.

6.8.2.5 Illuminated Signage

Illuminated signage in appropriate locations can provide both information and colour in the townscape after dark and such signage will be determined by consideration of the status of the building, its design, setting and location as well as, the requirement for low energy options.

- It should be sympathetic to the building on which it is to be displayed and not obscure architectural features such as cornices or window openings,
- Illuminated signage will not be permitted where they adversely impact upon an ACA or a protected structure,
- Sky signs, i.e. signs that project in any part above the level of a building parapet or obtrude on the skyline, are regarded as objectionable in principle and will not be permitted,
- Internally illuminated scrolling signs, or signs with exposed neon tubing are generally not acceptable in ACA's,
- Illuminated signs with the use of electronic visual display technology such as LED (Light Emitting Diode) and LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) will not be permitted. In certain circumstances where a community public realm project is proposed LED/LCD signage may be considered. Where such signage is deemed appropriate, suitable locations shall be determined under the local area plan process.

6.8.2.6 Fascia Signs

Fascia signs are an important means of identifying a business and indicating the type of business and service provided therein. As such they are a traditional feature of the streetscape in towns and villages throughout the County. If appropriately located and designed fascia signs can enhance the character of the building on which they are located and the townscape as a whole.

- Fascia signs should be of an appropriate size, and sited and designed to harmonise with the shop front, the façade of the building and any detailing thereon,

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- Where there is an original fascia, the sign should make use of this with generally no advertising at sub-fascia level or on pilasters or columns,
- Where a new commercial building is proposed, the location of fascia signage should be integrated into the overall design,
- On older and more traditionally styled buildings, painted signs or non-illuminated letters are preferable to panels or other types of display,
- The depth of fascia should be in scale with the overall façade of the building,
- Internal illumination should preferably be in the form of individually backlit letters
- Where external illumination is proposed, trough lighting is preferred. The trough should extend over the whole fascia and be painted to integrate it into the whole display.

6.8.2.7 Projecting Signs

- Projecting signs should be sympathetic to the design of the building where they are to be displayed and respect fascia signage,
- To reduce visual clutter, a projecting sign will generally only be acceptable where there is no other projecting advertisement including a canopy, awning, flag or horizontal banner, Internal illumination should preferably be in the form of individually backlit letters,
- Where external illumination is proposed trough lighting is preferred with the trough painted out,
- Illuminated projecting signs are generally unacceptable immediately adjacent to a neighbouring residential property, protected structure or an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA),
- There shall only be one projecting sign per building.

6.8.2.8 Sandwich Board Signs

- The majority of sandwich board advertisement structures are located within the town centre/retail core area and this area also coincides with the area of greatest heritage value in terms of concentration of protected structures and designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's),
- To ensure that the number, location and design of sandwich board advertisement structures do not undermine the heritage value of designated ACAs or protected structures,
- To generally confine the dimensions of conventional sandwich boards type advertisement structures to 600mm wide and 900mm in height. Flexibility may be given for more irregular forms, where the overall design is visually acceptable,
- To require the design, colour scheme and finishes to advertisement structures within designated ACA and/or adjoining protected structures are of high quality design and avoid the use of garish colours,
- To require the design, colours and finishes of advertisement structures throughout the Council area to be of high quality design,
- To require that advertisement structures are not permanently fixed to the street/pavement or building and are removed from the public space/street when the premises is not in use, i.e. outside operational hours,
- To require that the advertising structure does not interfere with or prejudice public safety including pedestrian traffic.

Policy

- EDE 45** To ensure that all signage development complies with the relevant assessment criteria and guidance as set out under Section 6.8 above unless otherwise provided for in a local area plan.
- EDE 46** To work with the NRA to provide additional directional signage including tourist locations, throughout the County, in accordance with NRA guidance document *Policy on the Provision of Tourist & Leisure Signage on National Roads*.

Note:

Under the Roads Act 2015, from the 1st August 2015 both the National Roads Authority (NRA) and the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA), the former by renaming and the latter by dissolution, effectively merged as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). As all documents referenced in the Plan in relation to the National Roads Authority (NRA) precede this date they will remain referenced as NRA documents.

Chapter 7

Transport

7.1 Introduction

A modern, sustainable, safe transportation system is essential for the health of the economy, environment and society. Such a system actively contributes to social inclusion and quality of life. County Louth is fortunate in having a broad range of well developed transport facilities, based on a hierarchy of motorway (M1) national, regional and local roads and a network of local, regional and national bus routes in addition to a main line rail service providing both commuter and intercity services.

The availability of a range of transport options has dramatically improved during the course of the 2009 – 2015 County Development Plan with sustainable transport modes increasingly being promoted in the form of improved public transport services, improved cycling and walking facilities and infrastructure aimed at supporting the use of electric vehicles. The aim of this is to effect an increased modal shift away from the dominance of the private car as the main mode of transport in the County. However, private road transport is likely to remain dominant for the foreseeable future. Over dependency on the car as the primary means of personal transportation is unsustainable in the long term, having regard to the finite nature of fossil fuel resources and their impact in contributing to global warming. This Plan will therefore seek to promote alternative sustainable modes of transport.

There is an intrinsic link between land use and transportation and therefore the settlement strategy and policies contained in the Plan seek to locate the majority of new development within existing towns and other settlements, where car dependency can be reduced and public transport can more economically and sustainably be provided. The adoption of the Core Strategies for Dundalk, Drogheda and the remainder of the County, seek to proactively address the links between land use planning and transportation by directing new development into more compact urban forms that reduce the need for travel. The strategies were also influenced by the availability of public transport.

The aim of this chapter is to present a coherent set of policies which will seek to improve the transportation system within the County in a manner that is sustainable and supports economic development and improved quality of life for the people of the County.

7.2 National Transportation Policy

7.2.1 Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS)

Funding for new transport schemes comes from the **Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS)**. Infrastructure is funded through the 'Capital Investment 2012-16: Medium Term Exchequer Framework' and via a number of agencies including the National Transport Authority (NTA), the National Roads Authority (NRA) and the public transport operator.

7.2.2 A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020

In February 2009 the government published the document, '**A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 -2020**'. This concluded that transport and travel trends in Ireland are unsustainable. Even with the much needed investment delivered, if we continue with present policies, congestion will worsen, transport emissions will continue to increase, economic competitiveness will suffer and quality of life will decline. The policy document outlines a suite of actions that will have complementary impacts in terms of travel demand and emissions. These are grouped into the following overarching actions:

- Reducing distances travelled by the private car and encouraging smarter travel, including focusing population growth in areas of employment and encouraging people to live in close proximity to places of employment and the use of pricing mechanisms or fiscal measures to encourage behavioural change,
- Ensuring that alternatives to the car are more widely available, mainly through a radically improved public transport service, development of national electric infrastructure and through investment in cycling and walking,
- Improving the fuel efficiency of motorised transport through improved fleet structure, energy efficient driving and alternative technologies,
- Strengthening institutional arrangements to deliver the targets.

It is important to understand that the targets and actions proposed are relevant to both urban and rural living. The government is committed to the implementation of this strategy including improved bus services in rural areas and other such actions to promote modal shift.

7.2.3 National Transport Authority (NTA)

Over the period of the previous plan there has been a steep change in the organisation of transport in the State, particularly in the area of public transport. In late 2009 the National Transport Authority (NTA) was established. It has as its remit responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger land transport services. This includes the provision of subvented bus and rail services by Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus / Bus Átha Cliath and Irish Rail / Iarnród Éireann. The Authority also plays a direct role in taxi and bus licensing and in securing the integration of all public transport modes. The Authority is a prescribed body for the purposes of preparing a development plan. The NTA is responsible for public transport investment in the Greater Dublin Area, additionally the NTA also administers two grant programmes on behalf of the **Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport**, these being the Regional Cities Public Transport Programme and the Accessibility Programme. In relation to Louth the NTA has been responsible for achieving a significant improvement in bus services. This has included increased frequency and integration of services with links provided to adjacent counties. For example, Ardee is now serviced by 25 buses per day from Drogheda alone with many of these services continuing to Monaghan. The revised services have also been routed through key attractors such as Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda.

7.2.4 Transport 21

Prior to the establishment of the NTA, government transport policy was based upon the Transport 21 Project which committed € 34.4 billion to major infrastructural and investment projects nationwide. Whilst the programme was planned to operate during the period 2006-2015, the onset of the recession in 2008 resulted in the re-evaluation of its ambitious targets.

Nevertheless the programme delivered a new national motorway network including the remainder of the M1 through County Louth. It also funded upgrades and expansions to the rail network including an entirely new intercity train fleet, some of which were earmarked specifically for long distance commuter services such as Dublin to Dundalk. Large investments were also made to the national bus network in the form of new vehicles, stations and services. Whilst Transport 21 has now largely been superseded, the legacy of the investments made have had a lasting impact on the state in general. This funding has impacted on County Louth by providing new buses and increased frequency on routes which were formerly infrequently served. The regularity impact of the NTA has led to further service enhancements across the County over recent years.

7.2.5 Smarter Travel

An integral element of the new direction in transport has been the launch of the Smarter Travel Programme operated by the **Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, (DTTS)** Sustainable Transport Division. The Sustainable Transport Division promotes the use and development of sustainable means of transport – walking, cycling and public transport and directly supports the development of sustainable travel modes working in conjunction with local authorities and government agencies for example, the NRA, the NTA and other non-statutory stakeholders. In Louth, Smarter Travel has delivered substantial funding for the Dundalk Town Council, Walking and Cycling to Schools Project from 2009 for three years whilst in Drogheda and Ardee, successful detailed studies were completed in 2012 on the opportunities for increasing walking and cycling.

7.2.6 National Cycle Policy Framework 2009

The DTTS produced the National Cycle Policy Framework 2009 which provides a series of overarching objectives and policies relating to the promotion of cycling over the coming years. The key aim of the framework is to promote a strong culture of cycling to the extent that 10% of all trips will be undertaken by utilising bikes by 2020.

7.2.7 National Roads Authority, Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012

In 2012, the **DECLG** in conjunction with the National Roads Authority (NRA) produced detailed guidelines which set out planning policy considerations relating to development affecting motorways, national primary roads and national secondary roads. The emphasis throughout the guidelines is to maintain the efficiency, capacity and safety of the national road network which has received significant investment over recent years. The NRA has overall responsibility for the planning, supervision of construction, road network management and maintenance on national roads. Key principles of the guidelines include the following;

- Integration of spatial planning with transportation is key to reducing the need for travel and encouraging the use of more sustainable travel modes,
- From a road safety perspective, planning authorities, the National Roads Authority, road authorities and the Road Safety Authority must guard against a proliferation of roadside developments accessing national roads,
- Planning authorities must assess the trip generation aspects of any land use zoning objectives and how such trip generation is to be catered for

- Development management is the key to plan implementation.

The Council has had regard to the NRA objectives in formulating policy in the Plan.

Note:

Under the Roads Act 2015, from the 1st August 2015 both the National Roads Authority (NRA) and the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA), the former by renaming and the latter by dissolution, effectively merged as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). As all documents referenced in the Plan in relation to the National Roads Authority (NRA) precede this date they will remain referenced as NRA documents.

7.2.8 Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS) / Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)

All proposals for development in urban areas including villages will be subject to the provisions contained within this document. This new approach to the design of roads and streets in urban areas represents a fundamental change in the approach to be taken in respect of urban road space. In future, the emphasis will be on urban roads as active places which will be attractive to all users and not just primarily as transportation corridors for the near exclusive use of private cars. This represents a steep change in road design. Streets are to be designed as integrated, pleasant environments where the needs of the pedestrian and cyclist have an equal status to the car driver.

Policy

- TC 1 To fully capitalise on the transportation advantages which County Louth possesses through pursuing an integrated transport approach to development which facilitates access to a range of transport modes and provides genuine transport choice.**
- TC 2 To support the implementation of government transport policy as expressed in Transport 21, A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 -2020, Spatial Planning and National Roads–Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, National Cycle Policy Framework 2009, Traffic Transport Assessment Guidelines 2014, Smarter Travel and other relevant policy documents which may evolve during the course of the Plan.**
- TC 3 To promote land use planning measures which aim for co-ordination and integration between land use and transport throughout the County, thereby maximising the potential of the County’s transportation network and encouraging travel by public transport, walking and cycling.**

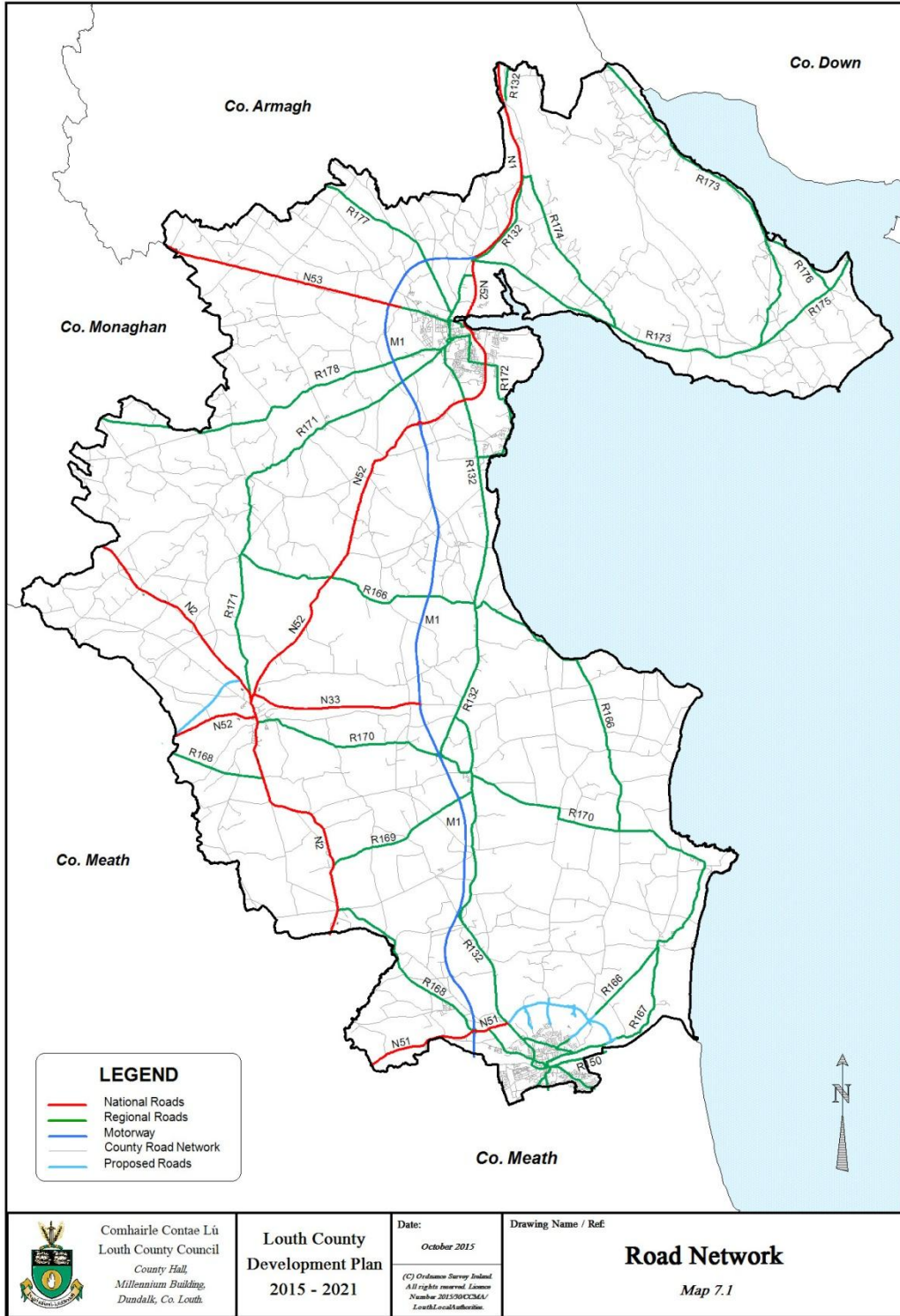
- TC 4 To encourage the provision of modes of transport which are accessible to all, including people with impaired mobility by reason of disability, age or care roles.**
- TC 5 To promote, in collaboration with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS) and other relevant agencies and organisations, the expansion of the network of walking and cycling routes throughout the County.**
- TC 6 To adhere to the principles contained within the guidance document, *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013)* Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS)/ Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG).**

7.3 Road Infrastructure

Similar to the remainder of the Country, road transport remains the dominant mode of transport within County Louth playing a crucial role in contributing to business and industrial competitiveness. The County is fortunate in having an excellent road network comprising motorway, national primary and secondary routes, strategic regional roads and a dense network of local roads. Significant expenditure on road infrastructure has taken place in recent years and this is reflected in the excellent quality of the County's roads. The County's road network is illustrated on Map 7.1.

Chapter 7
Transport

Map 7.1: Road Network



7.3.1 Motorways

Louth is strategically located at an approximate midway point on the EO1 Euro Route. (M1 Motorway) This links the port of Larne in Northern Ireland with Rosslare in County Wexford. The section of the EO1 through County Louth, which encompasses the M1 motorway and the Dundalk to Newry Link Road (N1 / A1), carries in excess of 11,000 average daily vehicular journeys. (NRA 2014)

7.3.2 Motorway Services

The County has a total of two online motorway service areas located at Whiterath, Dromiskin where there is a single service area on the northbound carriageway and a corresponding service area on the southbound carriageway. The service areas provide a range of facilities for both private and commercial traffic including, shops, food outlets, toilets and shower facilities, childrens' play areas as well as refuelling facilities The provision of motorway services is essential for the convenience and safety of the travelling public. The policy applicable to the plan period for online Motorway Services is contained within the NRA publication, NRA Service Area Policy 2014. The provision of off-line motorway services shall be guided by Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines 2012.

7.3.3 National Routes

Louth has benefited from very significant investment which has taken place in Ireland's national road network. The NRA strongly advocates that the strategic role of this road network in catering for the safe and efficient movement of major inter urban and inter regional traffic be safeguarded to allow for the effective delivery of these investments. Table 7.1 outlines the national routes that run through County Louth.

Table 7.1 National Routes in County Louth

National Primary	National Secondary
N2 Dublin – Derry	N51 Drogheda – Slane
N1/A1 Dundalk – Northern Ireland Border	N52 Dundalk - Kells
N33 Charleville Interchange (M1-Junction 14) - Ardee	N53 Dundalk - Castleblayney

The Council will continue to implement measures to safeguard the capacity and safety of these national routes so that they can continue to perform their strategic role and maintain their importance to the future development of the County.

7.3.4 Regional and Local Roads

Regional and local roads form the life lines of transportation needs across the County. It is via these roads that the vast majority of smaller towns, villages and dispersed rural communities and services are accessed.

Under the 'Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-16: Medium Term Exchequer Framework' a total of € 2,931 million is to be spent on national, regional and local roads, principally to maintain the investment made in the existing network over previous years. During the previous

plan period, the most notable road projects completed in the County have been the N51 and N53 regional road improvement schemes and the R178 Red Bog project.

Policy

TC 7 To provide and maintain a road hierarchy based on motorway, national routes, regional routes and local roads and to maintain the carrying capacity and lifespan of the road network and ensure high standards of safety for road users and to require that all proposals for development that would be likely to impact significantly on the carrying capacity of national routes be accompanied by traffic transport assessment, road safety impact assessment, road safety audits and mobility management plans, in accordance with the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines 2012* and/or the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013)*

TC 8 Development proposals of a residential or other nature within 100 metres of either the M1 motorway or the N1/A1 national route will be restricted in all but exceptional circumstances*. Any development assessed under this policy will be subject to the provisions of Policy ENV6 and ENV7 of this Plan, the *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012* and the costs of implementing any mitigation measures concerned should be borne by the developer.

