

MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

Preparation of Dunboyne, Clonee & Pace Local Area Plan 2009-2015



STRATEGIC ISSUES PAPER

Planning Department
Meath County Council
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1.0 PREAMBLE

1.1 Background

Meath County Council has commenced the preparation of the six-year Dunbooyne, Clonee & Pace Local Area Plan (LAP) 2009 to 2015. This Strategic Issues Paper has been prepared as part of the first stage in the LAP preparation and is designed to stimulate debate between key stakeholders, landowners and the general public about the issues relevant to Dunbooyne, Clonee, Pace and the surrounding areas.

Public consultation is important at the outset of the Plan preparation in order to address issues and concerns that are of relevance to those most affected by the Plan's provisions and to ensure that the final document reflects public aspiration as well as government policies, strategies and guidelines. Meath County Council hereby invites any interested parties to make submissions in respect of the consultation document to the undersigned before 3.30 pm on Monday 8th December 2008. Submissions or observations in electronic format can be e-mailed to planningsubmissions@meathcoco.ie.

Please make your submission by one medium only i.e. in hard copy or email. This will avoid the duplication of submission reference numbers and will streamline the process. Your assistance on this issue is appreciated. All submissions to be clearly marked with the name of the settlement to which the submission refers. The deadline for receipt of submissions is Monday 8th December 2008.

All submissions or observations received during the above time period will be taken into consideration during the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan.

The Consultation Document is available for inspection during normal office hours at the following locations from Thursday 6th November 2008.

- Planning Department, Abbey Mall, Abbey Road, Navan.
- Meath County Library / Navan Branch Library, Railway Street, Navan.
- Dunshaughlin Area Office, Dunshaughlin.
- Dunbooyne Branch Library, Castle View, Dunbooyne.
- Rotal Meath Pitch 'n' Putt Club, Main Street, Clonee, Co. Meath.
- www.meath.ie

Copies of the Consultation Document are available for purchase from the Planning Department, Abbey Mall, Abbey Rd, Navan, Co. Meath. Please contact Lynda Thornton @ 046- 9097566 or lthornton@meathcoco.ie

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It should be noted that there will be another opportunity to make further comment once the Draft Plan has been prepared and is placed on public display.

1.2 Statutory Context

Section 18 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (the Act), as amended, provides that an LAP may be prepared in respect of any area which a planning authority considers suitable; and in particular for areas which require economic, physical and social renewal and for areas likely to be the subject of large-scale development within the lifetime of the Development Plan.

An LAP shall be made in respect of an area which is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, other than a town designated as a suburb or environs in that census. An LAP shall also be made in respect of an area which has a population in excess of 2,000 and is situated within a functional area of a planning authority which is a County Council. An LAP is required to be consistent with the objectives of the Development Plan, although the 2001 Amendment to the Planning and Development Act (2000) indicates that an LAP can include specific objectives pertaining to the zoning of the land.

The Act requires that an LAP consists of a written statement together with a plan or plans indicating the objectives in such detail as may be determined by the Planning Authority for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which it applies including detail of community facilities and amenities, and standards for the design of the developments and structures.

1.3 Timeframe of Plan and Structure of Issues Paper

The timeframe for the process is now fixed by legislation. The County Development Plan requires that a Local Area Plan for Dunboyne, Clonee & Pace will be prepared within 2 years of adoption, in accordance with Part II, Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The Local Area Plan must set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Plan area. The Planning and Development Act 2000 provides for the preparation of the Plan in two stages:

- Preparation of the Draft Plan.
- Making of the Local Area Plan.

Within each of these stages there are four common requirements:

- Public Notification
- Public Consultation
- Manager's Report
- Preparation of the Plan

The Strategic Issues Paper has been prepared in order to stimulate debate on the issues that the new Plan may address over its duration from 2009 to 2015. It deals with some of the main issues under various topic headings. These headings are not exhaustive and you are invited to raise other matters you may consider relevant.

