



Comhairle Contae Lú  
Louth County Council



# DUNDALK LOCAL AREA PLAN 2024-2030

PRE-DRAFT ISSUES PAPER



## Introduction

Louth County Council intends to prepare a Local Area Plan (hereafter referred to as 'the Plan' or 'LAP') for Dundalk. This Plan will provide a framework and land use strategy for the future growth of Dundalk for the benefit of the town and its citizens. A fundamental objective of the Plan is to create an environment where Dundalk can fulfil its potential and continue to be a focal point for population and economic growth and investment in the north-east of the country. There will be a strong emphasis placed on consolidation and urban regeneration and the promotion of sustainable patterns of development that encourages the creation of a vibrant urban core where there is a quality and attractive working and living environment.

## Purpose of the Issues Paper

This Issues Paper is intended to give a broad overview of the key issues facing Dundalk that will encourage members of the public and interested parties to engage in the process and make a submission.

This Issues Paper gives the citizens of Dundalk and any interested parties an opportunity to shape the future of the town to have their say when it comes to the issues that they feel are important. This could include issues such as housing, the economy, social and community facilities, the environment, or transport.

If you wish to contribute to the preparation of this Plan a submission can be made at this Pre-Draft stage **on or before 4.30pm on Friday 30th June 2023**. Further details on how to make a submission are set out on the Louth County Council Portal at <https://consult.louthcoco.ie/>

## What is a Local Area Plan?

A Local Area Plan is a statutory planning document that provides a detailed planning strategy for a specific area or settlement. It provides a mechanism for implementing national, regional, and county development plan policy at a local level. The Plan will include a written statement that sets out the narrative and policy framework for Dundalk. Alongside this, a book of maps detailing land use zonings and areas of environmental interest will be provided. Environmental Assessments to be carried out as part of the preparation of the Plan will be included in an appendix.

Regional Policy Objective 4.19 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region requires that an Urban Area Plan is to be prepared for Dundalk. National Policy Objective 70 of the National Planning Framework (NPF) indicates that Urban Area Plans will be prepared under the provisions of the legislation of local area plans. In the absence of legislation that expressly provides for 'Urban Area Plans' this Plan is being prepared in the first instance as a Local Area Plan.

## Who will make the Dundalk Local Area Plan?

The making of the Dundalk Local Area Plan is a reserved function for the elected members of Louth County Council. The elected members will therefore vote to make the Plan. At each stage of the process they will be assisted by Council officials.



# How will the Plan affect me?

The Plan will provide a spatial framework for the future growth of Dundalk. It will identify the areas for residential and employment related development and where community and neighbourhood facilities such as schools, playing fields, shops and local services will be provided. Planning applications will be assessed against the land use zoning and policy objectives of the Plan together with any associated guidance documents and relevant national, regional, or county development plan policy.

## National and Regional Policy

The National Planning Framework (NPF) provides the framework for planning policy at a national level. This is supported by the National Development Plan (NDP), which sets out the investment strategy in capital infrastructure projects to be progressed and delivered across the country. Combined, these documents are known as Project Ireland 2040.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region sets out the mechanism for delivering the NPF at a regional level. The regional role of Dundalk is recognised in national and regional policy through its designation as a Regional Growth Centre in the NPF and RSES.

The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 provides the framework and strategy for implementing national and regional policy at a county level. This is demonstrated in the prioritisation of Dundalk for growth and the position of the town at the top of the settlement hierarchy in the County Development Plan.

The Dundalk Local Area Plan will be required to be consistent with the County Development Plan and demonstrate how national and regional policy is being implemented at a local level.

## Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied)

The current Louth County Development Plan was adopted in 2021. Variation No.1 was adopted in July 2022. The Written Statement in Volume 1 of the County Development Plan includes text and policy objectives specifically relating to Dundalk. A land use zoning map for Dundalk was published in Volume 1A of the County Development Plan. This will provide the framework for the preparation of the Local Area Plan.