*Only where the proposed development is infill development and is located within an established building line.

TC 9 To prohibit any external lighting or illumination and any advertisement signs that would distract or interfere with the free flow of traffic, using the road network.

7.3.5 Protected National and Regional Routes

The Council considers it necessary to restrict new accesses and the intensification of existing accesses along national and certain protected regional routes in order to preserve their carrying capacity, their life span and in the interest of traffic safety. Details of these roads including restrictions and exemptions are set out in Table 7.2 (National Routes) and Table 7.3 (Regional Routes).

Table 7.2: National Routes - Restrictions and Exemptions on Access

Road Category	Restrictions	Exemptions
Motorways	No direct access	None
Dual carriageways	No direct access	None
Single Carriageways (National Primary and National Secondary Routes)	No new access or intensification of existing access	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where the new access would eliminate a traffic hazard. 2. Where a new access is required for any major employment generating activity, including tourism or development of national or regional importance. 3. Extensions to an authorised use where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard. 4. Where a new access is to a fixed natural resource of national or regional importance where no other suitable vehicular access can be provided.

Table 7.3
Protected Regional Routes - Restrictions and Exemptions on Access

Routes	Restrictions	Exemptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 173/R175 Dundalk -Greenore • R173/R176 Greenore – Carlingford – Omeath (Cornamucklagh) • R178-Dundalk – Carrickmacross (Essexford) • R171 Dundalk – Louth Village • R169 Dunleer – Collon • R168 Drogheda – Collon • R166 Drogheda – Termonfeckin • R132 Dundalk – Drogheda • R132 Dundalk – Feede • R132 Carrickarnon - Border • R177 Dundalk - Armagh • Port Access Northern Cross Road* 	<p>No new access or intensification of existing access.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where the new access would eliminate a traffic hazard. 2. Where a new access is required for any major development, including tourism developments, of national, regional or local importance where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard 3. Where new access is to a fixed natural resource of national, regional or local importance where no other suitable vehicular access can be provided. 4. Extensions to an authorised use where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard 5. Dwellings required to satisfy the housing needs of persons who have lived for not less than 10 years in the area, where no other site is available off a minor road, and where the existing entrance servicing the family home is used. Where the entrance to the existing family home cannot be used, consideration will be given for one new entrance only onto the adjoining protected regional route. A condition confining occupancy to a family member for a minimum of 7 years will be attached to any permission granted under this exemption.

**Sections of this road may be constructed during the period of this plan subject to funding availability*

Policy

TC 10 To prohibit the creation of new accesses or intensification of existing accesses onto National Routes and Protected Regional Routes as set out in Tables 7.2 and 7.3.

TC 11 To prohibit the proliferation of non road traffic signage on or adjacent to National Roads as per the *DECLG Spatial Planning & National Roads Guidelines 2012*.

7.3.6 Entrances

The provision of suitable and safe entrances is essential to facilitate traffic flow and movement and to protect the safety of road users. Visibility standards in respect of new entrances and existing entrances where there is an intensification of use, onto all categories of roads and vehicle dwell areas are set out in Table 7.4 and 7.5. Visibility splays are included at junctions to provide sight lines along the intersected street / road to ensure that drivers have sufficient reaction time should a vehicle enter their path. Visibility splays are applied to priority junctions where drivers must use their own judgement as to when it is safe to enter the junction. Junction visibility splays are composed of two elements; the X distance and the Y distance. In all urban roads and streets (that is streets and roads with speed limits of 60kph or less) the **Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)** shall be applied.

Table 7.4 Minimum Visibility Standards

Road Category	Sight distance (Y)	Visibility requirement over ground	Distance back from edge of Carriageway (X) (1 to 6 houses)	Distance back from edge of Carriageway (X) (More than 6 houses and non-domestic developments)
National and Protected Regional Routes	215m	0.6 -1.05m	3.0m*	4.5m**
Regional	125m	0.6 -1.05m	3.0m*	4.5m**
Local Class 1	75m	0.6-1.05m	3.0m*	4.5m**
Local Class 2	75m	0.6-1.05m	3.0m*	4.5m**
Local Class 3	75m	0.6-1.05m	3.0m*	4.5m**
Cul de Sac	75m	0.6-1.05m	3.0m*	4.5m**

* In difficult circumstances a relaxation of 2.4m may be permitted.

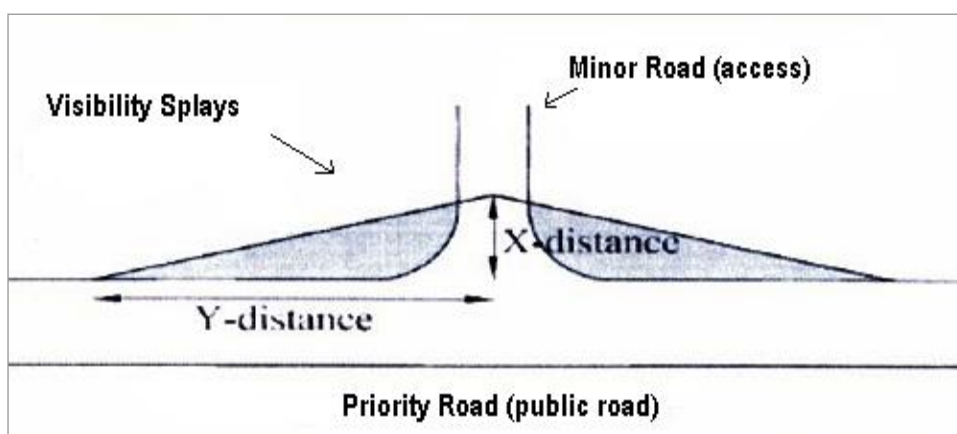
** In difficult circumstance a relaxation of 3.0m may be permitted.

*Note: Where the 85% percentile speed on a local class 2 or a local class 3 rural road is shown to be below 50 kilometres per hour, the minimum sight distance requirements contained in the document **National Roads Authority –Design Manual for Roads and Bridges**, shall apply.*

Table 7.5 Vehicle Dwell areas

Domestic accesses	Commercial accesses
Gradient 0% to 2% for at least 5 metres	Gradient 0% to 2% for at least 15 metres

Figure 7.1 Junction Visibility Splays



Policy

TC 12 To apply the visibility standards and vehicle dwell area requirements as set out in Tables 7.4 and 7.5 in accordance with the *National Roads Authority Design Manual for Roads & Bridges (DMRB)* for the national road network and to ensure that the standards set out in the *Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets (DMURS)* apply to all urban roads & streets.

7.3.7 Existing Entrances to Replacement Dwellings

Proposed replacement dwellings normally use the existing in situ vehicular entrance to the development. However, in some instances the existing entrance is sited at a location which is unsuitable for the needs of modern traffic, eg on a sharp bend in the carriageway. There will not be a presumption that such entrances can be utilised to service the proposed replacement dwelling where traffic safety is likely to be placed at risk. In this regard see Chapter 4 policies on replacement dwellings.

See also Chapter 2 – Settlement Strategy and Core Strategy

7.3.8 NRA TD 300 - Rural Cycle Scheme Design, April 2014 (and any subsequent amendments)

In relation to provision for cyclists and pedestrians along single carriageway national routes, this interim document sets out the current NRA policy and design considerations for this type of non-motorised user of national routes. It will be used as directed by the NRA for the design of new or improved cyclist and pedestrian facilities on Type 2 and Type 3 single carriageways, National Roads in rural areas. The design considerations from the advice note have already been incorporated into a number of road improvement schemes across the State and will be a consideration in any road improvement schemes within County Louth, over the course of the Plan. The NRA will, during the course of the Plan develop additional policy on catering for non motorised road users along national routes including pedestrians and cyclists.

7.3.9 Vehicular Parking Standards

The parking standards required by the Council in respect of specified uses are set out in Table 7.6 below. In the case of any uses not specified, the standard for the closest similar use will apply, or such other requirement as may be determined by the Council.

7.3.9.1 Car Parking Requirements

The provision of car parking facilities in accordance with the appropriate standards is a requirement for all development taking place within the plan area. However the Council recognises that there can also be a conflict between the provision of car parking and urban design considerations and therefore the Plan makes provision for the application of variable parking standards at identified locations within the Plan area and for a variety of uses as highlighted in Table 7.6.

Area 1

Sites located within Town and Settlement Centres.

Area 2

Lands located adjacent to high level public transport services or lands serving local catchment area.

Area 3

All Other Areas.

Table 7.6 Car Parking Requirements

Land-use	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Dwellings	1 per dwelling	1 per dwelling	2 per dwelling
Apartments	1 per dwelling	1 per dwelling	2 per dwelling
Residential Institutions	1 per 3 units	1 per 2 units	1 per 2 units
Retail	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 20 m ²	1 per 10 m ²
Bar /Discos/Dancehalls	1 per 20 m ²	1 per 10 m ² public space	1 per 5 m ² public space
Restaurant/Function Room	1 per 20 m ²	1 per 10 m ² public space	1 per 5 m ² public space
Hotel/Guest House	1 per 2 bedrooms	1 per 2 bedrooms	1 per bedroom
Offices/ enterprise	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 20 m ²	1 per 20 m ²
Banks /Financial Inst.	1 per 30 m ²	1 per 20 m ²	1 per 20 m ²
Industrial	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 50 m ²
Warehousing	1 per 100 m ²	1 per 100 m ²	1 per 100 m ²
Retail warehousing**	1 per 40 m ²	1 per 40 m ²	1 per 40 m ²
Cash & Carry	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 25 m ²
Showrooms	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 25 m ²
Creches	1 per 6 children	1 per 6 children	1 per 6 children
Cinemas/Theatres	1 per 20 seats	1 per 20 seats	1 per 5 seats
Conference Halls/churches/ community	1 per 20 seats	1 per 20 seats	1 per 5 seats
Schools	1 per classroom	1 per classroom	1 per classroom
Clinics/Doctor's Surgery	2 spaces per consulting room	2 spaces per consulting room	3 spaces per consulting room
Leisure Centres/ Clubs	1 per 100 m ² Public space	1 per 100 m ² Public space	1 per 30 m ² Public space
Nursing Homes	1 per employee & 0.5 per bed	1 per employee & 0.5 per bed	1 per employee & 0.5 per bed

Additional uses not mentioned above will be linked to the nearest appropriate use detailed in the Table or on a case-by-case basis.

7.3.9.2 Shared Use Car Parking

Many categories of development have the potential for shared use car parking due primarily to differential time demands. There are various degrees of shared parking. Efficient sharing of spaces can allow parking requirements to be reduced significantly.

Parking bays shall be a minimum of 5m x 2.5m with circulation aisles at least 6m wide. Parking bays for people with impaired mobility shall be provided at the ratio of 10% of the total car

spaces. Design standards of parking bays for people with impaired mobility shall be in accordance with the **Traffic Signs Manual 2010** (or any subsequent revision).

In addition to the car parking standards, sufficient space will be required for all service vehicles involved in the operation of the business or building within the curtilage.

7.3.9.3 Cycle Parking

Secure cycle parking facilities should be provided in new developments including residential, retail, office and employment generating uses and elsewhere as considered necessary by Louth County Council. The quantity of bicycle stands required will be one third of the number of car parking spaces required to serve the development and subject to a minimum of 1 stand. Cycle parking standards shall be conveniently located to the structure served, secure, easy to use, adequately lit and signposted. Weather protected facilities should be considered where appropriate and particularly where associated with long term parking (over 3 hours). Bicycle parking stands should be placed where there is supervision either passive or otherwise. Louth County Council will support and encourage the provision of shower facilities within employment/enterprise developments, to facilitate cyclists.

Policy

- TC 13** The policy of the planning authority will be to avoid the creation of additional access points from new development or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses to national roads and protected regional roads to which speed limits greater than 60km/h apply. This provision will apply to all categories of development, including individual houses in all control zones within the Plan area.
- TC 14** To require that new and retrofitted cycle infrastructure is designed in line with the recommended approach in the NTA's National Cycle Manual. Funding for retrofitted infrastructure where appropriate, shall be investigated in consultation with the NTA.
- TC 15** In those settlements which incorporate sections of national roads or protected regional roads that are subject to a speed limit of 60 km/h before a lower 50 km/h limit is encountered a limited level of direct access to facilitate orderly urban development may be permitted. Any such proposal must, however, be subject to a road safety audit carried out in accordance with NRA requirements and a proliferation of such entrances, which would lead to a diminution in the role of such zones, must be avoided.

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| TC 16 | To require compliance with the parking standards as specified in Table 7.6 unless otherwise provided for in any local area plan. |
| TC 17 | To require the provision of car parking spaces for persons with impaired mobility at 10 % of the total car spaces and in accordance with Section 7.3.9.2. |
| TC 18 | To consider a reduction of the above standards in respect of proposed developments which the Council considers to be of such a quality and value as to contribute significantly to the spatial, economic and social wellbeing of the settlement in question. Where a reduction in car parking standards is accepted, a contribution in lieu of the provision of car parking will normally be required. |
| TC 19 | Shared use car parking (non residential) will be considered on a case by case basis particularly in town centres. |

7.3.10 Roads Improvement Programme 2015 -2021

The Council's **Road Improvement Programme** covers the period 2015 to 2021. This programme, which is set out in Tables 7.7, 7.8, and 7.9 will be implemented by the Council and the NRA over the period of the Plan. Where the proposed road works are of such a scale and magnitude that warrants the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), planning approval will be required from An Bord Pleanála. Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening and, if necessary an Appropriate Assessment Stage Two exercise will also be required for any such schemes.

Table 7.7 Motorways and National Routes

Road Number	Location and Proposed Works
N2	Ardee By-Pass
N2	Ashbourne to Ardee By-Pass
N51	General Improvements
N52	Ardee By-Pass
N52	General Improvements
N53	General Improvements

Table 7.8 Strategic New Roads

Location and Proposed Works
Port Access Northern Cross Route, Drogheda
Narrow Water Bridge, Cornamucklagh, Omeath
East West Link, R 178, General Improvements
Western Infrastructure Route, Dundalk
Marlbog Road link to Old Golf Links Road, Blackrock, Dundalk environs.
Bridge at Greenhills linking the southern environs of Drogheda (Meath Portion) with the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) East of railway viaduct, Drogheda
Bridge Crossing and upgrades of Marley's Lane (southside) and Cement Road (northside) west of Bridge of Peace, Drogheda
Bridge Crossing, east of South Quay (southside) to east of Merchants Quay (northside), Drogheda

Proposed new roads included in Table 7.8 shall be subject to compliance with all relevant EU policies such as the Water Framework, Habitats, SEA and EIA Directives.

Table 7.9 Proposed Capital Works Programmes

Road	Proposed Works
R165	General Improvements
R168	General Improvements
R169	General Improvements
R 171	General Improvements
R 172	General Improvements
R173	General Improvements
R177	General Improvements
R 178	General Improvements
St Laurence's Gate, Drogheda	Environmental Improvement Works
Rathmullan Road /Bridge of Peace	Junction Upgrade
Newtown Road, Drogheda	Upgrading

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St Dominic's Bridge, Drogheda	Refurbishment
Crushrod Avenue, Drogheda	Full Reconstruction
Windmill Road, Drogheda	Upgrading and Resurfacing
Matthews Lane Industrial Estate Road, Drogheda	Upgrading
Leonard's Cross / Collon Road, Drogheda	New Junction
Palace Street Reconstruction, Drogheda	Reconstruction
Smarter Travel Projects, Dundalk	Refurbishment
Hill Street Junction, Dundalk	New Junction
Carrick Road / McEntee Avenue, Dundalk	Refurbishment
Great Eastern Greenway, Cooley Peninsula	Extensions to Existing Greenway

Policy

TC 20 To secure the implementation of the Council's Road Improvement Programme 2015 – 2021 as detailed in Tables 7.7, 7.8, and 7.9 in consultation and agreement with the Department of Transport and National Roads Authority subject to available funding and to keep free from development all lands identified for the construction and improvement of national, regional and local roads within the County. All proposed transport routes will be required to comply with the Habitats, EIA and SEA Directives.

7.3.11 East-West Link

There has been a long term plan to improve the road infrastructure across the central border area through a series of upgrades to both the national and regional roads involved. In its entirety this project is known as the East - West Link (Dundalk to Sligo via Cavan). The route will link Dundalk to Cavan via Cootehill, Shercock and Carrickmacross. Improvements are proposed to some 60km of the total route length. The route has been brought to preliminary design stage by the lead authority for the project, Cavan County Council.

Policy

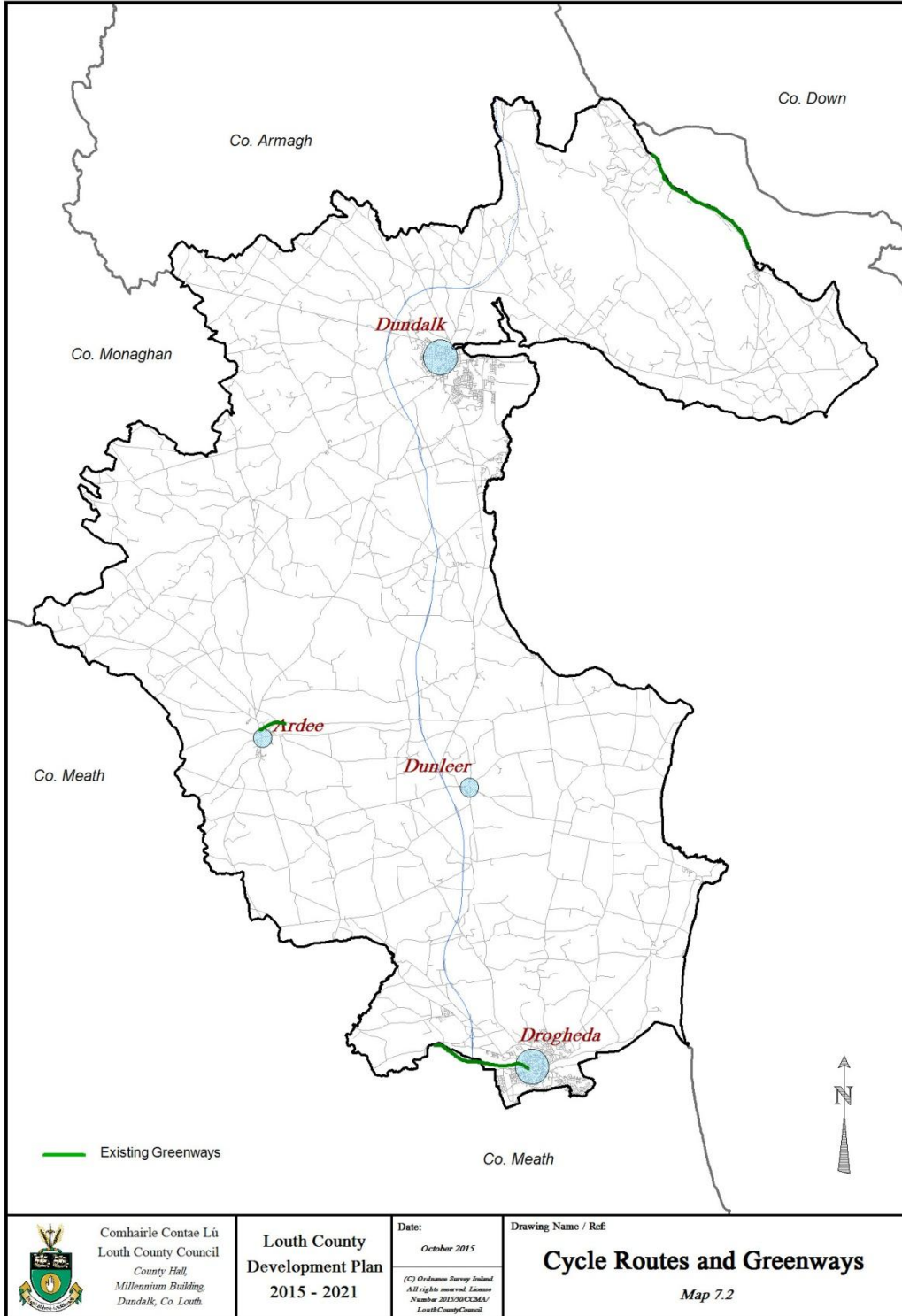
TC 21 To seek to progress construction of the Dundalk to Cavan section of the East – West Link Road over the Plan period in partnership with Cavan County Council, Monaghan County Council and the National Roads Authority subject to funding.