1. Population and Settlement Strategy
2. Housing
3. Public Transport
4. Employment and Industry
5. Retailing
6. Community and Education
7. Infrastructure
8. Heritage and Conservation
9. Flooding

2.0 Identifying the Issues

2.1 Population and Settlement Strategy

Meath County Development Plan

For the last number of Census, Meath County has experienced a very pronounced rate of growth in its population as a result of its proximity to the Dublin Metropolitan Area and the employment opportunities that arise therein. Today, urban settlements are most successful in generating economic growth, industrial and service employment. Larger settlements with a wide range of economic, educational and social facilities have been most successful at generating indigenous employment growth and at attracting foreign investment and many of the urban centres have benefited significantly from their location within the Greater Dublin Area.

Dunboyne is the main settlement in the LAP area, followed by Clonee. It is a Moderate Growth Town in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. Moderate Growth Towns are designated in the Regional Planning Guidelines and have population targets of up to 15,000. In 2002, the population of Dunboyne was 5,363 persons. This grew to 5,713 in 2006, an increase of 6.5%. (This compares to a more significant increase of 74.1% over the 1996-2002 period.) At County level, the population increased by 21.4% over the period 2002-2006, a very minor increase on the 22.1% growth rate experienced in the County over the 1996-2002 period. By comparison, Navan and its environs increased in population by 51.5% between 1996 and 2002 and by 28% between 2002 and 2006. So whilst the population of Dunboyne has continued to increase, the rate of increase has slowed significantly over the last census period and is considerably below that of the County as a whole and Navan town and its environs.

The identification of Dunboyne as a Moderate Growth Town in the County Plan is as a result of key infrastructural improvements, including the M3 Motorway which is due to be completed in 2009/2010 and the proposal for a new rail station in the town as part of the Clonsilla to Pace rail corridor. In the Regional Planning Guidelines, the population range for a Moderate Growth Town is between 5,000 to 15,000.

Clonee was not recorded by the 1996 Census. However, the population in 2002 was 173 persons and 1,000 in 2006 which highlights a population increase of 478% in the intercensal period. This is a dramatic increase, however, Clonee is not designated for substantial growth in the County Development Plan.

The townland of Pace and the surrounding area is predominantly rural, comprised of agricultural land with a number of individual houses throughout. It is not designated for significant population growth; however, considerable transport infrastructure will be developed in Pace in the form of an interchange between the M3 Motorway and the Pace train station on the Dublin – Navan rail line.

The LAP area is entirely within the Dunboyne DED. In 2006 Dunboyne town and Clonee comprised 77.1% of the population of the Dunboyne DED. This, together with the rural population of the LAP area, highlights that the majority of the population of the Dunboyne DED lies within the LAP area.

Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area

These Guidelines, published in 2004, attempt to put in place a broad planning framework for the development of the Greater Dublin Area of which Meath forms part. The Guidelines provide an overall strategic context for Development Plans of each local authority, which promote a

sustainable settlement strategy. The Guidelines also seek to provide a better balance between public and private transport. The future form of development should reduce urban sprawl and create a clearer distinction between urban and rural areas. In the long term, it is intended that the growth of the Metropolitan Area will be balanced with the growth of a number of 'Development Centres' within the Hinterland. Dunboyne, alongside Ashbourne, Kells and Trim is identified as a Moderate Growth Town.

It should be noted that Clonee and Pace are not referred to in the Regional Planning Guidelines.

Main Issues

- What steps should be taken to manage the impact of population growth?
- In what areas of the LAP should additional population growth be focused?
- In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, where should land be zoned for new housing, if required?
- What services should be integrated into areas of additional population growth?

2.2 Housing Supply

Background

If the population targets noted above are to be achieved over the lifetime of the Development Plan and beyond, there will be a requirement to provide additional housing units to accommodate this absolute increase and to account for smaller household sizes. There has been a continuing drop in household size in the County in recent years. In 1981 the average number of persons per household was 3.68 persons. In 2002 this figure was 3.06 persons per household. The continuing decline in household size is in line with trends in the state as a whole, where Irish household sizes have been moving towards EU averages, which have traditionally been lower.