# Strategy for the Future Development of Dundalk

The development strategy for Dundalk will focus on creating a vibrant, well connected town with quality neighbourhoods that are attractive for people to live in and businesses to invest. There will be an emphasis on urban regeneration through the redevelopment of under-utilised buildings and land which will assist in the consolidation of the urban core and the creation of a more compact settlement. Consideration will be given to the potential suitable locations for taller buildings in Dundalk and how this can assist in achieving higher densities and compact growth. The management and protection of natural assets and ensuring the town is resilient to and can respond to the impacts of climate change will ensure the sustainable growth of the town for existing and future generations.

## Growth Strategy – Key Questions

1. How should the Plan promote the concept of compact growth and what areas should be targeted for consolidation?
2. How can we encourage more people to live in the urban core of the town close to employment and services?
3. Where higher residential densities are proposed, how can we ensure that appropriate standards of urban design and architecture are achieved to ensure sustainable and liveable communities?
4. What criteria are important in the assessment of higher density proposals?
5. What areas of Dundalk are suitable for taller buildings?

## Regeneration Projects

Following on from the successful delivery of the public realm scheme on Clanbrassil Street, the Council continues to support projects that will revitalise the town centre and create vibrant and attractive spaces for businesses to operate and people to shop and socialise. Two areas of the town centre where there will be a particular focus on regeneration are The Long Walk and St. Nicholas Quarter.

Both the Long Walk and St. Nicholas Quarter projects are funded under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

The Long Walk Quarter consists of the Carroll Village and Long Walk Shopping Centres, Dundalk Bus Station and areas to the east of the Long Walk Road. There is an opportunity to create a new living quarter in this part of the town that will be distinctive and include flexible civic spaces for a range of cultural, recreational, and community uses.

St. Nicholas Quarter is an area of Dundalk that has high levels of vacancy and dereliction and where ad hoc development has taken place. The primary elements of the St. Nicholas Quarter Project are public realm works to enhance the streetscape and the provision of new routes through the backlands to allow for greater permeability and enable the release of under-utilised lands for redevelopment.

## Regeneration – Key Questions

1. What areas of Dundalk in addition to the Long Walk and St. Nicholas Quarter should be identified and prioritised for regeneration?
2. What measures should be used to encourage vacant sites, the upper floors of buildings, and under-utilised lands to be brought back into use?

# Quality Homes and Sustainable Communities

As the population of Dundalk continues to grow, it is important there is an adequate supply and range of housing types, sizes and tenures of housing to meet the needs of the entire community. It is also critical that the town grows on a sustainable platform that will encourage residents, workers, and school children to walk, cycle, or use public transport. For this reason the more centrally located infill and brownfield lands will be prioritised for growth.

## Quality Homes – Key Questions

1. What are the key housing related issues in Dundalk?
2. What type of housing would you like to see built?
3. What areas in Dundalk would you like to see housing developed?

## Social and Community

The provision of social and community infrastructure in appropriate locations is an essential component of building sustainable, properly planned, and healthy communities. With a significant population increase projected in Dundalk it is important that the Plan considers how the town will cater for new and growing communities and an increasingly diverse population.

In addition to facilitating the provision of social and community infrastructure the Local Area Plan will also seek to respond to the issue of social exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage by creating inclusive communities where everyone has access to services, housing, and facilities to meet their needs.

## Social and Community – Key Questions

1. How can the Plan promote social inclusion?
2. What do we need to consider to enable us to meet the needs of an ageing population, people with disabilities, children, young people, and ethnic minorities?
3. What type of community facilities and local services are needed in existing and new residential communities?
4. What community infrastructure and sports facilities are lacking and where should these be located?