7.4 Cycling and Walking

The Smarter Travel Programme operated by the **Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's, (DTTS)** (Sustainable Transport Division) has been outlined in section 7.2.5 Smarter Travel. In County Louth during the course of the 2009-2015 Development Plan, this programme has supported the development of an extensive walking and cycling network in Dundalk together with the construction of a rural cycling and walking Greenway skirting Carlingford Lough. The Division has also funded detailed walking and cycling strategies for Drogheda and Ardee. Over the course of the 2015-2021 Plan, the Council will complete the Greenway and seek further funding towards developing a wider urban and rural network of cycle infrastructure, including the development of the National Cycle Network which is proposed to pass through the County in the form of Corridor 5, Dundalk to Wexford. Good quality and safe cycling and walking facilities and their use, particularly in urban areas, can make a valuable contribution to the reduction in traffic congestion and the encouragement of significant modal shift away from dependency on the use of the private motor car. Existing Greenways are illustrated on Map 7.2.

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Map 7.2: Cycle Routes & Greenways



7.4.1 The Great Eastern Greenway

The Council will, over the course of the Plan seek to capitalise on the success of the greenway linking Carlingford to Omeath by pursuing construction of further sections of greenway both to the north and south of the existing facility. Ultimately it is the aim of the Council to have a continuous, off road, segregated greenway linking Dundalk with Newry, County Down via Carlingford, utilising the former rail line where possible.

Policy

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| TC 22 | To provide where possible, traffic free pedestrian and cyclist routes especially where they would facilitate more direct, safer and pleasant alternative routes to those of the private car. |
| TC 23 | To incorporate, where feasible, provision for cycle and pedestrian paths within new road proposals and improvement schemes. |
| TC 24 | To promote the development of cycling by the provision of cycle routes in both rural and urban areas. |
| TC 25 | To investigate the possibility of developing additional linear cycle routes utilizing existing natural or manmade corridors such as riversides and abandoned road and rail infrastructure. |
| TC 26 | To encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities in towns, villages and at public facilities such as schools, libraries and in all new developments. |
| TC 27 | To continue to engage with and pursue funding opportunities offered through the National Cycle Network scheme, the Active Travel Towns Scheme or other similar funding streams that may become available over the course of the plan. |
| TC 28 | To plan and develop a Louth Coastal Walk from the northern to the southern county boundary taking full account of the need to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the coast and the need to avoid significant negative impacts on Natura 2000 Sites through the process of Habitats Directive Assessment Screening. |

7.5 Public Rights of Way

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) requires development plans to include an objective for the preservation of public rights of way providing access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility by the identification on maps and by listing of such public rights of way. Public rights of way enable enjoyment of the County's high quality landscape and are important for tourism development and recreation and the enjoyment of the County's cultural heritage.

Policy

TC 29 To identify and preserve existing accesses and public rights of way to recreational areas including the coast, mountains, riverbanks, and other places of natural beauty and recreational utility and to commence the process of mapping and listing public rights of way in the County during the lifetime of this development plan under the provisions of Section 14 of the *Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)*.

7.6 Green Schools Programme

The Green-Schools Programme is operated and co-ordinated by the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce in partnership with Local Authorities throughout the country and national departments. Schools across County Louth at all levels are enthusiastic participants in The Green Schools Travel Programme. Participating schools set their own travel targets, with the ultimate aim of increasing the number of pupils walking, cycling, park 'n' stride, carpooling or using public transport. The aims of the programme are to increase physical activity levels and develop road sense in children as well as reducing congestion and vehicle emissions.

Policy

TC 30 To support the Green Schools Programme across the County through the provision of dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure in close proximity to schools, subject to the availability of funding.

7.7 Electric Vehicles

ESB ecars was established in 2010 to roll out the charging infrastructure for electric vehicles and vehicles across Ireland and to support the introduction and demand for electric vehicles nationally. Ireland is regarded as the perfect environment in which to implement a large scale electric vehicle programme due primarily to;

- Size of the small island nation,
- High levels of wind power and mild climate,
- Government financial and policy support,
- Single service provider/unified distribution network,
- High level of home ownership.

The relatively small size of Ireland makes it an ideal location for the electric vehicles programme, with no excessively long distances between urban centres. Fast charge points are currently being installed on inter-urban routes at 60km intervals in designated locations. Ireland is somewhat unique in having one service provider operating a unified distribution network across the country which streamlines the efficiencies in infrastructural rollout and adoption.

Policy

TC 31 To support and facilitate, where appropriate, the network of electric vehicle supporting infrastructure across County Louth in accordance with national policy on the promotion of electric vehicles requiring that EV ducting for 10% of all car parking spaces is provided for in all car parks.

7.8 Public Transport

Public transport in County Louth is provided by way of bus, rail and rural transport services together with taxi and hackney services. Public transport is at its most effective when operating in corridors where there is a medium or high density of population. In County Louth, there are good quality public transport services between Dundalk and Drogheda. Public transport routes throughout the County are illustrated on Map 7.3.

Through the local area plans process, the Council will seek to promote the enhancement of public transport services and infrastructure, in the main towns, villages and rural areas. Gaps and inadequacies in public transport services are notable in many parts of the County, especially in dispersed rural areas. This affects primarily older people, the young, people with limited mobility and those on low incomes.

Policy

TC 32 To co-operate with the relevant transport authorities and operators, both public and private, to secure improvements in and expansion of public transport in the County.

TC 33 To encourage a modal shift from use of the private car towards more sustainable modes such as public transport, cycling and walking.

7.8.1 Rail Transportation

The Dublin to Belfast rail line crosses the County on a north-south axis. There are two operating railway stations at Dundalk and Drogheda respectively. Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways jointly operate the cross border 'Enterprise' rail service providing rail services eight times daily between Dublin and Belfast. The year 2014 saw some € 15 million allocated from EU funding for a major upgrade to the service involving refurbishment of the existing rolling stock including new interiors, better access, a new booking system and track enhancements north of the Border. The aim of the upgrade is to extend the life of the service until approximately 2024. Ultimately, it is the intention that the service will be operated on an hourly basis during the course of this Plan. Both Dundalk and Drogheda are also linked to greater Dublin and beyond by Iarnród Éireann's long distance commuter services. Drogheda in particular benefits from a very high frequency service to Dublin and the town itself is the site of one of the two national centres for servicing trains.

Over the course of the plan County Louth will benefit substantially from a number of planned capital programmes proposed by Iarnród Éireann. These include resignalling projects around Greater Dublin, a DART link to Dublin Airport and the Dublin Inter-connector which will re-route DART services underground, thereby allowing more frequent commuter rail services from Louth. It remains the policy of the Council to secure, in co-operation with Iarnród Éireann, improved rail services in County Louth, particularly for the mid and south Louth areas.

7.8.2 Rail Based Park and Ride Facilities

Park and ride facilities operate at both Dundalk and Drogheda rail stations. These facilities are well utilized, particularly in Drogheda. Additional rail based park and ride capacity may be required at both these stations and this issue will be addressed through their respective local area plans.

Policy

TC 34 To secure, in co-operation with Iarnród Éireann, improved rail services in County Louth, particularly for the mid and south Louth areas.

TC 35 To support the improvement of rail based park and ride facilities as required in Dundalk and Drogheda and in conjunction with any existing/new railway station located in the county.

7.8.3 Bus Transportation

Bus Éireann provides the mainstay of public bus services within County Louth. The County is well connected with the Greater Dublin area by frequent express coaches and stopping services with Drogheda and Dundalk particularly well served. The County is also linked to Newry in Northern Ireland by local services which provide onward connections to long distance services northwards. A variety of other long distance services also operate from Dundalk and Drogheda albeit on a less frequent basis. Frequent express bus services are also provided to Greater Dublin by private operators. Ardee has numerous public and private express bus services passing through it en route to Dublin. Most of these services originate in the Monaghan, Donegal and Derry City areas. Rural and commuter services have also seen some enhancement and this trend is moving apace with the input of the National Transport Authority. This has been most notable in services passing through Drogheda where long distance services have seen improved frequencies and have been routed to serve major destinations e.g. Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda.

A number of private operators also run scheduled bus services in County Louth. Both Dundalk and Drogheda are linked to Greater Dublin by a private operator and the west of the County is particularly well served by a multiplicity of private scheduled services providing links with Greater Dublin and Counties Monaghan and Donegal. In addition a comprehensive private bus network serves Dundalk and its environs together with cross border services.

7.8.4 Bus Based Park and Ride Facilities

There is potential for the development of a network of bus based park and ride facilities in the County at transport intersections. Any proposal for a bus based park and ride site would be subject to a rigorous traffic and demand analysis.

7.8.5 Car Park and Share Facilities

In common with bus based park and ride facilities, there may be opportunities for car park and share facilities within the County which can be utilised by commuters who car share. This practice reduces the number of vehicles utilising the road network and as such is beneficial in terms of reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy

- TC 36** To work in consultation and co-operation with the National Transport Authority (NTA) other public bodies, agencies and community groups, to secure improvements in public transportation and associated infrastructure including bus shelters within the County and greater integration of existing and any new services.
- TC 37** To encourage the provision of enhanced public transport services and infrastructure both within and between the main towns of the County.
- TC 38** To ensure that bus routes and adequate services are provided within all new proposals for substantial residential developments.
- TC 39** To seek to provide for bus and car based park and ride facilities at a range of locations including motorway interchanges, subject to the availability of funding.

7.8.6 Rural Transport Programme (RTP)

The Rural Transport Programme (RTP) was launched in 2007 and is managed by the National Roads Authority (NRA). The aim of the Programme is “to provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs”.

In 2010 the local authority commissioned a transport audit and mapping study entitled ‘Review of Passenger Transport Services in County Louth.’ The study concentrated on the rural transport services funded under the rural transport programme and operated in the County by the Louthlinx community based rural transport programme. The service currently operates 22 rural transport routes providing tailored links for isolated rural dwellers with nearby larger towns containing retailing, community services including medical and social services.

7.8.7 Strengthening the Connections in Rural Ireland, Plans for Restructuring the Rural Transport Programme 2013 (National Transport Authority)

In 2013, the National Transport Authority published ‘Strengthening the Connections in Rural Ireland, Plans for Restructuring the Rural Transport Programme’ Under this plan, the existing 33 Rural Transport Groups would be rationalised into 18 Transport Co-ordination Units (TCU’s) which will be brought under the remit of local authorities. County Louth is to be grouped with County Meath and North Fingal.

The lack of public transport represents a serious issue for many people living in rural areas of County Louth and in particular older people, people with disabilities, young people and people on low incomes. The main types of journey for which provision is required include work, shopping, education and health journeys.

Policy

TC 40 To support the Transport Co-ordination Units planned to operate improved public transport in the rural areas of the County.

7.9 Ports

7.9.1 National Ports Policy 2013 (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport) DTTS

The National Ports Policy 2013 prepared by *the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS)* provides a strategic reform policy and roadmap for the development of Irish ports over the long term and is of relevance to County Louth containing as it does the three commercial ports of Drogheda, Greenore and Dundalk; one major fishing port in Clogherhead and a number of smaller ports and harbours, many of which are in the direct ownership of Louth County Council. Policy contained within this document aims to increase the contribution of the marine sector to the overall economy and therein places a clear emphasis on the relationship between spatial planning and ports. The policy notes that port companies should engage with the relevant planning authorities to ensure that any port masterplans and relevant planning and development strategies are complementary and consistent as there is considerable economic potential afforded ports due to their natural, as well as commercial nature.

7.9.2 County Louth Ports

The commercial ports of County Louth have been classified as Ports of Regional Significance under the National Ports Policy 2013. Drogheda is one of five Ports of Regional Significance which are state owned and the Policy notes that Drogheda Port Company retains an important role in regional freight distribution and has in the past provided a competitive alternative to facilities in Dublin Port. The Policy states that the smaller regional ports including Drogheda are best placed under the local government structure. Thus it can be envisaged that over the course of the plan, Drogheda Port will be placed under the control of Louth County Council or the Regional Authority.

Drogheda is the largest of the three commercial ports, Greenore is second in this hierarchy and is privately owned. The company has ambitious plans for future development including roll-on, roll-off facilities. In July 2011 Dundalk Port Company which handles a relatively small marine tonnage was dissolved and its functions transferred to Dublin Port Company. The M1 motorway provides excellent road linkages from the County's commercial ports to the rest of the Country and ultimately to the wider markets of the UK, Europe and beyond.

Clogherhead is a fishing port owned by Louth County Council. Whilst the port is relatively small in national terms it nevertheless lands a large percentage of shellfish relative to its size.

Policy	
TC 41	To support the development and expansion of the ports of Drogheda, Greenore, Dundalk and Clogherhead subject to the preparation of a masterplan and compliance with all relevant EU policies such as Water Framework, Habitats, SEA and EIA Directives.
TC 42	To implement the recommendations contained within the National Ports Policy 2013 as they relate to the ports of County Louth.
TC 43	To support the development of smaller ports and harbours many of which are in the direct ownership of Louth County Council, through the implementation of capital and maintenance dredging programmes, subject to compliance with EU Habitats Directive.
TC 44	Louth County Council will explore the potential development of Dundalk Port as a centre for future recreation and leisure use. Any proposals shall be subject to compliance with all relevant EU policies such as Water Framework, Habitats, SEA and EIA Directives.

7.10 Airports

Although there are no airports located within County Louth, it does enjoy the benefit of rapid access to both Dublin and the two Belfast airports. This provides international linkages and significant economic development opportunities, particularly with regard to the attraction of foreign direct investment and visitors to the County.

Chapter 8

Environment

8.1 Introduction

The Council is aware of the need to preserve, enhance and protect the quality of the environment whilst facilitating and encouraging development. A good quality environment is not only of intrinsic value in itself but is also extremely important for economic development and quality of life. Water resources in particular are extremely important but have often been neglected in the past in the name of economic progress and advancement. This has also been the case in relation to air quality. The protection of the water and air quality of County Louth is therefore of great concern to the Council.

This chapter outlines the policies of the Council in relation to the protection and management of these essential resources, including measures existing and proposed, to protect the environment of the County for the benefit of existing and future generations.

8.2 European, National and Regional Policy

The environmental policies contained in this Plan have been devised having regard to the large body of European and national legislation, directives and regulations.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the local authorities are the bodies charged with the responsibility for overseeing environmental protection in the State.

'Ireland's Environment – An Assessment' 2012 is the fifth state of the environment report produced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) It focuses on key trends, challenges and actions for climate change, air, water, waste, nature, land and soil. The overall conclusion of the report is that Ireland's environment remains in a good condition, although there are a number of key challenges arising over coming years including the years covered by this Plan. These challenges include;

- Valuing and protecting our natural environment,
- Building a resource-efficient low-carbon economy,
- Putting the environment at the centre of our decision making,
- Implementing environmental legislation.

The Council will pursue environmental policies that will seek to safeguard the long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the County and will lead by example in compliance with EU, national and regional policies. It will also seek to ensure that the highest possible environmental standards are maintained so that a high quality environment can be bequeathed to future generations.

Policy

- ENV 1** To implement european, national and regional policy in relation to the protection of the environment and the pursuance of sustainable development principles in respect of the Council's policies and procedures.
- ENV 2** To pursue the precautionary and the polluter pays principles in relation to permitted development in the County.
- ENV 3** To promote and maintain the highest achievable standards of air, noise and water quality in the County.

8.2.1 Climate Change

Climate Change Mitigation

Climate Change Mitigation refers to efforts to reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases. Mitigation can mean using new technologies and renewable energies, making older equipment more energy efficient, or changing management practices or consumer behaviour. Efforts underway around the world range from high-tech subway systems to bicycling paths and walkways. Louth County Council implement national guidance in the form of The Core Strategy and sustainable transportation promotion, such as the direction of growth in urban areas and Level 3 Settlements. Protecting natural carbon sinks like forests and oceans, or creating new sinks are also elements of mitigation. The Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) for County Louth supports these sinks. The use of green infrastructure and its protection can help address some of the impacts associated with climate change by also integrating solutions for flooding. National guidance has been transposed into this strategy to provide a stronger, clear process for climate change proofing a development plan.

Climate Change Adaptation

The coastline of County Louth stretches from the County Down border, through Carlingford Lough, Dundalk Bay and as far south as the Boyne Estuary at Drogheda. The coastline is an important resource to protect and is also subject to erosion from sea level rises due to climate change. Proposed coastal protection measures are to be located along the coast line at Blackrock, Salterstown, Port Beach, Baltray and Bellurgan. In addition repairs may be required at other locations as the need arises.

Climate change adaption measures are required by local authorities as part of their development plan review process. **National Climate Change Adaptation Framework – Building Resilience to Climate Change DECLG 2012**, provides guidance on development of measures along the coastline to address the impacts from climate change. Sea levels will rise and increased storm intensity and surge will affect wetlands and coastal communities. The final adopted Coastal Flood Risk Assessment (CFRAM) currently being drafted by the OPW will provide an evidence based requirement for climate change adaptation methods.

Policy	
ENV 4	To support the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework 2012 through implementation of the supporting objectives included in the development plan.
ENV 5	To promote the future development of County Louth in such a manner as to support climate change mitigation measures through the implementation of infrastructure to designated settlements.

8.3 Environmental Noise

Environmental noise refers to noise emitted by means of road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic and noise in urban agglomerations over a specified size. It is regulated under the **Environmental Noise Directive (END)** which was transposed into Irish law by the **Environmental Noise Regulations 2006**. The aim of the Directive is to provide for a common EU approach to the avoidance, prevention and reduction of the harmful effects of exposure to environmental noise.

8.3.1 Noise Action Plan 2013 - 2018

In the case of County Louth, only one noise source is applicable for the second round of action plans, i.e. that from major roads with traffic in excess of three million movements per year. A Noise Action Plan 2013-2018, which is based on the results of noise maps formulated by the National Roads Authority (NRA) in 2012, was prepared by Louth County Council for the entire County. Contained therein is a rolling programme of works designed to implement the Noise Action Plan and to be delivered on an annual basis, subject to the availability of funding. The Noise Action Plan is designed with the twin aims of avoiding significant adverse health impacts from noise and preserving environmental noise quality where good. The roads affected are listed in Table 8.1 below :

Table 8.1 Noise Action Plan, Roads Affected, County Louth

Road	Description
R-173	Ballymascanlon roundabout Dundalk east to junction with R174
R-132	Bridge Street, Linen Hall Street, Clanbasil Street, Crowe Street, Francis Street, Park Street, Dublin Street , Old Dublin Road (R 132) until Green Gates Junction on Old Dublin Road Dundalk
R-88	Baymore Road, Drogheda
R-152	Platin Road, Drogheda
R-168	Mell, Trinity Street, Drogheda
R-132	Old Dublin Road from Monasterboice junction with motorway and south through Drogheda until the border with County Meath
R-934	Castletown Road, Dundalk

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R-171	Anne Street, Dundalk
R-950	Junction between Clanbrassil Street-Bridge Street-Linenhall Street Dundalk
R-172	Jocelyn Street to Seatown Place and Avenue Road, Dundalk
R-166	Newfoundwell Road, Drogheda
R-178	Dominick Place until junction with Mount Avenue, Dundalk
M1	Motorway through County Louth from Border with Northern Ireland to border with County Meath
N51	Slane Road from Roundabout on M1 Motorway until border with County Meath border
N53	Castleblaney Road from Roundabout on M1 motorway to County Armagh border
N2	Monaghan border going south through Ardee and Collon.
N52	Ballymascanlon roundabout through R132 to the roundabout on M1 junction, Dundalk

Policy

ENV 6 To implement the Louth County Council Noise Action Plan 2013-2018 in order to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to environmental noise exposure.

