



## 4 POLICY CONTEXT

### 4.2 National Policy

#### 4.2.1 National Spatial Strategy, 2002 – 2020

The *National Spatial Strategy (NSS)* is a twenty-year planning framework designed to deliver more balanced social, economic and physical development between regions in Ireland. It provides a national framework and policy guidance for the implementation of regional, county and city plans. In order to drive development in the eight regions in Ireland the NSS proposes that areas of sufficient scale and critical mass will be built up through a network of “gateways”, “hubs” and “development centres”.

The concept of balanced regional development is central to the NSS. While it is aimed to sustain Dublin's central role to the Irish economy it is essential to strengthen other urban centres. This aims to provide for a better quality of life for everyone by resulting in less long distance commuting and therefore less congestion, as well as more regard for the quality of the environment and increased access to services such as health, education and leisure.

#### *Study Area's Role under the National Spatial Strategy*

Drogheda is designated as a Primary Development Centre in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) under the NSS and therefore its close relationship with GDA has been recognised. The NSS states that Primary Development Centres should be aware of their relationship with the Metropolitan area. Notwithstanding this, they should be able to support and strengthen their own catchments and neighbouring regions. A population figure of 40,000 is recommended for self sustaining growth in these Primary Development Centres.

The NSS also recognises and supports the role of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor of which Drogheda forms part.

### 4.3 Regional Policy

In terms of the regional planning context, it is evident that Drogheda, being located within the Border region but having strong links with the functional area of the Greater Dublin Area, suffers from what has been deemed its location ‘*at once in both regions, and at the same time in neither*’. In this regard both the policy context provided by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region as well as the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area has been analysed.

#### 4.3.1 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region (2004)

The *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region (2004)* estimate that the population of the border region will reach up

to 550,000 by 2020. The guidelines recognise that it would be appropriate for the development of Drogheda to move towards a population range of the order of 50,000 to 60,000 persons in the period up to 2020 and beyond. The location and form of such future growth should be focused on achieving a compact urban form. This implies that there should be a good balance of development between the northern and southern environs of Drogheda.

Drogheda is designated as a Primary Development Centre under the Guidelines (in line with the National Spatial Strategy). This requires the town to be economically self sustaining within its own catchment area, as well as maintaining close links to surrounding areas. The area's strategic position within the Dublin–Belfast Corridor and its location particularly in close proximity to Dublin on much improved road and rail connections will drive the development of the town as a Primary Development Centre.

It is stated in the guidelines that the future development of Drogheda is dependent on a number of initiatives being put in place including the following:

- Location of new high-tech industries
- Location of third level education facilities
- Need for improved social and recreational facilities

The Border Regional Authority supports the development of the Drogheda Northern Port Access Route and the strategic development of Drogheda Port which are of regional importance for both Drogheda and its hinterland. It should be noted that the guidelines point to a lack of manufacturing and enterprise activity in the area.

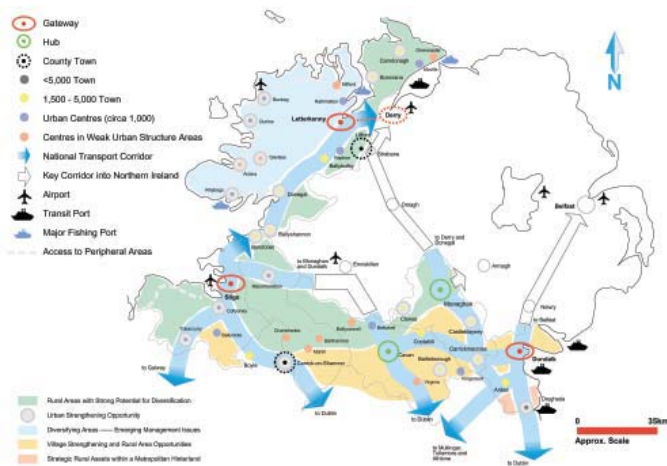
#### 4.3.2 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (2004-2016)

Although Drogheda town is located in the Border Region, the southern environs (in which the study area is located) are located in County Meath and therefore fall within the boundaries of the Mid East Region. In this regard, the area falls within the remit of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. The guidelines divide the overall strategy area into a Metropolitan and Hinterland area. The study area is located on the northern fringe of the Hinterland area. The strategy for the Hinterland area is to channel development into a number of self sustaining growth towns, which would be separated by green belts and in the long term would reduce the numbers commuting to Dublin.