## Climate Action and Flooding

Land use and spatial planning has a fundamental role to play in reducing our carbon footprint. At a national level, the Climate Action Plan 2023 seeks to put the country on a more sustainable path by cutting emissions, creating a cleaner, greener economy and society, and protecting people from the consequences of climate change. Louth County Council is currently preparing a Climate Action Plan for the County. It is anticipated this will be published in February 2024 and will include specific actions for the Dundalk-Blackrock Decarbonisation Zone. The Council also has a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy addressing adaptation (planning proactively to take action and make adjustments to minimise or avoid the existing and anticipated impacts from climate change) and mitigation (the efforts made to reduce the severity of future climate change impacts by reducing the emission of greenhouse gases).

This Plan will have a key role in facilitating and promoting tangible actions to address climate change. The Council will engage with the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) to assist in the integration of climate adaptation and mitigation into the policy objectives of the Plan. Adaptation measures refer to measures which can reduce the negative impact of climate change, while mitigation measures refer to measures that can be undertaken to reduce emissions.

Climate change will bring challenges to Dundalk in the area of flood risk. This relates to more extreme weather events and a rise in mean sea levels. The Council, in partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW) are advancing a Flood Relief Scheme for Dundalk and Blackrock that will mitigate against any potential impacts of flood risk in the town.



## Climate Action and Flooding – Key Questions

1. How can this Plan facilitate the transition of the Dundalk-Blackrock Decarbonisation Zone to a low carbon community?
2. How can energy conservation and sources of renewable energy be better encouraged?
3. How can this Plan address the challenges associated with climate change to enable Dundalk become more resilient to the impacts of climate change?

## Economy and Employment

The location of Dundalk along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, with excellent access to Dublin and Belfast via the road and rail network, in addition to the connectivity the port facilities at Dundalk and Greenore provide means the town is well positioned to attract economic investment. There is a strong base of both indigenous and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) businesses in the town. These businesses benefit from the presence of a third level institute, Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT), which provides opportunities for collaboration and a talented and educated workforce.

This Plan will seek to facilitate the continuation of inward investment in the town alongside the expansion and consolidation of existing businesses. This will ensure that Dundalk can strengthen its position as a driver for economic growth and development in the north east of the country.

It is important to ensure there are sufficient lands available to facilitate economic investment and that the associated infrastructure investment required to release these lands for development is delivered in a timely manner.

## Economy and Employment – Key Questions

1. How can the Plan assist in supporting existing businesses and attracting new employment to Dundalk?
2. How can Dundalk best maximise its attractiveness and strengths for economic investment?
3. How can the Plan address issues of economic deprivation in Dundalk and spread the benefits of economic growth to all sectors of society?

## Retailing and Town Centre First

Changing consumer habits combined with advances in technology continue to have a significant impact on the retail sector. However the retail offering in Dundalk remains strong and the recent investment in the public realm in Market Square and Clanbrassil Street has created an attractive public space that contributes to a vibrancy in the town centre which makes it an appealing destination for people to shop and socialise. The Marshes Shopping Centre is the primary destination for comparison shopping, while Dundalk Retail Park off the Inner Relief Road is the primary destination for bulky goods.

Beyond the Clanbrassil Street/Earl Street area of the town centre there is an increased level of vacancy. This is particularly evident in the Longwalk Shopping Centre and as you travel north of Clanbrassil Street onto Bridge Street. The former Carroll Village Shopping Centre and the former Dunnes Stores on Park Street in addition to Williamsons Mall are prominent sites with significant redevelopment potential in the town centre.

The Council will continue to work closely with businesses and the various stakeholders in investment and regeneration projects in the town centre area. This includes the progression of the projects at the Long Walk and St. Nicholas Quarter along with the implementation of any initiatives identified under the Town Centre First policy document.

## Retailing and Town Centre First - Key Questions

1. How can the Plan support retailing in the town centre and ensure the town centre remains the primary shopping destination in Dundalk?
2. What do you think the appropriate balance and mix is between retail and other town centre uses such as leisure, food, and retail services?
3. How can the evening and night time economy be developed for the benefit of Dundalk?
4. How can the 'Town Centre First Approach' assist in revitalising Dundalk town centre and address the issue of vacancy?
5. What are your thoughts on facilitating residential development in vacant buildings in the town centre?
6. How can we encourage the reuse of vacant properties and address dereliction?