ENV 7 To require that where new development is proposed within the limits of the noise maps for the designated sections of roads in the County, appropriate mitigation measures are undertaken so as to prevent harmful effects from environmental noise.

8.3.2 Light Pollution

The limitation of light pollution is important in the interests of nature conservation, residential amenity and energy efficiency. While adequate lighting is essential for a safe and secure environment, light spillage from excessive or poorly designed lighting is increasingly recognized as a potential nuisance for surrounding properties, can pose a traffic hazard, a threat to wildlife and reduce the visibility of the night sky. Lighting columns and other fixtures can have a significant effect on the appearance of buildings and the environment and where proposals for new lighting require planning permission, the planning authority will ensure that they are carefully and sensitively designed and so avoid creating glare or emitting light above a horizontal plane

Policy

- ENV 8** To ensure that all external lighting whether free standing or attached to a building shall be designed and constructed so as not to cause excessive light spillage, glare, or dazzle motorists, and thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties, traffic and wildlife.
- ENV 9** Details of on site lighting associated with all future development shall be submitted to and agreed with the planning authority

8.4 Water Quality

The long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of County Louth requires water quality to be of the highest possible standard. This includes surface water, ground water, estuarine and coastal waters all of which are vital to life and must therefore be managed wisely.

The quality of water in County Louth is monitored on a regular basis against a list of quality measurement criteria to ensure water quality is maintained. This includes;

- Carrying out farm surveys,
- Licensing and monitoring of trade effluent discharges to sewers in conjunction with Irish Water (IW) and licensing and monitoring of effluent discharges under **Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 as amended,**
- Assessment of proposed developments in order to ensure that surface and ground water quality is maintained,
- Domestic waste water treatment system inspections,
- Operational monitoring of rivers,
- Bathing water monitoring,
- Investigation of complaints,
- River catchment surveys.

Increased awareness through educational and other means is essential for informing the public of the need and importance of maintaining the highest possible water quality standards.

8.4.1 Bathing Waters

Each year local authorities are required to identify bathing waters within their area for the upcoming bathing season. Identified bathing waters are sea, river or lake surface waters which local authorities consider to be widely used by the public for bathing. Identified bathing waters are monitored, assessed and managed under the requirements of the **Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008**

The National Bathing Water Information Website identifies bathing waters around Ireland. County Louth has four bathing water areas along the coast and each of these has been classified as good status by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These are as identified below:

- Shellinghill/ Templeton,
- Port, Lurganboy,
- Clogherhead,
- Seapoint, Termofeckin.

Policy

ENV 10 To protect the good status classification of identified bathing water areas within County Louth.

8.4.2 The Water Framework Directive 2000

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000 aims to improve the quality of our water environment and covers the following waterbodies;

- All surface waters (lakes, rivers, canals, reservoirs),
- Groundwater,
- Estuarine waters (or transitional waters),
- Coastal waters (up to 12 nautical miles from shore).

The Directive is concerned with all waters and their uses and brings all water related matters under one framework, including those dealing with bathing water, drinking water wells and supplies, water taken from rivers, sewage disposal and the protection of salmon and shellfish habitats. The Directive requires an integrated approach to managing water quality on a river basin basis, with the aim of maintaining and improving water quality. They aim for significant improvements in water quality but recognise that in some cases soils and waters will take time to recover even where measures to address pollution have been put in place. The river basin plans are supplemented by Water Management Unit Action Plans which provide more detail on measures at a sub river basin level. All wildlife and habitats associated with the water environment must also be protected through extensive monitoring and investigation which involves the input of other state agencies. As part of the implementation of this directive compliance with existing EU directives is a legal obligation. Measures are set out in the plans to improve the status of water bodies at less than good status and to prevent any deterioration in the existing status of our waters. Existing good and high status sites must be maintained and protected. There are a series of objectives in the Plan whereby various catchments must achieve good status by 2015. An extension until 2021 and 2027 applies to various other catchments.

The directive is implemented on the basis of a series of River Basin District Management Plans (RBDMP). The current plans cover the period 2009-2014 and summarise the waterbodies that may fail to meet the environmental objectives of the **Water Framework Directive (WFD)** by 2015. They also identify those pressures which contribute to the environmental objectives not being achieved.

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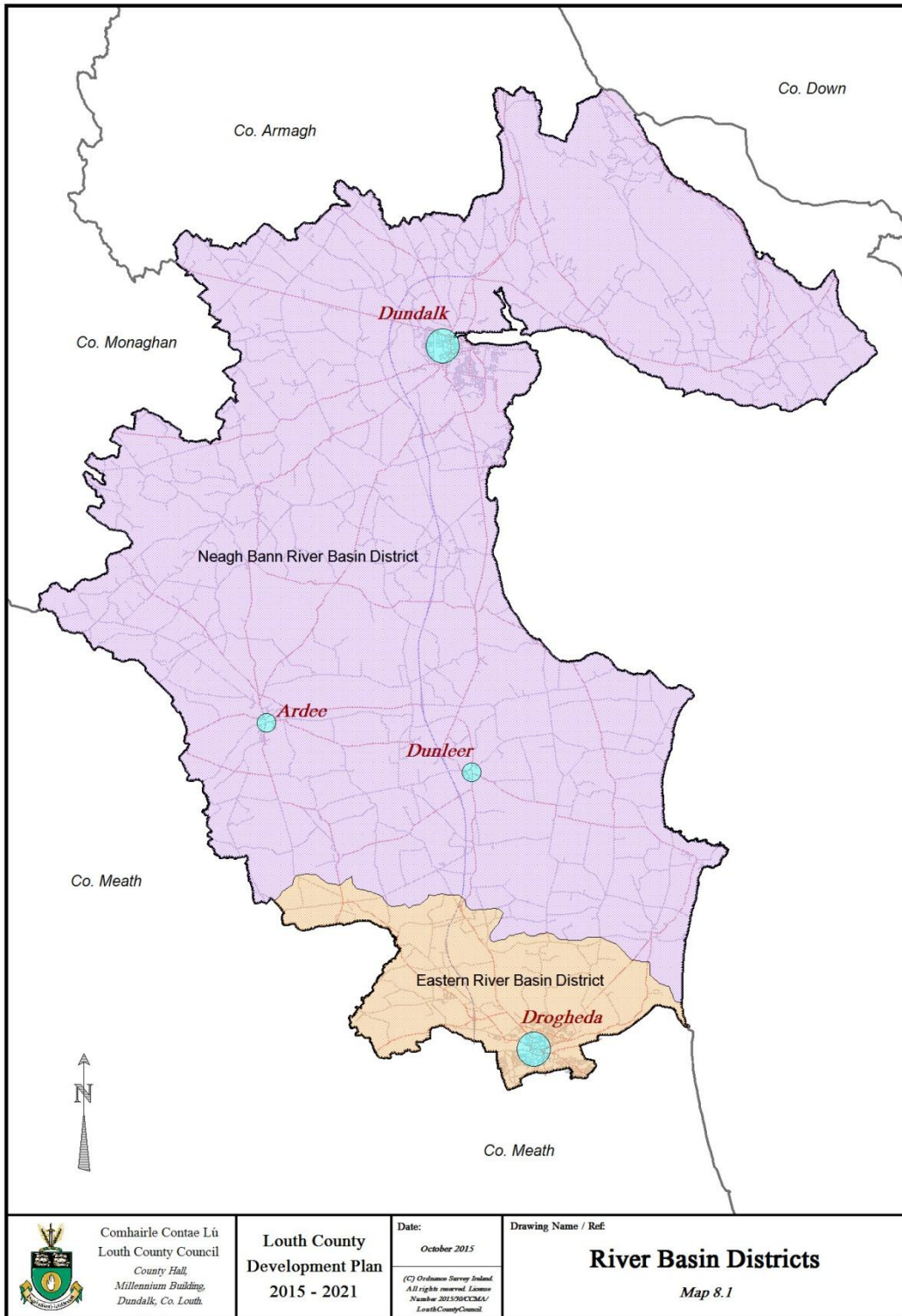
There are a total of 8 such plans covering the entire Country. Two of the abovementioned straddle County Louth which are;

- Neagh Bann River Basin District Management Plan (RBDMP),
- Eastern River Basin District Management Plan (RBDMP).

The former covers the majority of the County whilst the latter covers Drogheda and a small portion in the south of the County and is illustrated on Map 8.1.

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Map 8.1 River Basin Districts



8.4.3 River Basin District Management Plans (RBDMP)

A river basin district is the area of land from which all surface run-off flows through a sequence of streams, rivers and possibly lakes, into the sea at a single river mouth, estuary or delta. A river basin district also includes coastal and marine waters up to one nautical mile beyond the baseline from which territorial waters are measured.

The Water Framework Directive 2000 requires that River Basin District Management Plans be prepared and implemented, primarily by local authorities, for each identified river basin within the EU boundary. These set out a roadmap as to how the status of natural waters will be protected and restored where necessary. The Council has been implementing the requirements and recommendations contained within both of these plans in so far as they relate to County Louth over the course of the previous Plan. Much of the monitoring is carried out by the EPA including the coastal and estuarine monitoring. The local authority carries out operational monitoring of the river network throughout the County. Additional monitoring is conducted to improve the status of poor and moderate waters including additional sampling / monitoring, farm surveys, licensing of discharges, investigation of pollution complaints and assessment of septic tanks.

8.4.4 Water Management Unit Action Plans

Beneath the level of the River Basin District Management Plans are a series of **Water Management Unit Action Plans**. County Louth is covered by the following such plans:

- Carlingford WMU
- Castletown WMU
- Cooley Peninsula WMU
- Dee WMU
- Fane WMU
- Glyde WMU
- Mattock WMU
- Termonfeckin WMU
- Baltray WMU

These plans consist of specific actions for each of the Water Management Units such as addressing capacity issues in treatment plants or implementation of pollution reduction plans in shellfish waters. They also address issues such as status, impacts, pressures, risks, and objectives in relation to water quality.

8.4.5 River Basin Management Planning Guidance for Public Authorities (DEHLG 2008)

In 2008, the **Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)** issued the 'River Basin Management Planning – A Practical Guide for Public Authorities'. These guidelines explain the relationship that exists between the River Basin District Management Plans and other plans and programmes, including statutory development plans. It stipulates that local authority development plans will need to, both influence and be influenced by, River Basin Management Plans and that planning authorities should ensure that any relevant objectives of any water quality management plan be included in the development plan. The guidelines also highlight the need for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Plan to take into account the impact that it will have on the environmental protection objectives established for waters in the area covered by the Plan.

Monitoring of water quality in County Louth in 2013 revealed that there is still room for improvement in relation to water quality. Much of this can be attributed to a range of diffuse sources which can be extremely difficult to accurately identify. Point sources have also been identified and have been dealt with by appropriate investigation and/or enforcement action. Continued investment by Irish Water in public waste water treatment plants will also benefit the quality of surface waters, rivers and transitional water. The quality of groundwater is good, with 95% of groundwater bodies (by area) currently at good or better status.

Policy

ENV 11 To implement the recommendations contained in the River Basin District Management Plans for the Neagh Bann and the Eastern River Basin Districts, in so far as they relate to County Louth or any subsequent RBDMPs subsequently adopted during the lifetime of the Plan.

ENV 12 To increase awareness through educational and other means so as to inform the public of the need and importance of maintaining the highest possible water quality standards.

8.5 Natural Water Systems and Groundwater

Good quality groundwater is an important natural resource which has an inherent ecological and economic benefit. The quality of groundwater is continually being threatened by human activities which can cause pollution. The intensification of agriculture, particularly the spreading of animal slurry and farmyard wastes such as silage effluent and soiled water, and increases in population and septic tank effluent, have all led to an increased risk of pollution to groundwater and surface water systems, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters.

Approximately 6-8% of Louth's water supply comes from groundwater sources. The protection of this resource is imperative for the Council.

Poor agricultural management is one practice, which amongst others, can cause nutrients to be washed into ground and surface water. This results in contamination of water sources, making them unfit for human consumption and generating eutrophication, which encourages rapid algae and plant life growth, thereby depriving the water of oxygen necessary for water based life. Once contamination has occurred, it is both costly and difficult to rectify.

8.5.1 Groundwater Protection Schemes / Groundwater Monitoring

Groundwater protection schemes are county based projects that are undertaken jointly between the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) and local authorities. The aim of a groundwater protection scheme is to ensure the sustainability of groundwater reserves in addition to meeting the requirements of the **Groundwater Directives**.

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The EPA carry out ground water monitoring at 7 locations in the County. These are all private group water schemes and include the following:

- Ardtullybeg,
- Ballymakenny,
- Carlingford,
- Collon,
- Drybridge/Water Under,
- Sheepgrange,
- Tullyallen.

Groundwater source protection zones have been delineated for all borehole sources in the County

Policy

ENV 13 To implement the recommendations contained in any Groundwater Protection Scheme prepared under EU Ground Water Directives and to protect ground water resources in County Louth nutrient sensitive areas and the designated shellfish growing areas within Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay.

ENV 14 To protect fisheries in all rivers in the County, where appropriate, including relevant species as contained in Annex II of the Habitats Directive.

8.6 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

The Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) has the objective of reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources. In accordance with this Directive each Member State is obliged to put in place a Nitrates Action Programme and to review / revise their action programme at least every four years. Article 8 of the Directive obliges Member States to report every four years to the European Union on the implementation of the Directive in their country. Ireland's last Nitrates Directive Report covered the period 2008 – 2011. The report noted there was an overall improvement in nitrate concentrations across all water categories for the stations assessed due to;

- Above average rainfall,
- Reductions in organic fertiliser applications,
- Improvements in storage for organic fertilizer and the implementation of land spreading restrictions.

8.6.1 Ireland's Third Nitrates Action Programme 2014

Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) is designed to prevent pollution of surface waters and ground water from agricultural sources and to protect and improve water quality. In accordance with the **Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)**, Ireland's NAP was reviewed for a second time during 2013. This Third Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) is given effect by the **European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014**.

Protection of groundwaters from pollution by nitrates is an issue of increasing significance and the **EU Nitrates Directive** requires remedial actions in this regard. The presence of high levels of nitrates in soil is a health hazard as sources of drinking water can be contaminated. Nitrates and Phosphates can also contribute to eutrophication which is particularly harmful to surface waters, coastal and marine resources.

Policy

ENV 15 To ensure compliance with and to implement the provisions of the Nitrates Directive in so far as it falls within the remit of the Council to do so.

ENV 16 To require that collection and storage facilities for farm animal slurry are provided in accordance with the requirements of the Nitrate Directive.

8.7 On Site Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems

All wastewater, including domestic and trade, ultimately discharges to water, whether ground, surface or marine. Therefore, the provision of satisfactory waste water treatment and disposal is essential for the protection of the environment. The majority of wastewater is discharged under license from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the Council depending on the volumes involved.

All trade effluent requires an effluent discharge licence whether discharging to ground or surface waters. Domestic effluent discharging to surface waters and to ground waters (where the volume of discharge exceeds 5 cubic metres in any 24hr period) also requires a discharge licence. Domestic discharges discharging less than 5 cubic metres are exempt from a discharge licence but nevertheless must comply with the **EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems (2009)** serving single houses (population equivalent, less than or equal to 10 persons). In the case of trade discharges to a public sewer a trade discharge licence is required (in conjunction with Irish Water). Discharge licences are legislated for under Section 4 – discharges to ground waters and surface waters and Section 16 – trade discharges to the public sewer of the **Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977** as amended.

Treated wastewater discharging to ground and surface waters under licence must not result in deterioration of the status of the water body and must comply with the groundwater and surface water regulations. The treatment of wastewater can include inter alia, stages such as grease removal, pH adjustment, screening, primary settlement, aeration, secondary treatment, sand filtration and tertiary treatment to reduce nutrient levels. Prior to discharge, wetlands or willow tree

treatments may be used as further treatment polishing stage. The consideration of systems and processes including the quality of the treated waste water will be assessed during the discharge licence application process. Treatment systems are also subject to planning and will be considered on their merits.

The use of grey water collection and recovery systems may be considered subject to compliance with planning and Part H of the Irish Building Regulations. The Building Regulations recommend that only water from washing machines and baths is used for this purpose and not from kitchen sinks and dishwashers. **The Building Regulations** refer to the reuse of water from recommended sources for use in toilet flushing systems. Under no circumstances can grey water be reused in areas such as gardening. All treatment systems must be installed and certified by a suitably competent person with relevant standards, regulations and guidelines.

Policy

- ENV 17** To require that all permitted development taking place within an area served by a public wastewater treatment system connects to that system.
- ENV 18** To require that on lands identified for non-domestic development and where no public waste water facility exists or is proposed, that the wastewater be adequately treated and discharged to suitable receiving water, subject to a discharge licence.
- ENV 19** To require that private wastewater treatment systems for individual houses, where permitted, comply with the recommendations contained within the *EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems (2009) Serving Single Houses* (population equivalent less than or equal to 10).
- ENV 20** To implement the requirements of the Groundwater Protection Scheme to protect known and potential ground water reserves.

8.7.1 Design and Installation of On Site Wastewater Treatment Systems

The proper supervision, installation and commissioning of on site wastewater treatment systems by competent persons is regarded as most important in ensuring protection of surface and ground waters.

The Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012 has introduced a compulsory inspection regime for all septic tanks and other domestic waste water treatment systems in the State. The key objective is to enhance and protect public health and the environment which in turn benefits rural dwellers in terms of a better quality of life and better water quality.

Policy

ENV 21 To require that proper supervision, installation and commissioning of on site wastewater treatment system by requiring site characterisation procedures and geotechnical assessments, be carried out by competent professionally indemnified and suitably qualified persons.

ENV 22 To require that the construction and installation of all wastewater treatment systems are supervised and certified by a suitably qualified competent person as fit for the intended purpose and complies with the Council's requirements.

8.8 Regional Waste Management Plans

The document 'A Resource Opportunity – Waste Management Policy in Ireland' (DECLG 2012) contains measures for the provision of effective delivery of waste management services including the reduction in the number of waste management regions from 10 to three 3. These 3 new Waste Management Planning Regions correspond with the regional structures set out in the ***Governments Action Programme for Effective Local Government – A Guide to Putting People First (2012)***. These are as outlined below:

- Connacht-Ulster (Lead Authority – Mayo),
- Eastern-Midlands (Lead Authority – Dublin City Council),
- Southern (Lead Authority – Tipperary/Limerick).

County Louth is assigned to the Eastern – Midlands Waste Management Region, with the lead authority being Dublin City Council. In accordance with **Section 22 of the Waste Management Act, 1996** and the **Waste Management (Planning) Regulations, 1997**, the lead authorities, as set out above, gave notice of the intention to commence the preparation of new regional waste management plans in 2013 with the intention that draft plans be completed in late 2014.

The statutory objective of these plans is to:

- prevent or minimise the production and harmful nature of waste,
- encourage and support the recovery of waste,
- ensure that such waste as cannot be prevented or recovered is safely disposed of,
- address the need to give effect to the polluter pays principle, in relation to waste disposal.

The Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 has been adopted.