The role of the LAP is to cater for this increase in population, which could potentially rise to 15,000, albeit on a phased basis and beyond the lifetime of this LAP, if the aspirations of the County Plan are fully realised. A review of serviced land availability in the County Development Plan reveals that there will not be sufficient land to accommodate this target population in the longer term. This has implications for zoning and for the efficient use of any further lands identified for development.

Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas

Earlier this year the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government issued its publication Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas. This is an updated of the 1999 Guidelines and is designed to assist planning authorities, developers, architects and designers in delivering quality residential development into the future. The principal aims of the Guidelines are to:

- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, and minimise the need to use cars;
- Deliver a quality of life which residents and visitors are entitled to expect, in terms of amenity, safety and convenience;
- Provide a good range of community and support facilities, where and when they are needed;
- Present an attractive, well-maintained appearance, with a distinct sense of place and a quality public realm;
- Are easy to access and to find one's way around;
- Promote the efficient use of land and of energy, and minimise greenhouse gas emissions;
- Provide a mix of land uses to minimise transport demand;

- Promote social integration and provide accommodation for a diverse range of household types and age groups; and
- Enhance and protect the built and natural heritage.

In this regard, Local Area Plans must give specific recognition to the importance of achieving higher residential density in appropriate areas such as 'Brownfield' sites, sites in proximity to town centres or public transport corridors in the interest sustainable land use management. Policies in relation to densities now look at higher concentrations of residential development where quality design and quality of life issues are given precedent.

Main Issues

- How can the LAP ensure the above policies will be accepted by all users of the Plan?
- What are the issues that have a detrimental effect on the residential amenity?
- How can the residential amenity of the LAP area be maintained and improved?
- What are the perceived preferable formats for housing layouts and housing types for Dunboyne and Clonee and at what density and height?
- What contributes to an attractive residential layout?
- How can the Plan cater for a range of different housing needs, including, the elderly, students, the homeless, the mobility impaired, traveller families and first time buyers?
- How can the Plan ensure the refurbishment/improvement of existing residential areas?
- What considerations should be taken into account for proposed infill developments within existing residential areas?
- What range of social, economic and cultural facilities are required within residential areas?

2.3 Public Transport

Background

The reopening of the Dublin – Navan Rail Line is one of the projects included in Transport 21, the Government capital investment programme for the development of the transport system. The reopening of the rail line is to be implemented in two phases. Phase 1, Clonsilla to Dunboyne and Pace has been fully planned and approved. Phase 2 from Pace to Navan is due to be completed by 2015 and is currently the subject of feasibility studies.

The emphasis of all policy documents is very clearly placed on achieving sustainable development and the necessary integration of land use and transportation policy in this regard. All policy focuses on the reduction of the need to travel by the appropriate and complementary location of land uses. The recommended approach to future development is to concentrate development around existing centres, and accommodate those who need to travel by way of walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure.

In keeping with this approach, the objectives of Meath County Council regarding the future development of Dunboyne, Clonee and Pace are clearly focused on the utilisation of existing resources and the emergence of a compact and efficient urban form, with provision of the services and infrastructure necessary to serve the local population and easy access to a reliable public transport system to connect the town to the wider region.

Main Issues

- What are the types of activities and land uses that should occur around the train stations in Dunboyne and Pace?
- What intensities of development should take place around the stations, if any?

- How can the location of the train stations help to contribute to a better quality of life for residents?
- How will the operation of the train impact on residential amenity in Dunboyne, Pace and surrounding areas?
- Are additional bus services required? If so, where should these services cover?

2.4 Employment and Industry

Much of the recent growth in the LAP area has been driven by people who commute to Dublin to work on a daily basis. A sustainable community should provide for employment adjacent or close to home, thus reducing the need to commute to work. Therefore there is a need to build on the success of existing businesses in and near Dunboyne, Clonee and Pace and promote the development of more employment opportunities locally.