## Movement

Dundalk is a multi-modal settlement that benefits from excellent road and rail connectivity between Dublin and Belfast. There is also a strong network of regional and local roads that links Dundalk with key settlements in the County and wider region. These links and connectivity are important in supporting economic growth and investment.

A Local Transport Plan will be prepared for Dundalk as part of the Local Area Plan and will seek to ensure the integration of land use and transport planning. It will also provide a framework for the investment in and development of transport infrastructure in Dundalk.

Public transport in the town includes an inter-city and commuter rail service, a town bus service linking residential areas with the town centre, and a regional bus service linking Dundalk with Dublin airport, city centre, and large urban centres including Drogheda, Ardee, and Newry.

As part of the strategy of promoting active travel the Council, in association with the National Transport Authority, are progressing a number of projects in walking and cycling infrastructure. This will include the upgrade of existing infrastructure, the widening of footpaths, and the construction of segregated cycle lanes and will make walking and cycling a safer and more attractive mode of transport for residents and workers in the town.

Alongside investment in active travel projects, the Council also recognises the need for the road infrastructure in the town to maintain its capacity to accommodate the additional traffic arising from an increased population and economic activity associated with its designation as a Regional Growth Centre. This includes the upgrade to Mount Avenue, which will improve the link between the Castletown Road and the Carrickmacross Road. The construction of this road, which has recently commenced, will unlock strategically located lands zoned for residential development in proximity to the town centre and rail station.

The Council will also support the switch to electric vehicles and will facilitate the provision of public charging points in appropriate locations, in association with the stakeholders involved in the roll-out of this infrastructure.

## Movement - Key Questions

1. Do you find it easy to access local amenities by foot or bike?
2. How can we encourage people to travel more sustainably such as walk, cycle, or use public transport?
3. What improvements would you like to see in public transport services both within Dundalk and connecting the town to other centres?
4. Where are the most suitable locations for a Park and Ride/Park and Stride facility in Dundalk?
5. Where would you like to see electric vehicle charging points provided?

# Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Heritage

The coastal location of Dundalk along the mouth of the Castletown River provides the town with a wide network of ecologically important habitats that are rich in biodiversity. Dundalk Bay is a designated Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area. These areas, in addition to the other green spaces in the town including parks and open spaces are important assets that provide the town with an attractive setting and enable residents and visitors to enjoy an active and healthy lifestyle.

As the population of Dundalk increases, it is important that the Council continues to be proactive in the management of its green spaces, designated sites, and protected habitats. As part of the green infrastructure strategy of this Plan the Council will seek to identify additional walks and spaces for people to enjoy and where biodiversity and nature can thrive. The potential role of open spaces in mitigating against the impacts of climate change through carbon capture, enhancing biodiversity, sustainable water management, and flood resilience will be considered as part of the implementation of the green infrastructure strategy.

## Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Recreation and Natural Heritage – Key Questions

1. How do we promote the health, environmental, and heritage benefits of green infrastructure?
2. How do we integrate green solutions within compact urban development?
3. How do we manage our natural assets as the population of Dundalk continues to grow?
4. How can the Plan protect and enhance the biodiversity of Dundalk?



## Built Heritage and Archaeology

The built heritage of Dundalk, which includes Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian style buildings, contributes to a distinct sense of place and building style in the town. These buildings and their associated uses, which include residential, commercial, civic, and religious uses provide an important link to the past and give an indication of the origins and historic uses of buildings and spaces in the town. Areas of particular architectural or historic interest in the town are recognised in their designation as Architectural Conservation Areas. The Plan will continue to promote the rich built and archaeological heritage of Dundalk. It will seek to achieve a balance in supporting the re-use and regeneration of under-utilised spaces and buildings that will enable the regeneration of the urban core of the town, whilst, at the same time respecting the historic fabric of these buildings and spaces.