Policy

ENV 23 To implement and support the provisions of the Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021

8.9 Environmental Hazard Zones

The European Communities (*Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances*) *Regulations 2006* transposes the *SEVESO II Directive 96/82/EC* (relating to the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances) into Irish Law.

The Directive aims to prevent major accident hazards involving dangerous substances and limit their consequences for humans and the environment. This is achieved through the following:

- The siting of new establishments,
- Modifications to existing establishments,
- Development in the vicinity of an establishment which, by virtue of its type or siting is likely to increase the risk or consequence of a major accident,
- Site-specific emergency planning by the local authority and site operator.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) provides technical advice to planning authorities and provides advice on planning applications within a certain distance of the perimeter of these sites.

The SEVESO sites in County Louth are identified in Table 8.2 below including the advised consultation distances (with the HSA) to be applied in respect of these sites.

Table 8.2 Consultation Zones

Establishment	Tier	Consultation Distance (m)
Flogas Ireland Limited, Marsh Road, Drogheda	Upper	600
Maxol Limited, Marsh Road, Drogheda	Lower	400
Cooley Distillery, Riverstown, Cooley	Lower	400

Policy

ENV 24 To comply with the SEVESO II Directive in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents.

ENV 25 To ensure that land use policies take account of the need to maintain appropriate distance between future major accident hazard establishments and residential areas, areas of substantial public use and of particular natural sensitivity or interest.

ENV 26 To have regard to the advice of the HSA when proposals for a new SEVESO site, modifications to an existing SEVESO site or when proposals for development within the consultation zone of a SEVESO site are being considered (including and as detailed in Table 8.2

8.10 Invasive Species

Invasive species are species that have been introduced (deliberately or accidentally) by humans and have a negative impact on the natural environment and economy. After habitat loss, invasive species are the second biggest threat to biodiversity worldwide. Whilst there are a long list of freshwater, marine and terrestrial invasive species now present in Ireland, some plant species in particular pose a serious threat to the built environment. An example of this is the Japanese Knotweed which has the ability to grow through concrete and tarmac. In addition to this, some invasive species can pose additional threats.

Policy

ENV 27 Development sites must be investigated for the presence of invasive alien species, which if present must be treated and/or eradicated in accordance with best practice.

8.11 Derelict Sites

Under the *Derelict Sites Act 1990* and the *Litter Pollution Act 1997 (as amended)* the Planning Authority can require improvement of neglected lands including removal of vehicle parts and general refuse, and the renewal of structures. The Council will continue to be proactive in this respect.

8.12 Dangerous Structures & Places

The Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964 provides for local authorities to deal with dangerous structures. A Notice (Section 3 Notice) can be served on owners of property deemed to be dangerous, requiring specific works to eliminate danger be carried out thereby rendering the property safe.

Policy

ENV 28 To implement the provisions of the *Derelict Sites Act, 1990* in respect of derelict and obsolete areas and to implement the provisions of the *Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964* in respect of dangerous structures and places.

ENV 29 To implement the provisions of the Litter Pollution Act 1997 (as amended) requiring the removal of litter.

8.13 Veterinary Services

Louth County Council's Veterinary Service covers three distinct areas which are joint initiatives between Louth County Council and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), **Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)** and **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)**, respectively. The three distinct areas are:

- Food Safety,
- Dog Control,
- Horse Control.

8.13.1 Food Safety

This is primarily concerned with the inspection of small to medium size abattoirs and meat processing establishments which occupy the wholesale segment of the meat trade.

8.13.2 Dog Control

The Control of Dogs Acts 1986 (as amended) placed statutory responsibility for dog control and licensing services on local authorities. The Act gives the local authority power to appoint dog wardens, provide dog shelters, seize dogs, impose on-the-spot fines and take court proceedings against owners. **The Control of Dogs Regulations 1998** impose additional rules in relation to twelve specific breeds of dog (or strains / crosses of same) which are considered to be potentially dangerous.

8.13.3 Horse / Animal Control

The Veterinary Service also has responsibility under **The Control of Horses Act, 1996** for the control of horses in the County. The Veterinary Service operates a modern dog pound in Dromiskin which also has facilities for horses.

Policy

ENV 30 To support the implementation of the veterinary functions of the council in partnership with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

8.14 Flooding

Flooding is a natural phenomenon of the hydrological cycle. However climate change and increased built development mean that there could be significant impacts from flooding over the course of the Plan. Like other natural processes, flooding cannot be completely eliminated, but its impacts can be minimised with proactive and environmentally sustainable management. The

accepted national policy response to flood protection is now to manage the risk to life and property as sustainably as possible. The Office of Public Works (OPW) is the lead agency for flood risk management in Ireland. ***The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009*** and these are incorporated here.

The Guidelines outline three key principles that should be adopted by regional authorities, local authorities, developers and their agents when considering flood risk. These are:

- Avoid the risk, where possible,
- Substitute less vulnerable uses, where avoidance is not possible,
- Mitigate and manage the risk, where avoidance and substitution are not possible.

8.15 Avoidance of Development in Flood Risk Areas

Flood zones are geographical areas within which the likelihood of flooding is in a particular range and they are a key tool in flood risk management within the planning process as well as in flood warning and emergency planning. There are three types or levels of flood zones defined for the purposes of the guidelines:

- Flood Zone A – where the probability of flooding is highest (greater than 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding or 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding) and where a wide range of receptors would be vulnerable,
- Flood Zone B – where the probability of flooding is moderate (between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 and 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding and between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 year and 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding),
- Flood Zone C – where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1% or 1 in 1000 for both river and coastal flooding).

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been carried out for the County Development Plan 2015-2021 (Volume 2(b) Appendix 13 SFRA) . It should be noted that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) based on current available data is adopted as a 'living document' and as such will be subject to modification by emerging datasets of maps and plans as they become available.

This has identified in both map and textual format where Flood Zone A, and Flood Zone B areas are most likely to occur with a focus on the smaller towns and villages across the County. A series of maps have also been produced illustrating flood risk in all locations both urban and rural. This will permit the local authority to identify those areas within which development proposals shall be the subject of a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), which shall be appropriate to the type and scale of the development being proposed and shall be carried out in line with the Guidelines.

On completion of a national screening exercise in 2011, the OPW identified 300 areas of potential significant flood risk, referred to as Areas for Further Assessment, (AFAs), which are the focus of the Catchment Flood Risk Management Plans CFRAM Programme. Louth is covered by two separate CFRAM Studies:

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- Neagh Bann CFRAM which covers the bulk of the County,
- Eastern CFRAM which covers the southern extremities of the County including Drogheda & Baltray.

Both studies are scheduled for completion in 2016. A review of the SFRA will be carried out as soon as the AFA mapping process currently underway by the OPW is finalised. The review will be undertaken with the objective of ensuring that the issue of Flood Risk has been addressed in a manner consistent with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and will inter alia re examine the zoning of the Level 3 Settlements in accordance with the sequential approach. A variation of the County Development Plan will be proposed, if required to make appropriate amendments. In the interim Louth County Council has utilised the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) produced by the OPW.

There are 8 AFAs within County Louth as listed below, 6 in the Neagh Bann CFRAM Study Area and 2 in the Eastern CFRAM Study Area.

Neagh Bann CFRAM

Annagassan
Ardee
Carlingford
Dundalk & Blackrock South
Greenore
Termonfeckin

Eastern CFRAM

Baltray
Drogheda

Policy

ENV 31 Development plans and local area plans should be consistent with the planning system and Flood Risk Management Guidelines – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009, and adopt strategic, integrated, sustainable and proactive approach to catchment management to avoid and reduce flood risk within the region, managing the risk from:

- tidal effects around estuaries and along the coast including the implications of the latest predictions for sea level rise;
- fluvial flooding along river corridors and other significant watercourses resulting from catchments within and beyond the Region and other sources of flooding; and
- pluvial flooding resulting from surface water runoff and capacity constraints in surface water drainage systems.

- ENV 32** Where new or upgraded flood/coastal defences are shown to be essential to protect existing development, all such proposals shall be subject to the Floods and Habitats Directive and all other statutory requirements;
- ENV 33** New development should be avoided in areas at risk of flooding. However, it is recognised and acknowledged that the key urban settlements are at risk from coastal and fluvial flooding, but their continued growth and expansion can be facilitated through the careful expansion of the urban core and the implementation of appropriate land uses in areas at risk. New developments within a flood plain, will not only be at risk of flooding, but can add cumulatively to the risk of flooding elsewhere, and serve to undermine the flood plain's natural function of accommodating and attenuating flood flows. Accordingly, to minimise flood risk and help maintain their natural function it is essential to avoid development within flood plains wherever possible. However, where justification to permit development can be provided on sustainability and planning grounds, cognisance must be taken of outputs of CFRAM Studies in the provision comprehensive flood protection and management measures; which should be fully implemented in conjunction with any development in flood risk areas. Appropriate land uses should also be incorporated into those areas at risk.
- ENV 34** County development plans and local area plans shall include a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Existing and proposed zoning of lands for development in areas at risk of flooding should follow the sequential approach and justification test set out in the DECLG Guidance on Flood Risk Management. A flood plain may be defined as flood zone B, which defines the extent of a flood event with a 0.1% annual probability of exceedance as set out in the DECLG Flood Risk Management Guidelines, 2009.
- ENV 35** SUDS based drainage plans should be prepared in conjunction with local area plans to optimise flood/runoff management potential of the areas. Reducing the impact of existing and future development on flood risk can be achieved by adequately controlling runoff from new developments and associated areas, through employing Sustainable Drainage Systems, such that development impact is neutral or positive on flooding.
- ENV 36** Through flood plain protection and SUDS, local authorities should incorporate improvements in biodiversity and amenity for existing and proposed developments. Issues such as

coastal squeeze and compensatory measures to mitigate impact of climate change on existing habitat sites should be considered. Appropriate SUDS planning will also address both water quality and amenity dimensions.

- ENV 37** Direct strategically significant growth to low risk areas. Strategically significant projects and infrastructure should, as a rule, be located in low risk areas.
- ENV 38** An evidence based approach should be adopted to the application of sequential approach and justification test in zoning of flood susceptible lands for development. This should be transparent and use objective criteria appropriate to proposed zoning transparency and objective criteria will ensure that zoning process optimizes economic, social and environmental value.
- ENV 39** Founded on the precautionary approach to dealing with flood risk, measures such as flood compensation storage works or new hard-engineered flood defences alone, will not be acceptable as justification for development in a flood plain. The provision of compensation storage or hard defences alone shall not be considered sufficient justification to permit a development. Such measures will only be considered as part of a proposal if development/zoning is warranted by justification test on planning and sustainability grounds in the first instance, and no alternative site is available
- ENV 40** Recognising the concept of coastal evolution and fluvial flooding as part of our dynamic physical environment, an adaptive approach to working with these natural processes shall be adopted. The focus of a flood management strategy should not solely be driven by conservation of existing lands. It should recognise that marshes, mud flats and other associated eco-systems evolve and degenerate and appropriate consideration should be given to the realignment of defences and use of managed retreat and sacrificial flood protection lands to maintain such habitats as part of an overall strategy.

Chapter 9

Energy and Communications

9.1 Introduction

Energy is an essential component of Ireland's economy and society. Energy and energy infrastructure provides us all, in various forms, with the means to heat our homes, travel, communicate, produce goods and services etc. This demand for energy must be met all year round in a safe and secure manner. Competitive energy costs and quality infrastructure is central to attracting and sustaining both foreign and indigenous enterprise. In order to achieve this, provide jobs and growth and citizen wellbeing, Louth needs world class energy infrastructure which is fit for purpose in the 21st Century. We need to further develop our native energy sources and in particular native renewable energy sources. Development of native energy sources will reduce dependence on external sources, improve the energy mix and provide a more secure supply. Reduction in our dependence on foreign fossil fuels will provide positive social, economic and environmental dividends.

The EU currently has a Climate and Energy Package running until 2020 primarily driven by three EU targets: a 20 per cent share of renewable energy, a 20 per cent reduction in green house gases (GHGs) and a 20 per cent improvement in energy efficiency by 2020. (It should be noted that in 2014 the EU published its **Climate and Energy Policy Framework for 2030** which represents a significant change in EU policy and could have huge consequences for climate change and the evolution of energy markets across the EU.) In 2014, Ireland prepared the 3rd **National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP III)** which provides a progress report on delivery of the national energy savings targets implemented under current EU requirements in addition to energy efficiency policy priorities between now and 2020 and the reaffirmation of Ireland's commitment to a 20% energy savings target by 2020.

Directive 2009/28/EC is concerned with the promotion of the use of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and establishes the basis for the achievement of the EU's 20% renewable energy target by 2020. Hereunder, each member state is required to set targets for producing Renewable Energy Sources (RES) across three main categories:

- Heat (RES H),
- Transport (RES T),
- Electricity (RES E).

Ireland's overall target is to achieve 16% of energy from renewable resources. **The National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP)** (as required by the **Directive 2009/28/EC**) specifies the Government's approach and measures for delivery of Ireland's 16% target by 2020.

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The development of renewable energy is central to overall energy policy in Ireland. The Government's commitment to accelerating the development of renewable energy is set out in the Government's Energy Policy "***Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland – The Energy Policy Framework 2007-2020***", in the ***Programme for Government*** and in the ***Government's strategy 'Building Ireland's Smart Economy –A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal.'*** In summary, the Government plans that by 2020 the target will be delivered by approximately:

- 40% consumption from renewable sources in the electricity sector (RES-E) (*Achieved 19.6% by 2012*),
- 12% in the heat sector (RES-H) (*Achieved 5.2% by 2012*),
- 10% in the transport sector (RES-T) (*Achieved 3.8% by 2012*).

Louth County Council supports EU and national incentives for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, the movement to a low carbon economy and encouraging the development of renewable energy sources in an environmentally acceptable manner, which is evident *inter alia* in the planning and land use policies contained within the ***Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021***.

Louth County Council is proactive in improving energy efficiency across its operations and has been challenged, as part of the Public Sector, to reach energy efficiency savings of 33% by 2020. Louth County Council has been involved in numerous projects with local, national and European partners. Examples include *Dundalk 2020*, a 4km² zone in south Dundalk, which has resulted in reductions of 4,000 tonne of CO₂ emissions and savings in the region of €500,000 per annum.

At local level the key objective of the Council in relation to energy is to ensure that the County has sufficient energy resources available to drive economic development and improvement in the quality of life of the people of Louth.

Policy

EnCo 1 To promote and encourage the provision of renewable energy sources in line with the Government's National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) and successive energy policy developed during the course of the Plan.

9.2 Electricity Network

The development of a secure and reliable transmission network is critical to ensuring that Louth County Council has both the necessary infrastructure to accommodate and promote economic growth and attract investment to the area. Since the previous ***Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015***, a number of electricity suppliers have begun competing for both domestic and non-

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domestic customers. There is now also a single, all island energy market with the national electricity transmission system operator, EirGrid plc providing the physical infrastructure for the electricity supply system. Eirgrid plc has produced a strategic investment plan, “Grid 25 – “A Strategy for the Development of Ireland’s Electricity Grid for a Sustainable and Competitive Future” which sets out the future requirements of the electricity network up to 2025. It states that the capacity of the bulk of the transmission system which needs to be doubled by 2025 will be achieved through major reinforcements to the existing network across all the regions. This will be required to:

- Facilitate the necessary increase in renewable generation,
- Adequately meet the demands of the electricity consumer,
- Ensure that Ireland has the electricity supply infrastructure for economic growth to maximize competitiveness.

This Strategy will see the development of a much enhanced electric and gas infrastructure network particularly on the eastern seaboard where it is planned to construct a 400 kV transmission network to provide a strong power corridor between Dublin and Belfast, including a total additional investment of approximately €300m in the region which includes Louth, Monaghan, Cavan and parts of Meath and Longford. In the case of Louth the work will consist primarily of strengthening the existing network.

Louth County Council will support the reinforcement of the electricity transmission grid to improve energy supply to the County. Where strategic route corridors have been identified, the Council will support the statutory and other providers of national grid infrastructure by safeguarding such corridors from encroachment by other developments that might compromise the provision of energy networks. Where proposed high voltage lines traverse proposed residential areas, commercial or civic developments, they should be located underground where appropriate, in the interest of residential and visual amenity.

Policy

- EnCo 2 To support the statutory and other providers of national grid infrastructure by protecting identified strategic corridors from encroachment by developments that might compromise the provision of energy networks.**
- EnCo 3 To support and facilitate the development of an enhanced electricity supply network to serve the existing and future needs of the County**
- EnCo 4 To require the under-grounding of electrical cables within new residential, commercial or civic developments. Where existing and proposed high voltage lines traverse new residential, commercial or civic developments, consideration should be given to locating them**

underground where technically feasible, economically viable and environmentally appropriate, in the interest of residential and visual amenity.

EnCo 5 Where existing and proposed high voltage lines traverse sensitive rural landscapes consideration should be given to locating them underground where technically feasible, economically viable and environmentally appropriate, in the interest of residential and visual amenity.

EnCo 6 To require that all high voltage lines of 38 KV and over comply with all internationally recognised standards with regard to proximity to dwellings and other structures in which the public assemble.

EnCo 7 To ensure that energy transmission infrastructure follows best practice with regard to siting and design and is managed in terms of visual impact particularly to ensure the protection of all important recognised landscapes.

9.3 Natural Gas Supply Network

A high capacity gas pipeline currently runs along a north – south trajectory from North County Dublin through County Louth and connecting into the Northern Ireland gas network. This gas network provides potential for gas-fired generation in the North-East.

Gas Networks Ireland has a substantial distribution network in County Louth, covering Ardee, Blackrock, Clogherhead, Drogheda, Dromiskin, Dundalk, Dunleer, Termonfeckin and Tullyallen. Factors such as demand, size of settlements and commercial developments, especially adjacent to the existing network, drives expansion of it's service.

Policy

EnCo 8 To support the expansion of an enhanced natural gas supply network to serve the existing and future needs of the County.

9.4 Renewable Energy

The development of renewable energy sources is a priority at European and national level for both environmental and energy policy reasons. Renewable energy reduces dependence on fossil fuels, improves security of supply and reduces greenhouse gas emissions creating environmental benefits while delivering green jobs to the economy, thus contributing to national competitiveness.

Renewable energy comes from natural sources that are continuously replenished by nature and include for the following:

- Wind energy,
- Solar energy (sun),
- Hydro thermal (wave & tidal),
- Geothermal (heat below ground surface),
- Biomass (wood, biodegradable & energy crops),
- Waste material.

At a national level, much of the growth in renewable energy has been derived from wind turbine technology. However, Ireland has significant renewable energy resource potential including wind, wave, solar, tidal, ocean and bioenergy. The Government is now examining opportunities to develop Ireland's abundant offshore renewable energy resources, including offshore wind, wave and tidal energy, recognising that these offer rich potential over the coming decades. County Louth has a clear part to play in the development of renewable energy given its coastal location and therefore, the provision of such alternative energy resources will be considered on suitable sites throughout the County.

As a planning authority, it is important that Louth County Council recognises the range of new and developing technologies that can contribute to minimising greenhouse gas emissions, providing for a secure and stable energy supply and securing a greater proportion of our energy from renewable sources.

Policy

- EnCo 9** To encourage the production of energy from renewable resources at suitable locations, subject to normal proper planning considerations, including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.
- EnCo 10** To co-operate with the appropriate authorities both north and south of the border in the provision of all-island renewable energy.

- EnCo 11** To support initiatives aimed at reducing the level of energy consumption within the County.
- EnCo 12** To support international, national and county initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources, which makes use of natural resources of the County in an environmentally acceptable manner and where it is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- EnCo13** The Council will aim to produce a Renewable Energy Strategy for County Louth during the lifetime of this Development Plan. This strategy shall have regard to 'A Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies', SEAI and shall be compliant with the requirements of SEA & Habitats Directive.