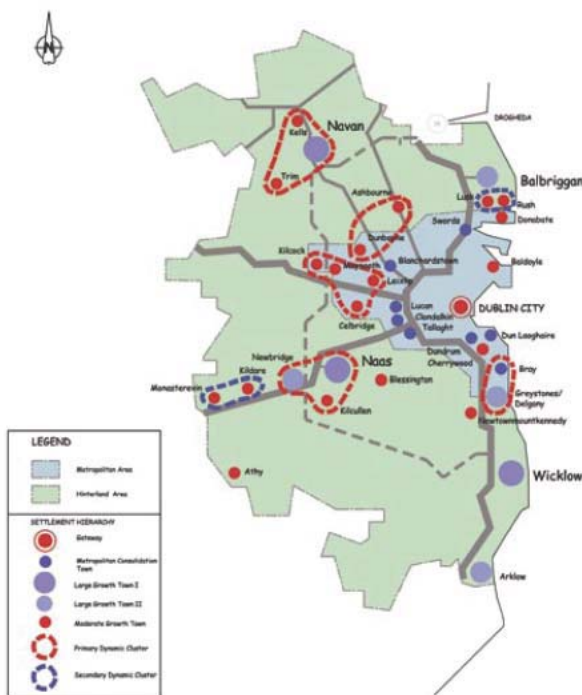
The guidelines address the issues of accessibility and connectivity across the entire region and they propose to develop an outer orbital route, which was identified in previous strategies including the Strategic Planning Guidelines and Platform for Change. They recommend that measures be

undertaken in the short term to identify and preserve a corridor or corridors including possible alignments particularly within the vicinity of urban areas such as Drogheda, Navan, Trim, Kilcock, Clane, Naas, Wicklow and Arklow. The construction of an alignment should be prioritised in the medium term after the completion of the strategic Public Transport and Road Infrastructure projects.

The guidelines recommend that relevant local authorities should liaise with the neighbouring regions to ensure that data on major urban centres which have an influence on planning and transport in the Greater Dublin Area, such as Drogheda, is taken into account when assessing and monitoring requirements in the Greater Dublin Area.



Strategy Map for the Border region from the National Spatial Strategy



Strategy Map for the Greater Dublin Area from the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area

## 4.4 Local Policy Context

### 4.4.1 Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area, 2007

The future role and function of Drogheda has been more clearly defined by the 2007 Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area. This strategy, which has a time frame of 20 years, was jointly commissioned by Louth, Meath and Drogheda Borough Councils to plan for the cohesive and interlinked development of the town going forward. The estimates contained in the Strategy indicate that the existing zoned landbank in the town and environs in counties Louth and Meath could accommodate an additional 60,000 persons thereby potentially almost trebling the population of Drogheda to 90,000 persons.

Set against this backdrop, the strategy sets out population targets for the town over four growth periods with an ultimate population horizon of 65,000 people for Drogheda and environs by 2024. This population horizon is ambitious and it is clear that the southern environs of the town, the area of this proposed Local Area Plan, will play a major part in the delivery of these objectives.

Some of the key objectives of the Greater Drogheda Planning Strategy which are of relevance to this Local Area Plan include:

- The progression of a Masterplan to guide development of the Bryanstown area.
- The provision of a road link between the M1 and R132 (Old N1).
- The development of the Bryanstown landbank in two phases in an east-westerly direction.
- The identification of the Donore Road Area as a key employment hub (incl. the IDA business park)
- Local and public transport movement through the heart of the LAP area.
- Provision of additional public transport links.
- The inclusion of a strategic land reserve for the Mill Road/ Marsh Road district.
- Provision of a range of community and other infrastructural facilities.

The Strategy further states that

*“the neighbourhood principle is fundamental to the phasing of the Strategy. Where greenfield town expansions are planned, each phase of development should create a sustainable neighbourhood, with appropriate social and physical infrastructure to be provided in conjunction with new housing. A social infrastructure deficit currently exists in many parts of the Study Area. Constructive solutions are required from developers to this problem before subsequent phases of development are allowed to proceed. To ensure flexibility, the proposed phasing schedule is aimed to be sequential rather than time-specific.”*

There are a number of other specific policies contained in the Strategy which have informed this Local Area Plan and these are referred to in the relevant sections of this Plan.