## Built Heritage and Archaeology – Key Questions

1. How can we encourage the sensitive reuse of redundant or derelict buildings?
2. How can we achieve a balance between protecting the built heritage of Dundalk whilst also facilitating the regeneration of the urban core of the town?
3. How can Dundalk's archaeological and built heritage be protected?



# Water Services Infrastructure

The provision of secure and resilient water and waste water infrastructure that has the capacity to meet the needs of future population and businesses is critical in ensuring the sustainable growth of Dundalk.

The water supply in Dundalk is served by the Cavan Hill Water Treatment Plant and Greenmount Water Treatment Plant. There are constraints in the water supply network in the town, particularly to the north of the Castletown River. Irish Water are investigating potential solutions to address these constraints.

Wastewater in Dundalk is directed to a Wastewater Treatment Plant at Soldiers Point and a Wastewater Treatment Plant at Blackrock. Whilst there is capacity in the treatment plants to accommodate additional loading there are constraints in the network. Irish Water are currently preparing a Drainage Area Plan for Dundalk that will identify the investments required in the network in order to facilitate development.

## Water Services Infrastructure - Key Questions

1. What water services infrastructure projects should be prioritised during this Plan?
2. How can we ensure that developments in Dundalk do not contribute to the deterioration in water quality including ground water, rivers, and coastal waterways?

## Environmental Assessments

Environmental Assessments are a crucial element of the plan making process, with these assessments reviewing the potential environmental impacts of the implementation of policy objectives.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) will be carried out. The Plan can only be adopted if it will not affect the integrity of a Natura 2000 Site.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will identify all types of flood risk in Dundalk and will assist in making informed land use planning decisions and formulating policy objectives relating to flood risk.

These assessments will be available for public inspection as part of the Draft Plan when it is placed on public display.

## Next Steps

Following completion of the pre-draft stage of public consultation the Forward Planning Team will commence the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan, which will be informed by stakeholder engagement and the submissions received under the pre-draft consultation. The statutory process will begin when the Draft Plan goes on public display. The public display period is six weeks, during which time there will be an opportunity to make a submission and attend public consultation events.



# Public Consultation

Join the conversation and ‘Have Your Say’ in shaping the future development of Dundalk

A series of Public Consultation drop-in sessions will be facilitated by staff from the Forward Planning Section of Louth County Council, as follows:

Public Consultation Drop-in Sessions	Date	Time
<b>Dundalk Library, Roden Place, Dundalk, Co. Louth A91 RC44</b>	Tuesday, 6th June, 2023	4:30pm -7:45pm
	Thursday 8th June, 2023	4:30pm -7:45pm
<b>Workshop and Neighbourhood Walk - This workshop will seek to promote public engagement in the preparation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan. Further details are available at <a href="https://consult.louthcoco.ie/">https://consult.louthcoco.ie/</a></b>	Tuesday 13th June, 2023	4:30pm -7:45pm

## Making a Submission

Submissions should be made by **one** medium only, in writing or via our online portal.

All written submissions should include your name, address, and, if applicable, details of the organisation or group you represent on a separate sheet to the actual submission.

There will be a series of ‘drop in’ sessions, so you can come and talk to us directly about what you think the Plan should include.

Further details on the Issues Paper and how to make a submission are set out on the online consultation portal <https://consult.louthcoco.ie/>

Any queries in relation to this Issues Paper can be emailed to [dundalklap@louthcoco.ie](mailto:dundalklap@louthcoco.ie)

## Where do I send my submission?

**In Writing:**  
Dundalk LAP  
Forward Planning  
Town Hall, Crowe Street  
Dundalk, Co. Louth  
A91W20C

**Consultation Portal:** <https://consult.louthcoco.ie/>

Submissions/observations in relation to the Issues Paper for the Dundalk Local Area Plan may be made during the public consultation period, from **Thursday 01st June, 2023, until 4.30pm on Friday 30th June, 2023** (inclusive).