9.4.1 Wind Energy

Wind energy can make a significant contribution as a clean sustainable solution to energy requirements. County Louth although located on the eastern seaboard where wind availability and speed tends to be less than west coast locations, still has significant potential for wind energy production. However, the County's diverse landscapes have varying degrees of sensitivity to wind energy generating infrastructure and therefore, care will need to be exercised in the location and siting of such infrastructure. It is possible that future large scale wind generation may be located off the Louth coast. This in itself presents significant opportunities for economic development in servicing off shore wind farms.

Wind Energy Development: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006 published by the **Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)** sets out in detail various development control considerations, including site selection, siting and layout for various types of wind energy projects. The Guidelines have been the subject of a targeted review since 2013 to encompass detailed guidance in relation to noise, proximity and shadow flicker and address issues that have caused increasing concern in relation to wind turbine development. In support of this, **Circular Letter PL 20-13 Review of Wind Energy and Renewable Energy Policies in Development Plans** issued to all planning authorities stating that a number of policy initiatives were under review including:

- Focused review of the wind energy development guidelines,
- Renewable energy export policy and development framework.

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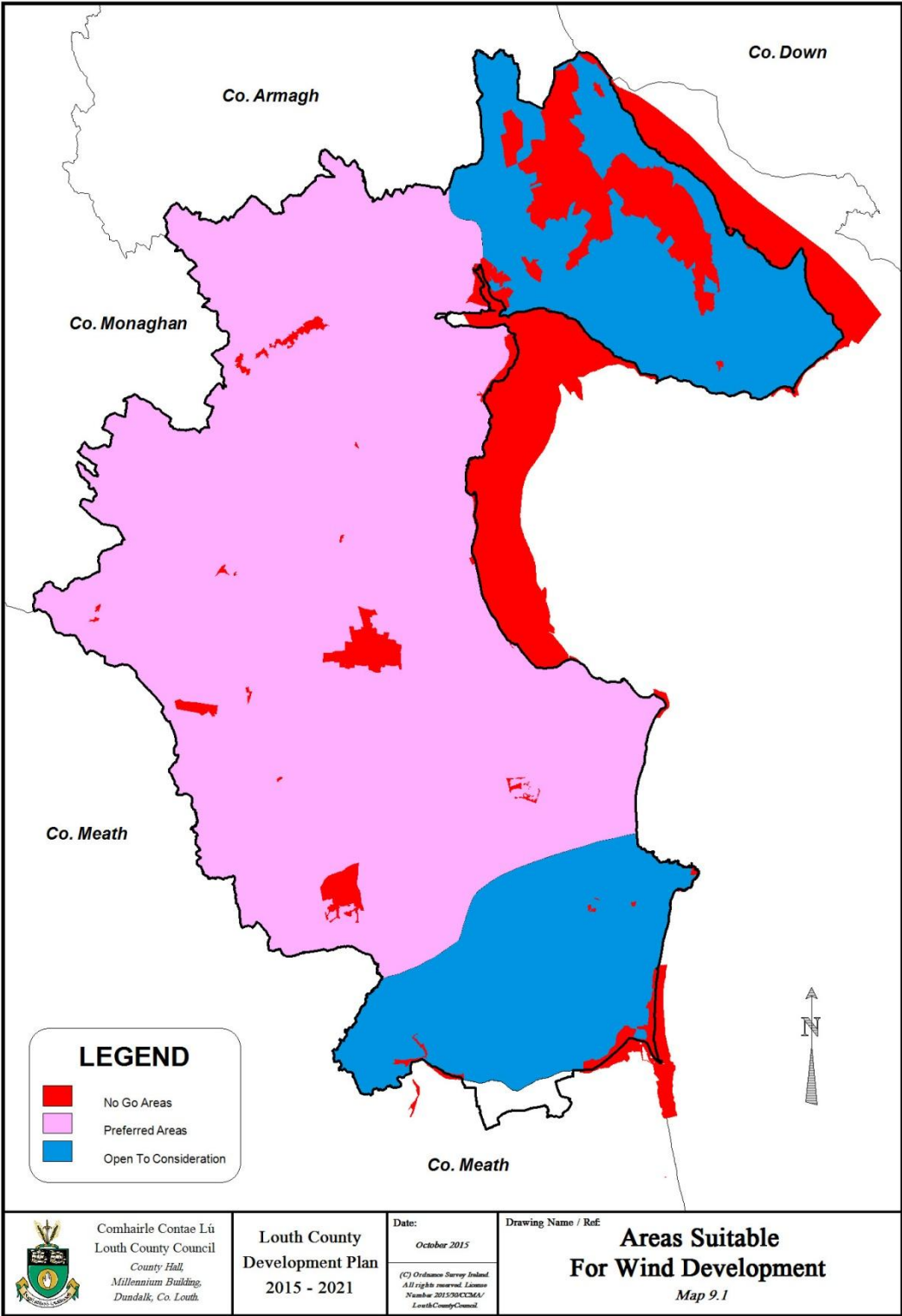
As the preparation or variation of local authority development plans must take account of all relevant and up to date national policy, the DECLG has therefore advised that until the review processes have concluded, local authorities should defer amending their existing development plan policies and should instead operate the existing development plan policies and objectives until the completion of these processes and advised otherwise by the DECLG.

It should be noted that as the 2013 document is a draft targeted review of the **2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines**, all the other sections of these 2006 Guidelines (including existing appendices) will remain in place.

Specifically the draft targeted review of the 2006 guidelines proposes the following;

- Setbacks from turbines and curtilage of noise sensitive properties in the vicinity,
- Noise sensitive properties include residential properties, residential institutions, schools etc
- Areas of special amenity may also be defined as noise sensitive,
- A noise limit to be attached in noise sensitive properties (for one or more properties),
- Exceptions to noise limits if residents give written consent to satisfaction of the planning authority,
- Exceptions to setback from turbines & curtilage of noise sensitive properties if the written consent of local residents is forthcoming & to the satisfaction of the planning authority.

Map 9.1: Areas suitable for Wind Development



Policy

- EnCo 14** To promote the location of wind farms and wind energy infrastructure in the “preferred areas” as outlined in Map 9.1, to prohibit such infrastructure in the areas identified as “no go areas” and to consider, subject to appropriate assessment, the location of wind generating infrastructure in areas “open for consideration”.
- EnCo 15** To facilitate the development of wind energy sources where proposals are consistent with the landscape preservation objectives of the Plan, the protection of the natural and built environment and the visual and residential amenities of the area.
- EnCo 16** To require that all wind farm developments comply with the Wind Energy Development - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006 and successive revisions developed during the course of this Plan.
- EnCo 17** To support the development of offshore windfarm developments subject to normal proper planning considerations, including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.

9.4.2 Solar Energy

Solar energy can provide a sustainable source of energy for buildings and reduces demand for electricity supply from the national grid. Solar energy is achieved by the manner in which glass and other materials and structures are utilised to capture and magnify the sun's energy. The basic techniques to harness solar energy and gain maximum benefit in buildings are as outlined below:

- Passive Solar Design (PSD),
- Solar Heating,
- Solar Electricity (most commonly Photovoltaic (PV) Systems).

Passive solar heating refers to the way in which buildings are designed to maximise solar gain and minimise heat loss, through design, infrastructure and layout which are key to achieving energy efficient development. Solar heating is where solar panels are utilised to transform solar energy into heat to provide water and /or space heating. Larger scale active solar thermal technologies can also be used for cooling and steam production, the latter of which can be used to

drive turbines for electricity production. Finally, the production of solar electricity relies on active solar technology the most common of which is Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Systems which use daylight to convert solar radiation into electricity, whereby the greater intensity of light generates the greater flow of electricity.

Louth County Council encourages such methods in the provision of renewable energy, subject to design and other considerations.

Policy

EnCo 18 To encourage and support the use of solar energy technologies in all new and proposed retrofit developments taking place in County Louth.

EnCo 19 To encourage and support the development of passive solar design proposals for the development of houses in rural and urban areas drawing on the document Building Sensitively and Sustainably in County Louth and the Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas.

9.4.3 Geo Thermal

Geothermal energy refers to heat energy stored in the ground. Heat is supplied to the ground from two sources, namely the hot core and the sun. Geothermal can thus be classified as either deep or shallow depending on the depths involved. Deep geothermal energy drills into the earth's crust which generates heat at great depth, whilst the second source is from the sun's radiation. Heat pump systems extract the stored heat and use it to heat spaces in buildings, water or to cool buildings.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) commissioned a study in 2004 on geothermal energy in Ireland, which identified potential resources of geothermal energy throughout the country and which will be particularly useful in assessing the geothermal potential in County Louth. The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) is currently undertaking a further study on shallow geothermal energy resources and aims to produce best practice guidance for geothermal systems in Ireland, a suitability map and a database of existing systems.

Policy

EnCo 20 To encourage and support the development of geothermal energy in County Louth.

9.4.4 Hydro Power

9.4.4.1 Wave Energy

Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland, in a collaborative approach undertook to carry out a feasibility study for creating an offshore interconnected transmission network and electricity grid based on renewable energy sources. This was referred to as the Irish-Scottish Links on Energy Study (ISLES). Whilst the area examined has huge potential for capturing wind, wave and tidal energy, constraints were found to exist in each regions electricity network none of which were developed with an off shore grid in mind. As a consequence, the capacity to generate electricity is currently not matched by the ability to collect and transport that energy to market.

Whereas the west coast of Ireland has the greatest wave generation power, there is no doubt that potential also exists in the waters off Louth's coast. The amount of this accessible resource which can ultimately be realised will depend on the cost effectiveness of wave energy technology, the amount of power which can be practically connected to the grid and the amount of capacity available on the network when other intermittent generation sources such as wind energy are considered.

While proposals below the high water mark are outside the Councils jurisdiction, on-shore ancillary plant, buildings and power lines will require assessment and all on-shore impacts must be mitigated to the greatest extent possible. In this regard detailed visual and environmental considerations of any development proposal will be assessed in determining their acceptability.

Policy

EnCo 21 To support the development of wave energy in suitable waters off the coast of County Louth subject to the protection of important marine habitats and acceptable visual and environmental considerations.

9.4.4.2 Tidal and Ocean Energy

In 2012, the *Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, (DAFM)* produced the document *"Our Ocean Wealth - An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland"*. This phased strategy aims to introduce ocean energy into the renewables portfolio in Ireland. Tidal energy is an important element of this overall strategy. Carlingford Lough and the Boyne Estuary could have potential for the generation of tidal energy.

Policy

EnCo 22 To support the development of tidal energy in suitable waters off the coast of County Louth subject to the protection of important marine habitats and acceptable visual and environmental considerations.

9.5 BioEnergy

BioEnergy is energy derived from biomass which includes biological material such as plants, animals, wood and waste. Biomass is all organic material and types used to provide bioenergy and can be divided into wastes and purpose grown material and includes:

- Waste streams including residues from forestry and related industries,
- Recycled wood,
- Agricultural residues and agrifood effluents,
- Manures,
- The organic fraction of municipal waste and sewage sludge,
- Separated household waste and sewage sludge,
- Purpose grown crops including short rotation forestry.

Energy from biomass is a renewable indigenous source of fuel for electricity, heat, transport and fuels. Such systems range from stand alone heat plants and individual heating boilers in buildings to power production in Combined Heating Power plants, where heat and power are generated from fuel in a single process. The associated advantages to BioEnergy, include *inter alia* security and diversity of supply, new opportunity for farming, employment generation and potential to reduce greenhouse emissions.

Policy

EnCo 23 To support the development of projects that convert biomass to energy whilst adopting the precautionary approach to large scale production of bio fuels in County Louth.

EnCo 24 In general, to direct commercial bioenergy plants to locate on lands which are reserved for industrial uses. Brownfield sites in rural areas may also be considered, subject to planning and environmental criteria.

9.6 Waste

Proposals for waste to energy development, including anaerobic digestion and dry digestion for farm or other wastes and by-products will be considered by Louth County Council. Anaerobic Digestion (AD) is a means of combating greenhouse gas concerns and increasing renewable energy production in line with national and international targets. It is a natural process of decomposition in the absence of oxygen where the organic matter is broken down to its simpler chemical components. The digestion process produces biogas which is a renewable energy source and can be used for transport, fuel or production of electricity.

Such developments are generally subject to Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Licensing System, where the environmental assessment will be the responsibility of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Policy

EnCo 25 To support the development of projects that convert waste to energy in County Louth subject to normal planning considerations.

9.6.1 Micro Renewable Energy

The Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) provide exemptions from planning permission for a heating system, domestic wind turbine, solar panels and heat pumps within the curtilage of a house, subject to certain conditions and limitations. These regulations also provide exemptions for micro renewable generators within the curtilage of industrial buildings, business premises and agricultural holdings including Combined Heating Power structures, wind turbines, solar panels, heat pumps and biomass boiler units. It should be noted that where an individual wishes to install any class of micro renewable technology that does not fall within the exemptions, they are required to apply for planning permission. In addition, the existing restrictions on exempted development as set out in **Article 9 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)** apply.

9.7 Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) was established as Ireland's National Energy Authority under **The Sustainable Energy Act 2002**. SEAI's mission is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices. To fulfil this mission SEAI aims to provide well-timed and informed advice to government, and deliver a range of programmes efficiently and effectively, while engaging and

motivating a wide range of stakeholders and showing continuing flexibility and innovation in all activities. The key strategic objectives are:

- Energy efficiency first,
- Low carbon energy sources,
- Innovation and integration.

The SEAI operates a regional office in Dundalk and has developed strong linkages with Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT), Louth County Council and the private sector. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland has been instrumental in the development and implementation of a number of innovative energy use and conservation projects in Louth, primarily in Dundalk.

The Council will work in partnership with, and support existing and proposed initiatives by SEAI in County Louth.

Policy

EnCo 26 To work in partnership with, and support existing and proposed initiatives by SEAI in County Louth.

9.8 Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings

According to the EU, buildings account for 40% of total energy consumption in the Union and therefore increasing energy efficiency in buildings has a huge role to play in meeting Ireland's renewable energy targets. ***The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) (2002/91/EC)*** was transposed into Irish law through the ***European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2006*** and the ***European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings)(Amendment) Regulations 2008***. A recast of the EPBD was adopted in 2010 (***Directive 2013/31/EU***) in order to strengthen the energy performance requirements and to clarify and streamline some of its provisions. As part of the Directive, a Building Energy Rating (BER) certificate is required once a building is offered for rent or sale. The BER measures the energy performance of a building and provides homeowners with the information required in order to improve the thermal efficiency of the dwelling. Expressed as primary energy use per unit floor area per year (kWh/m²/per annum) and illustrated as an energy rating (A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, etc) for the dwelling, it also includes CO² emissions indicator (kgCO₂/m²/yr) associated with this energy use and an advisory report. The right design decisions in relation to building form, internal layout, levels of insulation, amount and orientation of glazing, utilisation of solar energy, heating system and fuel type, use of draught lobbies, construction materials and measures to conserve potable water, can contribute greatly to sustainability. In addition these will lead to cost savings in the long term, while raising the level of comfort for the occupants of the dwelling.

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The Dwelling Energy Assessment Procedure (*DEAP*) is used to calculate the Building Energy Rated (BER) of dwellings. The procedure takes account of the energy required for space heating, ventilation, water heating and lighting, less savings from energy generation technologies. It calculates both the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emission rate and energy consumption per annum. This is a useful tool for designers when considering and comparing options to conserve energy and reduce CO₂ emissions.

The Non Domestic Energy Assessment Procedure (NEAP) is the methodology for demonstrating compliance with specific aspects of Part L of the Building Regulations. NEAP is also used to generate the Building Energy Rating (BER) and advisory report for new and existing non domestic buildings. NEAP calculates the energy consumption and CO₂ emissions associated with a standardised use of a building. The energy consumption is expressed as kilowatt hours per square metre floor area per year (kWh/m²/yr) and the CO₂ emissions expressed in terms of kilograms of CO₂ per square metre floor area per year (kg CO₂/m²/yr). NEAP allows the calculation to be carried out by approved software packages or by the default calculation tool, Simplified Building Energy Model (SBEM). SBEM, accompanied by a basic user interface, iSBEM, calculates monthly energy use and CO₂ emissions based on building geometry, construction, use and HVAC and lighting equipment. The purpose of SBEM and its interface iSBEM is to produce consistent and reliable evaluations of energy use in non-domestic buildings for Building Regulations compliance and Building Energy Rating purposes.

Part L of the **Building Regulations (1997-2014)** states that a building shall be designed and constructed so as to ensure that the energy performance of the building is such as to limit the amount of energy required for the operation of the building and the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions associated with this energy use insofar as is reasonably practicable. The Building Regulations requirements for new dwellings also prescribe that a reasonable proportion of the energy consumption to meet the energy performance of a dwelling is provided by renewable energy sources, limiting heat loss, availing of heat gain through the fabric of the dwelling and energy efficiency space and water heating systems. Energy efficient buildings will generate savings and is a cost effective way of fighting against climate change and improving energy security. Louth County Council will promote the use of energy efficient methods in the design of new and retrofitting of existing developments. The primary focus is to design buildings that create a thermally efficient building envelope. The use of on-site micro renewable or district heating systems also offers significant opportunities.

Policy

- EnCo 27** To promote the use of district heating systems in large scale development and master planned areas and encourage the integration of micro renewable energy sources into the design and construction of single and multiple housing developments.
- EnCo 28** To promote innovative building design and layout that demonstrates a high level of energy conservation, energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources and encourage the design and construction of buildings that are functionally adaptable.
- EnCo 29** To encourage the reuse of existing obsolete buildings.
- EnCo 30** To support the recycling of building materials on development sites.
- EnCo 31** To encourage and support the utilisation of building and landscape design features to minimise energy requirements.
- EnCo 32** To ensure that all new buildings are designed and constructed having regard to the Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings as set out in Section 9.9.

9.9 Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency in Buildings

This section sets out guidelines for the sustainable design, siting and construction of buildings, particularly, with regard to energy efficiency and energy conservation, as well as waste management, waste disposal and sustainable urban drainage systems. These standards need to be read and adhered to in conjunction with **Part L** of the **Building Regulations (1997-2014)**.

Measures that promote energy conservation and efficiency in buildings include air tightness, appropriate use of glazing, high insulation standards and more efficient heating. Alternative forms of electricity and heat generation should also be considered. The various elements in relation to energy conservation and ecological building design are further outlined in this section.

9.9.1 Passive Solar Design

Passive Solar Design (PSD) techniques relate to the siting, layout, built form and the landscaping of a development. The use of PSD techniques is cost effective, as it requires little or no cost to the developer and can amount to substantial savings on behalf of the owner/occupier. It also reduces the long-term use of fossil fuels and thereby reduces CO² production.

The main elements for the application of PSD with regards to design, siting and layout are as follows:

- Orientation - To maximise solar access and its benefits, the principle façade of a building should be orientated to be within 30 degrees of the south, where feasible. A southerly orientation maximises solar gain in winter.
- Wind – Buildings should be designed and located to reduce the impact of wind chill and suitable shelter belts should be incorporated.
- Openings - Large glazed surfaces should be located on the southern face of the building. These surfaces must be highly insulated through high performance glazing to prevent the loss of heat.
- Internal planning - The internal layout of buildings should be designed by setting occupied spaces to the south and service spaces to the cooler north.
- Avoidance of overshadowing – Where feasible, buildings should be carefully spaced to minimise the loss of solar gain due to overshadowing.

9.9.2 Passive Housing

A Passive House is an energy efficient building with year round comfort and good indoor environmental conditions without the use of active space heating or cooling systems. The concept is based on minimising heat losses and maximising heat gains (i.e orientation), thus enabling the use of simple building services. The construction of Passive Houses should have regard to the '**Guidelines for the Design and Construction of Passive House Dwellings in Ireland (SEAI)**'.