Main Issues

- Is there need for additional employment generating land uses in the LAP area?
- Where should additional industrial lands and employment generating uses be located in the Plan area?
- What types of enterprises would enhance the economic development of the LAP area?
- Should facilities such as, crèche, restaurants, leisure etc., be provided within employment centres?
- How can the Plan integrate enterprise land uses with other forms of land use such as residential, transportation, recreation, etc?

2.5 Retailing

Background

Dunboyne is the primary retail centre in the LAP area, followed by Clonee. The evolution of Dunboyne as a Moderate Growth Town will mean it will need to provide additional retail facilities. In addition, it is designated as a Level 3 Sub-County Town Centre in the Greater Dublin Area Retail Strategy 2008-2016. The policy of this Strategy in relation to Dunboyne is to facilitate and promote the continued improvement of its retail provision so that it meets its role as Level 3 centre, incorporating a range of convenience and comparison retail facilities adequate to serve the everyday needs of the catchment population. The Greater Dublin Area Retail Strategy 2008-2016 also sets out the Dunboyne is to eventually become a Level 2 centre. This highlights that the policy in this regard designates Dunboyne as the main retail centre within the LAP area but also in south east Meath.

Main Issues

- Where is the appropriate location for additional retail facilities?
- Should large scale retailing locate in Dunboyne or Clonee or both?
- Are there any deficiencies in the existing retail provision within Dunboyne and Clonee, e.g. what kind of shops are required that are not present?
- What other kind of uses and services should be provided alongside such retail uses?
- What measures can be taken to improve the town centre environments of Dunboyne and Clonee and to make them more attractive to visit for shopping and leisure activities?
- What uses are inappropriate in the main retail areas of the towns?
- What form should any new retailing take? Should it be a shopping centre or in a more traditional urban form typical of a shopping street?

- Are there enough appropriate retail facilities available within walking distance of residential areas in Dunboyne and Clonee?
- Are there derelict/vacant/underutilised sites which should be used to consolidate the provision of retail facilities?

2.6 Community and Education

Background

The Planning and Development Act 2000 has placed greater emphasis on planning authorities to provide specific policies and objectives for the development of community facilities within their administrative areas. These objectives relate firstly to the provision of community services, including schools, crèches and childcare facilities. Secondly the objectives must encourage the integration of planning and sustainable development with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area.

Main Issues

- Are there deficiencies in the existing open spaces within the Plan area?
- Are open space/recreational areas within close walking distance of residential areas and are such areas easily accessible?
- Is there adequate sports and recreation space available?
- Where could new parks/open spaces and recreational areas be located?
- Are there any significant interest groups or community activities without adequate accommodation or satisfactory location to carry out their activities?
- Where should community centres be provided? What activities should they cater for? Where is there an existing shortfall?
- Which community and cultural facilities (such as schools, churches etc.) are in need of expansion?
- Are there adequate provisions for training and education? Should additional primary, post primary or adult education facilities be provided?
- How can the Plan provide for childcare facilities in existing residential areas? How can this be balanced with the protection of residential amenity?
- How can the level of safety be improved around schools and play areas?
- What can be done to improve walking and cycling routes to and from schools within the county?
- Is there a requirement for additional services such as healthcare services or local libraries? Where should schools be located?
- Where should amenity walks in an around Dunboyne and Clonee be located?

2.7 Infrastructure

Background

Infrastructure provides a wide variety of services and functions, without which the Plan area could not function socially and economically. These include:

- Waste, effluent and emission control (wastewater treatment, the protection of existing groundwater aquifers and the recovery and disposal of household and hazardous waste).
- Water supply.
- Fire service.
- Roads.

- Public Transport (discussed at 2.3 above).

The opening of the M3, the associated distributor road west of Dunboyne and the rail line will do much to improve traffic congestion and to remove through traffic from Dunboyne, Clonee and the local road network.