#### 4.4.2 Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013

The Meath County Development Plan is the statutory framework for County Meath. In accordance with Section 19(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), this Local Area Plan must be consistent with the policies and objectives set out under the current Meath County Development Plan.

##### Settlement Strategy

The Development Plan sets out a settlement strategy for the county which is based on a hierarchy of designated settlements into which future population growth should be channelled. The Plan notes that development should be channelled in the first instance to Navan, Drogheda Environs and the Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Rail Corridor which are the three major designated areas of growth in the county. These centres are identified to accept the majority of the County's share of regional growth going forward and will continue to accommodate a significant level of immigrants, primarily from the Dublin region.

However, the Development Plan further states that the basis for the growth outlined for these growth areas is that they do not become dormitory towns for the Metropolitan Area. It is policy of the Plan that in such an instance, residential development would only be permitted if sufficient progress is made in providing employment, retail, social and community facilities within the settlement.

The long term objective for these centres is that they become self sustaining, with a population, including its catchment, capable of supporting facilities such as a high quality second level education service, a hospital of sufficient size to provide non specialised medical care, retail warehousing and a comparison retail centre. The medium term population horizon for Drogheda inclusive of the south environs located in Co. Meath is set out as 65,000 people.

The relevant policies contained in the Development Plan with regard to the settlement strategy are as follows:

##### Settlement Strategy SP1

*The Council will concentrate residential development first and foremost into the designated centres of Navan, Drogheda and the Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor having regard to the Settlement Strategy of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. These centres shall accommodate the majority of Meath's share of the Mid Eastern regional residential growth over the life of this Development Plan and beyond.*

##### Settlement Strategy SP2

*To ensure that all of the Large Growth Towns and Moderate Growth Towns will in so far as practical be self sufficient incorporating employment activities, sufficient retail services and social and community facilities. Residential development will only be permitted*

*if sufficient progress is made in providing employment, retail, social and community facilities within the settlement. The Elected Members of the Planning Authority shall resolve to agree a series of monitoring measures in this regard within 6 months of the adoption of this Development Plan. The Council will give consideration to the capacity of existing appropriately zoned, serviceable and undeveloped land to deliver sustainable mixed use communities in advance of zoning previously unzoned greenfield land for new development.*

##### Settlement Strategy SP5

*Having regard to the amount of existing residentially zoned land, the annual construction of over 3,500 housing units and the inadequacies of basic infrastructure such as water, sewerage, roads, transport, communications, etc., only strategic additional residential land use zoning shall be agreed for the life of this development plan. The location of these strategic additional residential lands shall reflect with the Settlement Strategy contained in this Development Plan and to the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. "Strategic" in this regard refers to the Large Growth Towns of Navan and Drogheda and the Metropolitan Area Moderate Growth Town of Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor and Maynooth, the Hinterland Area Moderate Growth Town of Ashbourne and the Small Growth Town of Enfield.*

In this regard, it is noted that the Development Plan seeks to channel additional development into the designated growth centres and that additional land reserves should only be released if they are in a strategic position and accord with the overall settlement strategy set out under the Plan.

##### Population Projections

The County Development Plan further sets out specific objectives in relation to the compliance of Local Area Plans with the population projections set out under the Plan. In particular, Objective SSPOL2 states as follows:

##### SS POL 2

*The preparation of the subsequent individual or grouped Local Area Plans shall ensure that they are consistent with the objectives of this Development Plan in accordance with the requirements of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 – 2002. In particular, the population growth and household formation provided for in each Local Area Plan shall demonstrate compliance with the Household & Population Projection contained in this Development Plan, and in particular Table 6. This compliance shall be explicitly demonstrated on the basis of the amount of residential land being released for development in a particular centre being quantified by applying reasonable density and average occupancy rates to the scale and quantum of development provided for in Table 6. In all instances, the release of land must have regard to the existing and future availability of, or the capacity to provide physical and social infrastructure.*

Table 6 of the Development Plan sets out population projections for the various settlements in the county and provides details on the number of households permissible in each urban centre over the period of the Plan up to 2013. The projections for Drogheda Environs have been extracted and are set out in Table 4.1 below.

From this table, it is clear that the overall projections for the lifespan of the Local Area Plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda is that a total of 3,500 additional units need to be provided. The table further indicates that a total of 1,338 units are already committed in the form of planning permissions granted which have not yet been built. This leaves a shortfall of 2,162 units that need to be provided to accord with the overall targets of growth up to 2013.