9.9.3 Low Energy Performance Buildings

All new buildings should be designed to comply with low energy performance standards in accordance with **S.I. No. 259 of 2011 Building Regulations**. These regulations cover a range of conservation of fuel and energy measures together with the requirement that for new dwellings, a reasonable proportion of the energy consumption of the dwelling is provided by renewable energy sources. It will be a prerequisite of all development in the Plan area that the provisions of the amended building regulations be complied with.

9.9.4 Active Solar Design

Active solar systems can work in unison with passive systems and provide an alternative mechanism for harnessing solar energy. This system does not rely on site orientation or layout but can be incorporated into any building design to maximise energy efficiency. Active solar technology involves the installation of a solar collector device; this device absorbs the sun's heat to provide space or water heating. A correctly sized unit can provide around half of a household's

water needs over a year; large buildings can introduce several systems to increase solar absorption.

9.9.5 Alternative Heating Systems

Energy efficient heating systems such as mixed fuel and wood pellet stoves, boilers and geothermal heat pumps can greatly help to reduce energy consumption. Geothermal heat pumps (GHP) work by extracting heat energy from a low temperature source and upgrading it to a higher temperature so that it can be used for space and water heating. Heat pumps are very economical. For every unit of electricity used to power the heat pump, 3 to 4 units of heat are generated. They work best in conjunction with low temperature heat distribution systems e.g. under floor heating. Wood burning systems do emit carbon dioxide. However, as the wood fuel is cultivated, it absorbs the exact same amount of carbon dioxide as is released when burnt. As such it does not add to the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. An eligible system can be used for heating a single room, hot water or a whole house.

9.9.6 Reduction in Water Consumption

Fresh water resources are increasingly becoming an issue of environmental and economic importance. According to Irish Water, the average daily consumption for all household purposes is about 150 litres per person. On this basis the average water consumption per person in Ireland comes to 55,000 litres per person per year.

9.9.7 Rain Water Harvesting

Rain water recovery systems harvest rain water which can then be used for the flushing of toilets, washing machines and general outside use. A rainwater holding tank is installed below the ground that gathers water from the roof of buildings. This water is pumped into a tank within the building's roof space where it is stored until required. This water would otherwise have to be treated and pumped by Irish Water representing a substantial saving. The system filters and collects between 20% and 30% of total water consumption used by a family of four. The system is isolated from the mains water system to eliminate any possibilities of contamination. In the event of using all of the rainwater reserve, an automatic change over system switches over to using mains water until the rainwater tank starts to refill. The rainwater system generally has three separate filters which reduce particles down to 130 microns. These systems should have the British Board of Agrément approval to meet the Building Regulations.

9.9.8 Wind Energy

The use of wind turbines to provide a self-sufficient power source or to supply power in combination with other energy sources merits investigation for any large scale development. A series of ***Planning & Development Regulations (including S.I. No. 83 of 2007 & SI No. 235 of 2008)*** exempts from planning permission certain types of renewable energy structures including small scale wind turbines in relation to dwelling houses, agricultural buildings and industrial buildings. The use of these technologies should be incorporated into the design of buildings from the outset. Proposals for the provision of small and medium size wind turbines which fall outside the exempted development categories will be favourably considered by the Council provided that they do not significantly impact on visual or residential amenities of the area.

9.9.9 Micro-Hydro Generation

The development of micro-hydro generation facilities does not constitute exempted development under current planning legislation and as such will require applicants to apply for planning permission. Considerations will include;

- The visual impact of the development must be considered and therefore matters such as turbine siting, cables, channels will be required to be addressed.
- Any potential impact upon residential amenity will also be a consideration in any determination.
- Is the proposed development located in a designated area e.g. Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and / or Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Where a proposed development occurs within or near a designated site, there is an obligation on the Planning Authority to inform a number of statutory bodies including the **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)**, **the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)** and Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) among others. These bodies may recommend a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) and/or Appropriate Assessment (AA) which may add considerable cost to the total project cost.

9.9.10 Construction Methods

Consideration should be given to the use of renewable building materials such as wood from sustainably managed forests and locally sourced building materials for development projects. Other features of construction should also be considered such as off-site construction and prefabrication to minimise the impact of building on the site, reductions in levels of on-site waste and also minimising cost. The re-use of construction waste such as excavated material and topsoil should also be considered. Materials used in the construction of Cob dwellings are to be in compliance with building regulations.

9.9.11 Waste Management and Disposal

All future developments should seek to minimise waste through reduction, re-use and recycling. Waste management and disposal should be considered as part of the construction process and in the operation of the development when completed.

9.9.12 Construction Waste

Construction related waste accounts for a significant proportion of total land filled waste in Ireland. Therefore developers and builders should minimise construction waste generated in development projects. During the construction process measures should be implemented to minimise soil removal (as part of the scheme design process), properly manage construction waste and encourage off-site prefabrication where feasible.

9.9.13 Domestic Waste

Everyday domestic waste produced by future residents and businesses shall be minimised through reduction, reuse and recycling. All new developments should provide for waste separation facilities, recycling banks and compost units.

9.9.14 Precipitation and Climate Change

Buildings should, as far as is practical, be future proofed against increased precipitation and storm frequency likely to result from climate change. The following check list should be applied:

- Check existing water table and natural patterns of drainage,
- Calculate rainwater guttering and pipe work on the basis of up to 30% increase in precipitation,
- Use soft landscaping to reduce storm water runoff and help the rain to percolate naturally into the water table,
- Use porous paving schemes to allow water to flow down through hard landscaping directly into the water table to minimise drainage requirements and relieve pressure on existing drainage,
- Retain robust roofing details including sarking in preference to battens,
- Preserve and increase planting of trees to absorb CO₂ to help reduce global climate change.

9.9.15 Micro Climate Enhancement

Trees and shrubs can make a significant contribution to energy conservation by providing shelter and modifying climate at the micro level. Designers and developers should plant deciduous trees and use hard landscaping on the south side of buildings to enhance the micro climate and minimise energy use.

9.10 Communications

The provision of telecommunications services is essential to promoting commercial and industrial development, enhancing social inclusion and interaction and improving personal and household security. Therefore, investment in the telecommunications sector is critical to further both the economic and social development of the County. Broadband internet services provide high access speeds and is consequently an advantage for businesses, attracting new businesses, students and home users. Government policy recognises the need to provide high levels of broadband connectivity to strengthen economic and social prosperity.

The implementation of high speed broadband connectivity falls within the remit of the **Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DECNR)**. In 2012, the **DECNR** published a national broadband plan entitled “**Delivering a Connected Society – A National Broadband Plan for Ireland**”, with the aim of radically changing the broadband landscape of Ireland, by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses and also as a conduit for modern society. It sets out targets for achieving higher speeds throughout the Country as expeditiously as possible.

9.11 Broadband

Three broadband schemes have been rolled out to advance broadband connectivity. These are as outlined below:

- National Broadband Scheme (NBS),
- Rural Broadband Scheme,
- 100 MBS project.

9.11.1 National Broadband Scheme (NBS)

The aim of the NBS was to provide broadband services to target areas of the country which were not serviced by broadband or deemed to be insufficiently serviced and to ensure that every reasonable request for broadband in these areas was met. The successful tenderer to operate and implement the NBS was '3'.

9.11.2 Rural Broadband Scheme

This was established to enable a basic broadband service to be provided to rural premises which were incapable of obtaining a broadband service from existing internet service providers. The scheme identified the aforementioned rural areas and ascertained the possibility of providing the broadband service through existing operators utilising a variety of technologies.

9.11.3 Schools MBS Project

The objective of this project is to equip second level schools with 100Mbps of broadband connectivity and Local Area Networks (LAN) on a phased basis. It is anticipated that by year end 2015 that all second level schools will have 100Mbps broadband installed. The rollout of broadband to schools in County Louth is currently underway.

9.11.4 Metropolitan Area Networks (MAN's)

This is a network of ducting and fibre optic cable laid within a metropolitan area which can be used by a variety of businesses and organisations to provide services. MAN's is publically owned but allows all telecommunication operators open access to the networks. To date MAN's have been provided in Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee. The availability of broadband in promoting these centres to potential employment generating investors is deemed to be critical.

9.11.5 Louth Broadband Action Plan

During the life time of the *Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015*, the Louth Economic Forum was established. This economic forum devised an overall 10 Point Plan relating to 10 specific areas to be addressed. One such action plan related to broadband provision where the identified vision is:

- Position Louth as a leader in the provision of high speed broadband connectivity to the business community,

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- Achieve the highest coverage for home based enterprise in the interests of web based entrepreneurial activity throughout the County.

Policy

EnCo 33 To secure the provision of high quality broadband and telecommunication infrastructure within the County in the interests of promoting economic growth and competitiveness.

EnCo 34 To support a programme of broadband connectivity throughout the County and facilitate the expansion of broadband in more remote areas.

9.11.6 Open Access Ducting

Under the auspices of the Louth Economic Forum's Broadband Action Plan, the Council will require that open access is made available to all ducting networks provided within the Plan area in order to support a competitive telecommunications service and to safeguard existing roads and footpaths from unnecessary excavation. These networks will remain in the ownership of the developer until taken in charge by the Council. Thereafter, the service provider will be responsible for the telecommunications infrastructure. The Council will require, by way of condition attached to any grant of planning permission that the service provider enter into an agreement with the Council to ensure that open access, at an economic cost, is provided.

Policy

EnCo 35 To require that open access ducting for new developments is made available to all service providers on a non-exclusive lease basis at an economic cost.

9.11.7 Telecommunications (Structures and Antennae)

Louth County Council recognises the importance of high quality telecommunication infrastructure as a prerequisite for a successful economy and accepts the critical importance of a high quality telecommunications service at national, regional and local level. The deregulation of the industry has brought both choice and competition in conjunction with duplication and over provision of facilities.

The Planning Authority will have regard to the guidance issued by the *DECLG "Telecommunication Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 1996"*. It is the policy of the planning authority to consider proposals for such

infrastructure in light of this guidance in addition to the **Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)** and **Circular PL0 7/12** (as they relate to the above Guidelines).

Sharing of sites is encouraged within both these Guidelines and the **Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)** and in this regard, the Council will encourage that all new support structures fully meet the co-location or clustering policy of the guidelines and that shared use of existing structures will be required where there is a proliferation and excessive number of masts within an area.

Due to the physicality of the structures in addition to the materials utilised, these telecommunication structures can significantly impact on the landscape, both urban and rural. Therefore in dealing with applications for such development it is essential that care and consideration is afforded to discreet siting and good design.

9.12 Development Management Assessment Criteria for Telecommunication Structures

Planning applications for telecommunications will in addition to the above be assessed having regard to the following criteria as specified in the **“Telecommunication Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 1996”** and as revised by **Circular PL 07/12**:

- Pre-Planning consultation: Operators are advised to consult with the Planning Authority prior to lodgement of a planning application,
- Design and siting: Should be suitably designed and located to reduce visual impact. The operator should demonstrate that the location is not unduly obtrusive. In this regard, setting installations against an appropriate backdrop may mitigate negative impacts,
- Visual impact ,
- Access roads and poles,
- Sharing facilities and clustering,

It should be noted that whilst the 1996 Guidelines included reference to health and safety, temporary permissions, bonds and contributions, these have been revised by **Circular PL 07/12**, which now require *inter alia* the following:

- Cease attaching conditions limiting the life of telecommunication structures (except in exceptional circumstances e.g. site or environmental conditions applicable),
- Not to include separation distances in Development Plans between telecommunication structures and other development such as schools or residential dwellings,
- Lodgement of bond/cash deposit no longer appropriate. Instead the requirement to demolish, remove the structure and reinstate the site,

- Waivers for broadband infrastructure provision as per the “ *Development Contributions Guidelines for Planning Authorities*” 2013.

Policy

EnCo 36 To ensure the orderly development of telecommunications throughout the County in accordance with the requirements of the

“Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures-Guidelines for Planning Authorities 1996, except where they conflict with Circular Letter PL 07/12 which shall take precedence, and any subsequent revisions or expanded guidelines in this area.

EnCo 37 To promote best practice siting and design in relation to the construction of telecommunication structures and in particular secure a high quality of design of masts, towers and antennae and other such infrastructure in the interests of visual amenity and the protection of sensitive landscapes subject to engineering parameters.

EnCo 38 To operate a presumption against the location of antennae support structures where such structures would have a serious negative impact on the visual amenity of sensitive sites and locations.

EnCo 39 To require co-location of antennae support structures and sites where feasible. Operators shall be required to submit documentary evidence as to the non feasibility of this option in proposals for new structures.

EnCo 40 To make available where feasible, strategically located structures or sites owned by Louth County Council for the use of Telecommunication Operators.

EnCo 41 To encourage and facilitate the public and private sector to make available strategically located structures or sites in the County to facilitate improved telecommunications coverage.

EnCo 42 The planning authority shall include a condition on any planning permission that in instances where the telecommunications structure is no longer required, that it shall be demolished, removed and the site re-instated at the operator's expense.

EnCo 43 To support the co-ordinated and focused development and extension of broadband infrastructure throughout the County and co-operate with the *Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources DCENR* and public and private agencies where appropriate, in improving high quality broadband.

9.12.1 Domestic Satellite Dishes

Satellite dishes, if inappropriately sited, can materially harm the character and appearance of historic buildings, importance townscapes and the character of rural areas. While satellite dishes can be erected subject to specified conditions and limitations under the ***Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)*** these provisions are not applicable where the dwelling is a Protected Structure or is sited within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

See also Chapter 5 'Heritage'

Policy

EnCo 44 To prohibit satellite dishes where they would materially harm the character and appearance of a protected structure, an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) or in any other area where they would cause unacceptable harm to the visual amenity.

Chapter 10

Water Services

10.1 Introduction

Water is one of our most valuable resources. It has shaped the landscape, dictated the location of towns and cities, protected health, and fuelled economic development. However, clean water is expensive to both produce and manage. There is a complex process involved in turning raw water into clean drinking water, and treating wastewater so that it can be reintroduced back into our environment. The funding model which has been applicable to date is simply not sustainable and much greater investment nationally is needed to address weaknesses in the water system, including high leakage rates, varying quality standards, and disruptions to supply. This transition from the local authorities to Irish Water of the responsibilities for water and wastewater, in addition to the current investment funding model will ensure that Ireland is well positioned to attract foreign and indigenous investment, creating real potential for new jobs within the country.

The sustainable growth of County Louth is dependent, *inter alia* on the satisfactory provision of water and wastewater services. A plan led approach, in accordance with the County's Core and Settlement Strategy is required in the provision of such services in order to ensure that there is adequate availability to support future development. Furthermore, this infrastructure provision needs to be implemented in a manner that protects public health and is environmentally appropriate.

10.2 Irish Water

To meet the challenge of delivering improved water services and in accordance with Government policy, Irish Water was set up as an independent State owned subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group. Established in March 2013 under the **Water Services Act 2013**, Irish Water is charged with bringing the water and wastewater services (excluding surface water drainage) of the 34 local authorities together into one national service provider with the aim of providing a secure, high quality and sustainable service to the Irish public. Irish Water commenced the take over of water and wastewater responsibilities from the 34 local authorities (in excess of 1.5 million households across Ireland) on a phased basis from January 2014. At this time, Louth County Council entered a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Irish Water to operate water services under this agreement until Irish Water is fully operational.

Irish Water will be responsible for the operation of public water services including management of national water assets, maintenance of the water system, investment and planning, managing capital projects and customer care/billing. It will be accountable to two regulatory bodies – the

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Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) who is the economic regulator for the water industry, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) who is the environmental regulator.

Irish Water will prepare a twenty five year Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) which will be reviewed on a five year basis and will additionally prepare a Capital Investment Plan (CIP) which will detail its proposed water services infrastructure investment over a five to six year cycle. Both the WSSP and the CIP will be informed by national, regional and local planning policy. Delivery of Irish Water Infrastructure will be subject to the appropriate development management process as set out in the ***Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)***.

The current Capital Investment Plan (CIP) 2014-2016 outlines indicative investment priorities in water services infrastructure over the next three years and includes water services projects that were previously included in the ***Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) 2010-2012 (amended to include 2013)***, and based on the Assessment of Needs prepared by each local authority. The CIP 2014-2016 requires €1.77bn to meet the objectives identified by Irish Water and previous programmes of the ***DECLG.*** The schemes applicable to County Louth contained within the CIP 2014-2016 are as presented in Tables 10.2 and 10.6.

It is Irish Water's objective to provide both drinking water and wastewater strategic infrastructure capacity for domestic requirements to facilitate the Core Strategy and settlement location policies of this Development Plan and in line with ***National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002*** and Regional Planning Guidelines. Irish Water will endeavour to secure the provision of the infrastructure necessary to support the implementation of the Core Strategy on an incremental basis in line with the requirements of evolving population change, economic activity, construction and in a manner that is in line with the availability of the necessary capital investment and requirements to comply with environmental objectives and regulations.

Headroom capacity to support the delivery of strategic development requirements in a number of locations within the settlement hierarchy of the County is not yet in place. Delivery of the required additional infrastructural capacity in line with the Core Strategy will be triggered by either;

- The consumption of any existing headroom,
- Or applications for new connections.

and will be based on the optimum investment cycle and capital efficiency considerations consistent with population/economic activity assumptions in this Development Plan.

The planning authority and Irish Water will work closely together in the context of the provisions of this Development Plan and Irish Water's Connections Policy to monitor demand for new connections and advance the required investment consistent with the WSIP and the CIP.

Irish Water's subsequent investment cycle will be from 2017 onwards which will coincide with the next Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy cycle and the ongoing implementation of this Plan. Connection to Irish Water networks will be subject to charges set out in Irish Water's Connection Charging Policy which will cover the funding and delivery of appropriate water services infrastructure for specific developments.

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Where development proposals arise that require upgrading/expansion of Irish Water strategic infrastructure over and above that included in the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) or require the accelerated delivery of planned infrastructure, Irish Water will undertake an economic assessment of the implications of these requirements. This will take account of the provisions of this

Plan and wider government policy on planning and will provide where relevant, indicative costs to the connection applicant on the potential cost, to the said applicant, of Irish Water providing this infrastructure (as detailed in Irish Water's Connection Charging Policy).

It is the policy of the planning authority and Irish Water to encourage full capacity use of available infrastructure and to encourage connections to existing infrastructure where capacity exists in order to maximise use of existing infrastructure and reduce additional investment costs.

Policy

WS 1 Louth County Council will work in co-operation with Irish Water in its new role as the lead authority for water services.

