



## 2 THE PLAN AREA IN THE CONTEXT OF DROGHEDA

### 2.1 Physical Context

Drogheda is located on the east coast of Ireland, approximately 55 kilometres north of Dublin (see Map 2.1 at the end of this section). The settlement is an industrial port town with a population of 35,090<sup>1</sup> in 2006. The town proper is under the administration of Drogheda Borough Council. However, the growth of Drogheda over recent years has meant that the built-up area of Drogheda now stretches beyond the town boundary into Counties Meath and Louth. The majority of the northern town environs falls under the administrative remit of Louth County Council. The southern environs of Drogheda, including the Local Area Plan lands lie within the jurisdiction of Meath County Council.

The town is bisected in an east-west direction by the River Boyne which runs through the town centre and reaches the Irish Sea approximately 4 kilometres east of Drogheda. The town is located within the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor, which is commonly defined as the settlements linked by a shared transport and communications network between the two capital cities. Drogheda is served on this corridor by the M1 motorway which is located to the west of the town. The R132 (old N1) runs through the centre of Drogheda and also serves outlying settlements such as Julianstown, Painestown and other settlements in the wider East Meath area. The main Dublin – Belfast railway runs through Drogheda and a freight-only line serves Navan to the west.

Drogheda forms the natural eastern gateway to the Boyne Valley, which includes the world heritage, UNESCO designated *Brú na Bóinne* site - a complex of chamber tombs, standing stones and other archaeologically important structures. Further historic significance is provided by the location of the site of the Battle of the Boyne just to the west of the built-up area of the town.

### 2.2 Population Profile

In 1996 Drogheda's population was 25,282 rising to 31,020 in 2002 and 35,090 in 2006. This represents rapid growth during this ten year period of 38% compared to 17% for the Republic of Ireland generally. Much of the population increase of Drogheda has been fuelled by its relative proximity to Dublin, as Drogheda is located within the 'commuter hinterland' of the Greater Dublin Area. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the population growth of Drogheda in the 10-year period 1996 to 2006.

### 2.3 Employment Profile

The town is the major industrial, service and commercial centre for the East Meath area and south County Louth. Drogheda's predominant employment sectors being manufacturing, wholesale and retail and health and social work. Much of the manufacturing focus is due to the presence of the town's port. Similarly, the large numbers of Drogheda residents employed in health and social care work at Our Lady's Hospital to the north of the city centre which employs approximately 1,200 people.<sup>2</sup>

Two other main centres of employment include the town centre, typified by retail, service and professional land-uses. The town centre is centred around West Street and adjoining streets, the St. Laurence Shopping Centre and the Scotch Hall development at the south quays.

The Drogheda Industrial Estate (Donore Road Industrial Estate) is an industrial/warehouse park located on the Donore Road in a long-established industrial area in the south-west of the town. This area contains some of the main employers located in the town.

1996 Population	2002 Population	Increase between 1996-2002(%)	2006 Population	Increase between 1996-2006 (%)	Overall % in population increase between 1996-2006
25,282	31,020	22.70%	35,090	13.12%	38.80%

Table 2.1: Drogheda Population growth 1996-2006 (CSO)

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## 2.4 Residential Development

Drogheda has experienced considerable levels of house building over the past ten years, reflecting the levels of population growth experienced during this period. Areas of the town which have seen significant levels of residential development are primarily located in the suburbs both on the south-side and the north-side of the town, as well as west of the town centre. Large residential developments of recent years on the southside of the town have been completed at Bryanstown ('Martello Village') and Colpe Cross ('Grange Rath') amongst others.

## 2.5 Retail Development

Retail development has been strong within Drogheda and its environs over the past decade, following the growth trend experienced in relation to residential development during the same period.

Significant retail developments include Scotch Hall Phase 1 Shopping Centre, providing some 13,000 total gross retail floorspace, and the St. Laurence Shopping Centre, which opened off St. Laurence Street in May 2006 providing approximately 14,865 sqm of retail accommodation<sup>3</sup> (these are identified on Map 2.1 below).

Drogheda Retail Park, served off the new Drogheda M1 bypass has also attracted trade to the western environs of the town. The retail park offers 15,000 sq. m. of retail warehousing and is anchored by Homebase.<sup>4</sup>

Further to this, the Newgrange Business Park (which has a discount food retailer and electrics store as well as a number of other outlets close by) and the M1 Retail Park (which has a number of DIY and furniture stores as well as discount food retailers) provide for further retail offer in Drogheda.

In summary, it can be said that Drogheda's retail offer has increased rapidly in the past decade. As with residential development growth during the same period, this expansion is reflective of recent rapid population growth. Such developments have also restricted leakage to other centres, such as those in the Greater Dublin Area.

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3 Lisney Research, Ronan Diamond, March 2007

4 Drogheda Retail Park website: <http://www.droghedaretailpark.com/contents/scheme.htm>