This figure is then contrasted with the amount of units that can be achieved on the currently zoned landbank in the Drogheda Environs. The remaining zoned, but to date undeveloped landbank in this area is 56 hectares (this does not include the substantial landbank at Bryanstown of 145 ha which was previously identified in the 2001 Meath County Development Plan as subject to an Action Area Plan). Should the 56ha currently zoned be developed at a density of 35 to the hectare a total of 1,963 units would be achieved. This would fall short of the 2,162 unit target for the area as set out above. The total shortfall would be 199 units.

Further to this, the Development Plan states that adequate headroom of 50% needs to be provided in terms of the overall zoned landbank. This means that additional lands should be zoned 50% over and above the amount required to meet population targets. In this regard, the additional zoning requirements for the Drogheda Environs can be calculated as follows:

Total No. of Units required to 2013:	2,162
Land required to meet these targets: (at density of 35 per ha)	61.2 ha
Total Area of Land required including: an additional 50% headroom	91.8 ha
Existing zoned lands:	56 ha
Zoning Shortfall:	35.8 ha

From this calculation it is evident that in the region of 35.8 hectares need to be zoned additionally to the existing zoned land in the Drogheda Environs to meet the population projections of the Development Plan to 2013.

#### **Bryanstown Land Bank and Strategic Land Reserve at Mill Road/Marsh Road**

The Development Plan notes that there is a substantial strategic landbank at Bryanstown (145 hectares) identified in the Drogheda Environs Urban Detail Map contained in Volume 2 of the existing County Development Plan. The Plan further notes that this strategic reserve at Bryanstown (which is sometimes referred to as the 'hatched area') does not have the benefit of

an 'active' land use zoning objective, however the lands were zoned "subject to an Action Area Plan".

The Plan further includes the following objective:

#### **SS POL 4**

*The preparation of the Local Area Plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda shall have regard to and be influenced by the recently adopted Greater Drogheda Area Planning Strategy in the identification of additional significant lands for residential development and the identification of strategic infrastructural proposals. The strategic reserve at Bryanstown in addition to the lands between the Mill Road and the rail line have been identified for future residential development. The availability of adequate capacity in piped water services and roads infrastructure will be taken into account in the order of priority afforded to the release of residential lands. The preparation of the Local Area Plan shall take cognisance of the proposed Drogheda Traffic Management Study, and the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2005 – 2011.*

The Development Plan thereby clearly refers to the lands between the Mill Road and the rail line (hereunder referred to as the Mill Rd/ Marsh Rd. area) as an additional area which has been identified for residential development. In line with the recommendations of the Development Plan, this Local Area Plan has included the Mill Rd/ Marsh Rd area within the development envelope of the Southern Drogheda Environs and has given land use zoning designations to the area (please refer to the Zoning Map 5.3 in Section 5 of the LAP).

#### **4.4.3 Louth County Development Plan, 2003-2009**

The *Louth County Development Plan 2003- 2009* identifies Drogheda as the largest town in the county. It acknowledges the town's role as a commuter town and states that "the town should develop as a self sustaining settlement providing employment opportunities for its residents".

The settlement strategy for County Louth clearly sets out the policy for the future development of the town stating that "to promote and facilitate the growth of Drogheda as a major urban centre that can accommodate substantial population growth and act as a driver for development in the south of the county and wider surrounding region".

#### **4.4.4 Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan, 2005-2011**

The Drogheda Borough Development Plan is the statutory planning framework for Drogheda Borough within the town boundaries, i.e. the area directly to the north of the LAP lands. The Drogheda Development Plan notes that the town has grown significantly in the past few years and is reaching its natural capacity. It is acknowledged that with the population of the Greater Drogheda Area expected to grow to 70,000 by the year 2020 there is a need to coordinate future development

Urban Centre	Planning Permission Granted – No Construct. Started	Houses Under Construct.	Committed No. of Units	Projected Number of H'holds 2006 - 2009	Projected Number of H'holds 2010 - 2013	Total 2006 - 2013	No. of Units to Meet H'hold Targets	Remain. Undev. Resid. Zoned Land (Ha)	Density per hectare	Yield of Remaining Undev. Zoned Land
Drogheda Environs	1,111	227	1,338	1,100	2,400	3,500	2,162	56	35	1,963

Table 4.1: Extract from Table 6 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013

with the adjoining local authorities.