However, the opening of the M3 and the rail line also raises questions and challenges, particularly at Pace. Currently, Pace is intended to operate as a transport interchange and will be comprised of an interchange between the M3 Motorway, the Distributor Road west of the Dunboyne and the Pace rail stop. There will also be a Park and Ride car-park which will accommodate 1,200 car parking spaces. How this area will operate over the long term is an important issue for the LAP and must be addressed.

Main Issues

- What opportunities does the M3 opening present in terms of improving the public environment and for providing environmental improvements?
- What opportunities does the M3 opening present in terms of improving the public environment and for providing environmental improvements? Does it present difficulties?
- In what way should the Plan make provision to improve water supplies, waste disposal or telecommunications?
- How can the use of public transport, cycling and walking be promoted and the use of the private motor car be reduced?
- How do you travel to school? If you do not walk or cycle, what are your reasons?
- Can the location of the rail stations change people's travel habits (e.g. reduce car dependency)?
- Is there a need for improvements to the bus service / facilities in and around Dunboyne and Clonee?
- Are there any deficiencies in, or difficulties with, existing linkages (vehicular, pedestrian, cycle) between and within Dunboyne and Clonee and the wider Plan area?
- Where should new linkages be established? Will there be sufficient pedestrian and cycle linkages between Dunboyne and Pace?
- Are you prevented from walking to the nearest centre? What prevents you from using this route?
- Are there any walking routes to the centre of Dunboyne or Clonee that can be improved?
- How can transport and land use planning be integrated to produce a sustainable living and working environment?
- How should the Pace area evolve over the medium to long term?
- What form of car parking/traffic management plan is required for the town centres?
- What roads or junctions require upgrading to improve safety or traffic flow?
- How can the Plan strike a balance between infrastructural development and protection of the natural and built environment?

2.8 Heritage and Conservation

Heritage Background

Under the Heritage Act 1995, Heritage is composed of the following elements: monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways. The Council will need to have regard to the aforementioned elements when forming Heritage Policy.

Built Heritage

The Meath County Development Plan 2004-2010 includes policies for the protection of archaeological sites and monuments and protected structures. The Development Plan lists National Monuments in State care and indicates areas of archaeological importance as well as architectural conservation areas. All National Monuments in the County are offered protection under the National Monuments Acts. Also listed in the Development Plan are buildings, landmarks, structures and items of industrial and mining heritage importance.

Main Issues

- How can the Plan best work with other interested bodies in promoting and increasing awareness about our natural heritage, including the promotion of biodiversity?
- What role does the Plan have in nature conservation?
- How can the policies of the Local Area Plan contribute to the protection and appreciation of protected structures?
- How can we achieve a balance between development pressures and the protection of built heritage?

2.9 Flooding

Background

Extensive flooding occurred throughout the Plan area in both November 2000 and 2002, originating from the River Tolka. The *River Tolka Flood Study* was produced in 2003 to assess flooding issues and to propose alleviation works along the Tolka from lands immediately west of Dunboyne, through the Plan area at Pace and Clonee and on to Dublin City. According to RPS MCOS consultants who piloted the project, most of these works are underway or have now been completed.

However, it is only possible to minimise the risk of flooding. In addition, the magnitude and frequency of flood events is increasing. Considerable areas of the LAP are required as floodplain for the River Tolka, most notably for the 1 in 100 year flood event. In September, the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government published '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities*'. These Guidelines prescribe methods for planning future development in the context of flooding issues and are an invaluable tool in reducing the risk of flooding.

Main Issues

- What are the causes of flooding in the LAP area?
- How can we reduce the risk of flooding while accommodating future growth within the Plan area?
- What areas continue to be most at risk?
- What implications does the flooding of the River Tolka have for the future growth of Dunboyne, Clonee, Pace and the surrounding rural area?
- How do we best deal with existing areas which remain prone to flood events?