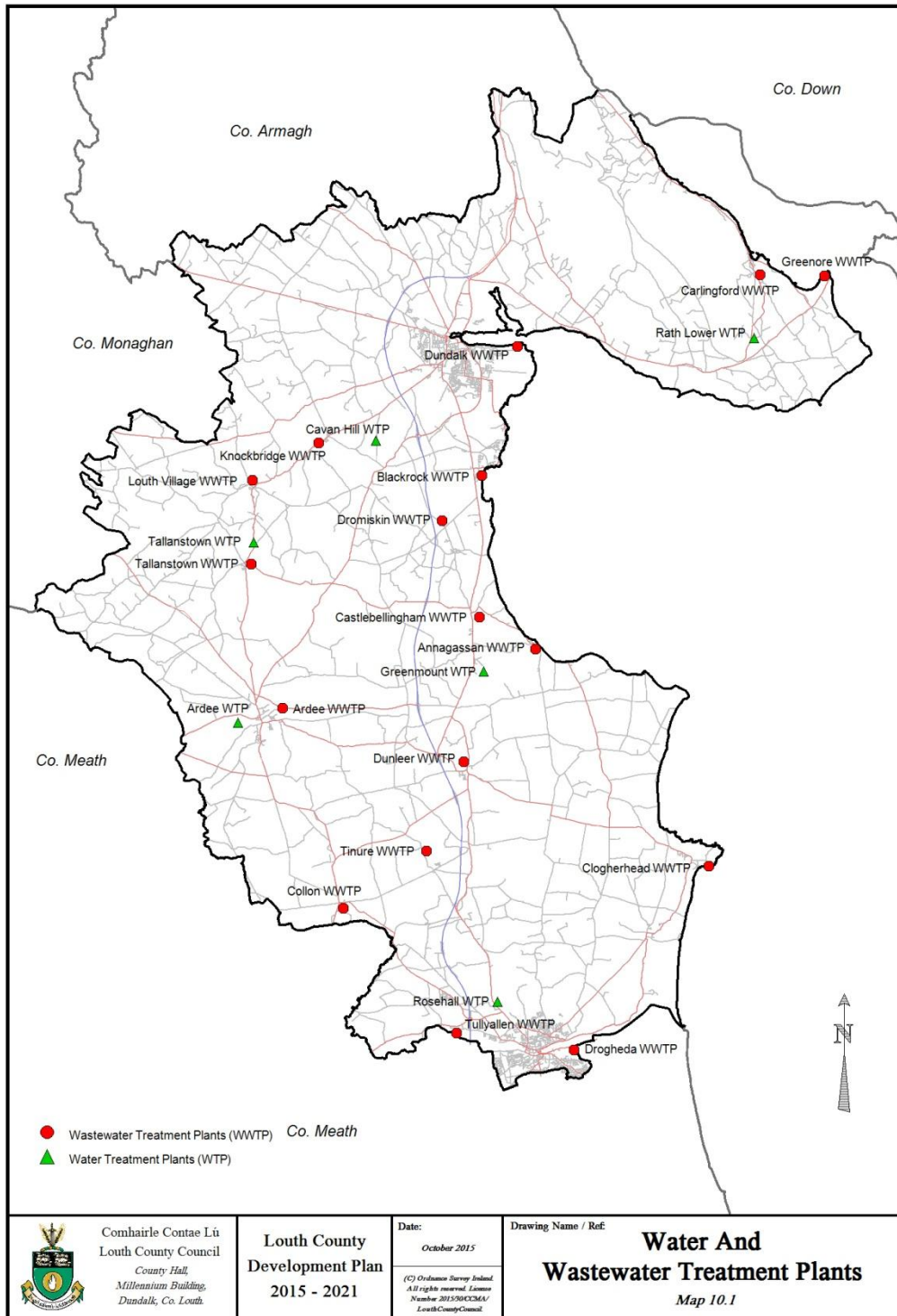
WS 2 Louth County Council will liaise with and advice Irish Water in identifying, prioritising and progressing the implementation of water and wastewater projects throughout County Louth over the lifetime of the Plan.

10.3 Water and Waste Water Services

Having regard to the aforementioned, the Water Services Section of Louth County Council will operate in conjunction with Irish Water to provide and maintain an adequate public water supply and wastewater infrastructure network throughout the County for the period of the Plan. Additionally, the Water Services Section of Louth County Council will seek to ensure that there is continued investment in and improvements made to critical infrastructure over the Plan period. This will be achieved through implementation of the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) 2014-2016. The current network of water and wastewater treatment plants is illustrated on Map 10.1

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Water Services

Map 10.1 Water & Wastewater Treatment Plants



10.3.1 Wastewater

The provision and maintenance of quality wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential for sustainable development and protection of the environment and public health. Irish Water is now responsible for the treatment and disposal of wastewater in towns and villages where public wastewater treatment facilities are in place. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the statutory body tasked with ensuring that appropriate standards are put in place in the provision of wastewater infrastructure.

Irish Water operates 18 public sewerage schemes in County Louth. The Dundalk and Drogheda schemes are operated under an operation and maintenance contract by a contractor. Secondary treatment is provided at all public schemes within the county save for Omeath and Greenore, where sewage is discharged by direct sea outfall. The public wastewater schemes which are currently operational in varying capacities in the towns and villages of County Louth are as outlined in Table 10.1 below.

Table 10.1 Public Wastewater Schemes, County Louth

Annagassan	Dunleer
Ardee	Knockbridge
Carlingford	Louth Village
Castlebellingham/Kilsaran	Omeath
Clogherhead	Greenore
Collon	Tallanstown
Drogheda	Baltray/Termonfeckin
Dromiskin	Tinure
Dundalk	Tullyallen
Blackrock	

Table 10.2 County Louth Wastewater Schemes in Irish Water's CIP 2014-2016

County Louth	B
Ardee Sewerage Scheme (Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade & Network)	Review Scope & Commence Construction
Dundalk & Drogheda Wastewater Treatment Plants (Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades – Nutrient Removal)	Review Scope & Commence Construction
Dundalk Sewerage Scheme Study (Network Study)	Review Scope & Commence Construction

	C
Omeath Sewerage Scheme	Review Scope and Commence Construction

These schemes will be progressed as intended in the 3 year timeframe of the CIP

10.3.2 Private Wastewater Treatment Systems

A significant number of houses are catered for by individual on site treatment plants. The requirements relating to the siting and operation of these individual waste water treatment systems are dealt with elsewhere in the Plan. A number of non-domestic developments are also serviced by private treatment plants. The majority of wastewater facilities, some 75% are public schemes.

See also Chapter 8– ‘Environment’

Policy

WS 3 Private Waste Water Treatment facilities other than single house systems will not be permitted except in the following limited circumstances. Consideration may be given to granting permission for private waste water/communal facilities in developments managed by suitable institutions.

10.3.3 Water

Drinking water in County Louth is drawn from a variety of sources including public, group schemes with private source and other private sources. In total there are 13 public water supply schemes dispersed throughout the County and as detailed in Table 10.3 below. Approximately 84% of properties in the County are served by public water supply, 13% by private wells and 3% by group water schemes.

Table 10.3 Public Water Schemes, County Louth

Scheme
Ardee
Greenmount/Dunleer
Tallanstown
Cooley Water Supply Scheme including Carlingford, Greenore, Omeath, Cooley, Jenmkinstown
Carrickcarnan
Dunbin/Sheelagh/Courtbane
Clogherhead/Termonfeckin
Collon

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Kilineer
Drybridge
Cavanhill
Staleen
Rosehall

Private supplies provide the alternative for those areas that are not served by a public water supply and comprise mainly of certain private group water schemes for rural settlements and wells serving single dwelling houses. There are 7 private group schemes operating in the County which are supported by the Rural Water Programme and detailed in Table 10.4

Table 10.4 Private Group Water Schemes, County Louth

Scheme
Ballymakenny
Drybridge/Waterunder
Tullyallen
Grangebellew
Mountain Park
Sheepgrange
Killany/Reaghstown

Private group schemes are to be licensed and regulated under the **Water Services Act**. In the case of the public schemes this will be by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), whilst private schemes will be overseen by the Council once private regulations are enacted.

The Council supports the continued operation and development of the private group scheme sector and sees this sector as providing an effective mechanism of developing piped services in un-serviced rural areas.

Table 10.5 contains a list of the public water supply schemes which are included and approved in the Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) 2010-2013 for County Louth and have subsequently been incorporated into Irish Water CIP. It is envisaged that these schemes will be completed during the lifetime of the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021**.

Table 10.5

Public Water Supply Schemes approved under WSIP 2010-2013, County Louth

Scheme	
Dundalk & Drogheda	Water Conservation Stage 3

Table 10.6 outlines the schemes relating to Water included in Irish Water's Capital Investment Plan CIP 2014-2016 pertaining to County Louth.

Table 10.6
County Louth Water Schemes in Irish Water's CIP 2014-2016

County Louth	B
Drogheda Water Supply Scheme (Staleen Water Treatment Plant Emergency Works)	Review Scope & Commence Construction
Dundalk Water Supply Scheme (Water treatment plant upgrade)	Review Scope & Commence Construction

These schemes will be progressed as intended in the 3 year timeframe of the CIP

Policy

WS 4 To support the provision of high quality water and wastewater 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.

WS 5 To support the extension or upgrading of existing water services infrastructure within the County (including those listed in the Irish Water Investment Programme) and the provision of water services infrastructure in un-serviced settlements to assist in the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

- WS 6** To promote and support the development and proper management of Group Water Schemes subject to appropriate level of treatment being provided and suitable robust operational arrangements being put in place.
- WS 7** To prohibit the use of pump stations for conveyance of sewage unless the proposed pump station will cater for a significant catchment of zoned development lands that otherwise cannot be drained. Where deemed appropriate in consultation with Irish Water, temporary pumping arrangements may be considered as an interim measure, pending the provision of more permanent arrangements within a reasonable timeframe. All arrangements for same will be as per the requirements and agreement of Irish Water.

See also Chapter 8 – Environment

10.4 Water Conservation

Louth County Council has successfully completed Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Water Conservation Programme comprising the set up of water management systems and active leakage control respectively. Following a detailed assessment of all watermains in the County, Stage 3 works have now commenced in Dundalk and Drogheda to complete a targeted rehabilitation of priority mains and refurbishment of networks which are in poor condition. These works will continue under various contracts during the period of this Development Plan.

Policy

- WS 8** To support the commitment to water conservation and leakage reduction within County Louth in accordance with the Water Conservation Programme and in accordance with best practice in order to conserve valuable resources and by reducing wastage.
- WS 9** To support Irish Water in promoting public awareness of and involvement in water conservation measures by households, businesses and industries.

10.5 Domestic Metering

Installation of meters on domestic water connections has been completed within County Louth. Billing of water charges for domestic customers commenced in 2015. **The Commission for Energy Regulation** will be the national body acting as a water regulator with power to set water charges.

10.6 Surface Water Drainage

As new developments are constructed, less rainfall is absorbed into the ground and an increased volume runs to drains at increased rates of flow. This has the potential to cause localised flooding in streams and piped drains, in addition to bringing surface contaminants directly into water courses, causing pollution.

The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study produced a number of policy documents which included for;

- Environmental management,
- New developments, and
- Climate change.

These focused on the design approach and criteria with the objective that future development did not continue the trend of pollution and flooding. This approach using **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)** is a total solution to rainwater management and is applicable in both urban and rural areas in contrast to traditional drainage which may best be considered as providing 'a collection and disposal' approach. **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)** are a method of replicating the natural characteristics of rainfall runoff from any site. They provide hydraulic, water quality and environmental benefits. The overall objective is to minimise stormwater runoff and to collect and treat the minimised amount of runoff as close to source as possible. SuDS techniques comprise a flexible series of options, which allow the drainage designer to select those systems that best suit the circumstances of the site.

Policy

WS 10 To ensure that the incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) measures in all developments is mandatory. An integrated approach to drainage will be adopted and all development proposals shall be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment which will address run-off quantity, run-off quality and impacts on habitat and water quality. Best practice guidance is available from the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study and development proposals will be required to meet with design criteria (adjusted to reflect local conditions) and material designs therein.

WS 11	To ensure that all discharges shall be attenuated to green field levels whereby both flow rate and volume of discharge of runoff from developments to receiving waters shall mimic in so far as possible pre-development levels.
WS 12	To ensure that when Master Plans are being prepared that sustainable drainage will be adequately addressed. Master plans will identify appropriate aerial features for example ponds and basins based within the overall plan area that can provide both amenity and surface water management facilities for the full area rather than a large collection of small development based units.
WS 13	To ensure that all new development shall incorporate appropriate measures to protect existing water bodies through appropriate treatment of runoff. In particular discharges from car parks shall be appropriately treated so as to remove pollutant materials.
WS 14	To ensure that all new developments shall be provided with separated drainage systems.

10.7 Riparian Corridors

A riparian corridor is the land directly adjacent to or surrounding a natural or artificial waterway, including:

- Major & secondary rivers,
- Intermittent or permanent creeks and streams,
- Gullies and drainage lines where surface water collects,
- Wetlands,
- Lakes.

Riparian land extends from the edge of the waterway onto adjacent terrestrial land. The width of the riparian zone may range from narrow through to a wide densely vegetated corridor. The width is dependent on location within the catchment (valley or floodplain) and the adjacent land use. Riparian corridors provide a crucial link between terrestrial and stream ecosystems and form a unique and distinct unit within the surrounding landscape. A healthy riparian corridor usually has a diverse range of plant species.

See also Green Infrastructure Strategy Appendix 14, Volume 2 (b) for additional details.

Chapter 11

Implementation and Monitoring

11.1 Introduction

The Plan sets out the Council's vision and strategy for the sustainable development of the County over the period 2015 - 2021. It contains a wide range of objectives and policies covering the broad range of functions of the Council. It is essentially a contract between the Council and the people of County Louth and there is a statutory obligation on the Council to implement its provisions. This will present many challenges in the years ahead, particularly due to the economic climate. Therefore, there is no guarantee that the range of specific objectives and projects included in the Plan will be carried out in full or in part as this will depend on the availability of funding. However, the policies in relation to the manner in which the Council seeks to protect the heritage, environment and well being of the people of Louth is not, by and large, funding dependent. Therefore, in this regard, the Council will implement all relevant policies and objectives as contained in the Plan.

The implementation of the policies, targets and projects contained in the Plan does not fall to the Council alone. The people of the County, as individuals and through community groups, developers, government agencies and others with the good of County Louth at heart, will be required to play a significant role if the Plan is to be fully delivered.

The Plan will also be regularly reviewed to assess progress and to determine whether amendments are required. Therefore, the Council may carry out variations of the Plan from time to time, where it is considered that such amendments are warranted.

11.2 Local Area Plans

Following the making of the Louth County Development Plan, a programme for the preparation of the **Local Area Plans (LAP's)** will commence. Local Area Plans will be prepared for the following areas:

- Dundalk and Environs
- Drogheda including North Drogheda
- Ardee
- Dunleer

The timing of these Local Area Plans will be determined by the relevant legislative provisions.

Local area plans must be consistent with the policies and objectives of the development plan, its core strategy and any regional planning guidelines that apply to the area of the Plan. The local area plan will set the context for the zoning of land at a local level for the use solely or primarily of particular areas for particular purposes, whether residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, open space or otherwise or a mixture of these uses. In addition to the local area

plans, it may be necessary to pursue the implementation of the strategic objectives of the Plan through the preparation of further studies addressing individual themes about which references are contained in the Plan.

11.3 Public Funding

Funding for the various projects, programmes and objectives of the Plan will be dependent on capital funding from the government. The Council's own funds will also be allocated under the annual budget adopted by the Elected Members each year. As previously referred to, the availability of funding, even for important maintenance and capital projects may be under threat due to the deterioration in the government's finances. Therefore, the implementation of the Plan in respect of capital projects will be dependent on the availability of funding.

11.3.1 Contribution Schemes

A planning authority may, when granting planning permission under Section 34, include conditions or require the payment of a financial contribution towards the costs incurred by the council or likely to be incurred by the Council, in the provision of public infrastructure and facilities. Conditions requiring payment of a financial contribution are generally dependent on the planning authority having adopted a Development Contribution Scheme which sets out the level of contribution which has to be paid in respect of different classes of work and ensures transparency and equity for all. The **DECLG** published **Development Contributions Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2013**.

Herein, it was recognised that the previous suites of schemes were prepared in a very different economic climate which has significantly altered and whereby local authorities now, more than ever, need to achieve the right balance between funding necessary infrastructure through planning gain and supporting / promoting economic activity and job creation by reducing costs to business.

Therefore, a key aim for future development contribution schemes must be to promote sustainable development patterns, secure investment in capital infrastructure and encourage economic activity.

11.3.2 Section 48 Contributions Scheme

In accordance with the provisions of **Sections 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)**, the Council has prepared a Development Contributions Scheme. All development proposals are required by conditions attaching to planning permissions to make a financial contribution towards the costs incurred by the Council, or likely to be incurred, in the provision of public infrastructure.

During the lifetime of the previous Development Plan, there was a significant downturn in the economy and a particular decline in the building industry. Consequently funding from this source has reduced significantly during the plan period and such will continue to be the case unless there is a marked upturn in the economy and the building sector, in particular.

It is not necessary for the planning authority to be able to show a direct beneficial relationship between the public works and the development being permitted. This is a reserved function.

11.3.3 Section 49 Contribution Scheme

Under this provision, councils can require financial contributions for a particular public infrastructure service or project. The development being permitted must benefit from the public works in question. Similar to the Section 48 scheme, this is a reserved function and the council will reserve the right to make such a scheme if circumstances warrant it.

11.3.4 Special Contributions

Special contributions may also be imposed under **Section 48(2) of the Planning and Development Act (as amended)**. These are individually calculated and relate to specific exceptional costs not covered by either the general or the supplementary scheme.

11.4 Private Funding

11.4.1 Private Sector

The bulk of the development and investment proposed in this Plan will come through the private sector. This refers specifically to the industrial, residential and commercial development that will take place in the County over the Plan period. The Council will also consider entering into arrangements with the private sector to secure the delivery of essential infrastructure and investment where appropriate, and subject to any infrastructure thus provided being available to all who might require access to it.

11.4.2 Public Private Partnerships

Public Private Partnerships (PPP) are partnership agreements between public sector organisations and private sector investors and businesses for the purposes of delivering specific projects related to public services and infrastructure. Such an approach can involve a number of different types of project, including:

- Design and build,
- Design, build and operate,
- Design, build, operate and finance,
- Operating contracts.

11.5 Bonds

To secure the satisfactory completion of development on a site which has been the subject of a grant of planning permission, the Council will require the giving of a cash bond to ensure the completion of the development to the satisfaction of the Council. This is covered under **Section 34(4)(g) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)**. This cash bond may be requisitioned in part or in full where the development has not been satisfactorily completed and used by the Council to ensure the satisfactory completion of the development. This cash bond shall not be released until the estate is taken in charge. The value of the cash bond will be reviewed during the lifetime of the Plan and thereafter each year in accordance with the Wholesale Price Index for the Construction Industry.

11.6 Phasing

The timely provision of supporting community facilities in tandem with the development of areas is important in ensuring a high quality, sustainable development takes place. All large scale development proposals shall be phased having regard to the delivery of both physical and social infrastructure and orderly expansion outwards from the existing built up area.

11.7 Enforcement

The Council has extensive powers under the ***Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*** to take enforcement action where unauthorised development has occurred, is occurring or where permitted development has not, or is not being carried out, in compliance with the planning permission granted. The Council will enforce the planning legislation to ensure that the environmental, visual and economic development of the County is not jeopardised by inappropriate and environmentally damaging development and to ensure that the policies and objectives of the Plan are implemented and adhered to.

11.8 Monitoring and Review

The purpose of monitoring and review is to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of policies and objectives in terms of achieving stated aims and objectives.

There is a general duty on a Planning Authority to secure the objectives of the Development Plan. In this regard ***Section 15(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)*** states that:

“It shall be the duty of a Planning Authority to take such steps within its powers as may be necessary for securing the objectives of the Development Plan”.

Furthermore, ***Section 15(2)*** states that:

“The Chief Executive of a Planning Authority shall, not more than 2 years after the making of a development plan, give a report to the members of the authority on the progress achieved in securing the objectives”.

Section 95(3) (a) of the Act expressly requires that the two year report includes a review of progress on the Housing Strategy.

Following adoption of the Plan, key information requirements will be identified focusing on those policies and objectives central to the aims and strategy of the Plan. These will be utilised in the review process.

Chapter 11 Implementation and Monitoring

In addition to the Chief Executive's progress report, the Council will continue to monitor the implementation and operation of the Plan on an ongoing basis. Where it is considered that modifications or adjustments are required in the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development, variations of the Plan may be introduced.