The plan also recognises that there is a need for increased density of new housing in the area and the redevelopment of brownfield sites close to the town centre and transport corridors. The plan states that:

*“Within a relatively confined area such as Drogheda Borough, it is no longer appropriate to provide new housing purely in the form of low density detached or semi-detached two storey dwellings.... The changes in the form of housing to be provided in the future is the result of a rising population and falling numbers of people per household thereby signalling the need to meet actual demand through the provision of a range of family size and small household accommodation”.*

The plan also notes that there is a need for more job creation in the area to support this growing population and to reduce the numbers commuting to Dublin. The town lacks significant Foreign Direct Investment and really only has a number of small manufacturing firms. The area also has the

potential to develop its tourism market as it boasts a number of historic sites and areas of great beauty.

Although the town has had significant improvements in transportation in the last few years including the completion of the M1 Motorway and a new fleet of trains on the suburban commuter line the plan emphasises the need for the Northern Access Route and also a Southern Access Route.

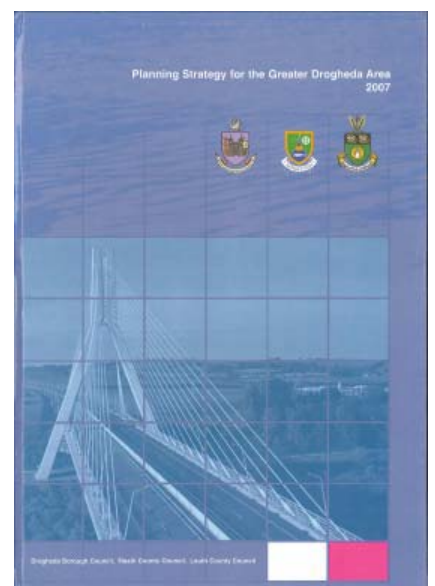
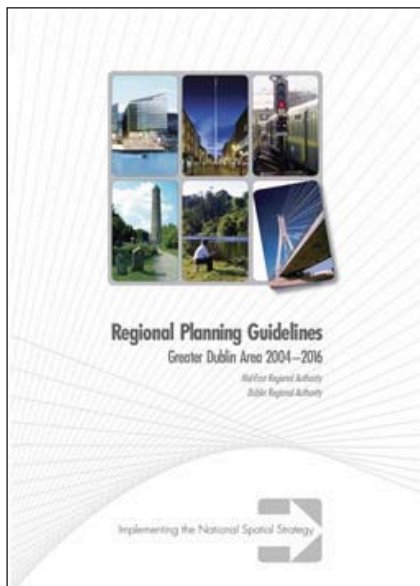
#### 4.4.5 Local Area Plan for the Northern Drogheda Environs, 2007-2013

This Local Area Plan was adopted in 2004. It states that demand for development in Drogheda and in particular the lands to the North of the town have increased in recent years. However in the absence of a development policy and insufficient infrastructure services to the north of the town many planning applications were refused. The aim of the plan therefore was to facilitate development in an orderly fashion.

Before the lands in the Northern Environs Plan can be developed it is essential that infrastructure constraints are addressed and the Northern Access Route completed. The plan states that these lands have the potential to accommodate a population of up to 20,000 people if these issues are addressed.

#### 4.4.6 North Drogheda Environs Masterplan

The North Drogheda Environs Masterplan has been adopted following the recommendations of the Local Area Plan. It sets out a detailed development framework for approximately 254 hectares of land which has been split into three separate but integrated neighbourhoods. Similarly to the Local Area Plan it provides for the Northern Port Access Route and other infrastructure essential to the area.



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#### **4.4.7 Drogheda Transportation Study**

A traffic management study for the town of Drogheda was commissioned by Drogheda Borough Council and published in 2006. This sets out a number of specific transport management recommendations for the town centre and beyond.

The majority of the report focuses on traffic improvements in the town centre. However, some recommendations are included for areas beyond the town centre and in particular to the main approach corridors to the town and new strategic road links.

The study further notes that in the context of the anticipated population growth, future public transport bus routes should be planned to cater for future residential growth. These should be based on a desirable walking distance of 400 metres to a bus stop. Some potential future bus routes are identified in the study.

The detailed recommendations of the strategy have informed this Local Area Plan and are referred to in various sections of the Plan.

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