

## 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 5.1 Introduction and Context

This chapter sets out the Council's policies and proposals, which are aimed at promoting and enabling economic development and tourism within the plan area. This chapter gives effect to the Strategic Objective for Economic Development.

#### SO1

***Assist in the development of Dundalk's Gateway status as a Regional Employment Growth Centre & Regional Shopping Destination.***



#### 5.1.1 National and Regional Context

It is a priority of the National Development Plan 2000-2006 to promote sustainable growth and employment. The National Development Plan identifies key determinants of sustained economic performance, both nationally and regionally, and these include:

- Ease of access to foreign and domestic markets.
- A modern telecommunications network.
- Back-up research and technology infrastructure which is accessible to enterprises in all sectors.
- A well developed educational system.
- A highly qualified and skilled workforce.
- High quality physical infrastructure, including inter-urban transport and energy transmission systems.
- An adequate supply of housing.
- A good overall quality of life and;
- A high quality and sustainable environment.

The areas that are best endowed with these characteristics are generally the larger urban centres, which have a strategic location relative to their surrounding territory. These areas possess good social and economic infrastructure and support services, and have the potential to open up their zones of influence to further development. The cities and towns with this capability are envisaged in the National Development Plan as developmental "gateways", able to drive growth throughout their zones of influence and

generate a dynamic of development that, which inclusively, recognises and exploits the relationship between city, town, village and rural area.

The central thrust of the Government's National Development Policy is to facilitate the further development of the major urban centres that already function as gateways; Dundalk being such a town.

## **5.2 Background to the Local Economy**

Dundalk's strategic location on the metropolitan corridor equidistant between Dublin and Belfast places it in a position, which makes it attractive to potential investors. Dundalk benefits from excellent existing infrastructure, including rail links and road links that have been improved during the last plan period. The peace process in Northern Ireland has also been of great benefit to Dundalk's development.

Dundalk has a strong industrial tradition but has suffered from high levels of unemployment in the past and unemployment continues to be a concern within the area.

In the past, the proximity to the border has acted as an impediment to local economic development. However, there is now considerable potential to take advantage of the proximity, and this gateway location for inward investment opportunities.

There is an opportunity to utilise this strategic location to help bridge the gap between the North and South, encouraging more trade linkages between businesses both sides of the border. The town is strategically located midway between Dublin and Belfast, in the E01 corridor which has been defined as part of the National Spatial Strategy as being of strategic importance for economic development. Dundalk can act as the gateway link and a regional economic growth centre, between the two major cities on the island.

## **5.3 Employment Context**

### **5.3.1 Demographics**

The statistics in this chapter have utilised census figures of 1996 as the baseline information. The Quarterly National Household Survey and Dundalk Live register provide more up to date figures on employment.

The total population figures for Dundalk and the environs are estimated to have increased significantly from 33,474 in 1996 to an estimated 39,137 in 2002<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to Addendum in Section 1.16 Chapter 1

**Table 5.1** Total Estimated Population for Dundalk and Environs<sup>2</sup>

Year	Total Population
1991	33,474
1996	33,740
2002	39,137 (estimated)

**Table 5.2** Unemployment Levels in Dundalk 1981 –1993

Year	Labour Force	Unemployment	Per Cent %
1981	9488	1267	13.4
1986	9902	2719	27.5
1991	9899	2770	27.9
1996*	11158	2760	24.7

Table 5.2 includes Dundalk Urban, Ballymascanlon, Castletown, Dundalk Rural and Haggardstown.

Dundalk has suffered high unemployment levels when compared with the national rate. In 1986, unemployment in Dundalk was estimated to be 27.5% compared to the national level at 17.9%. Between 1981 to 1991, unemployment continued to rise significantly with the number of unemployed people in Dundalk from 13.4% to 27.9%. In 1996 the unemployment rate had dropped by almost 3.2%, which represented a similar decrease to, that which was experienced nationally.

**Table 5.3** Persons aged 15 yrs & over in each DED of Dundalk & Environs Plan Area, Classified by principle economic status in 1996<sup>4</sup>

DED	Employed	Unemployed	% Unemployed of labour force
Dundalk Urban	8364	2364	22.0
Ballymascanlon	665	116	14.9
Castletown	468	60	11.4
Dundalk Rural	180	33	15.5
Haggardstown	1481	187	11.2
Total	11158	2760	24.7

In 1996, Dundalk and the Environs had an unemployment rate of 24.7%. The area of highest unemployment was identified as Dundalk Urban at 22%, whilst the area with the lowest unemployment levels was Haggardstown at 11.2%.

<sup>2</sup> 1991-1996 projections (source: CSO, *Louth Population Report, Co. Louth*, pp. 5, 1996) and 2001 projection estimated based on County Louth Housing Strategy– see. pp.87 of *Dundalk and Environs Draft Development Plan 2003-2008 and addendum*

<sup>3</sup> 1981-1991 projections (source: DUJDC, *Dundalk Development Plan 1996*, pp. 12)

\* This total is for Dundalk Urban, Ballymascanlon, Castletown, Dundalk Rural, Haggardstown, CSO, *Louth Population Report, Co. Louth*, pp. 44, 1996

<sup>4</sup> Source – CSO, *Louth Population Report, Co. Louth*, pp. 44, 1996)

Compared to the national level of unemployment, Dundalk Urban, Ballymascanlon and Dundalk Rural were all higher.

**Table 5.4** *An analysis of Dundalk's Labour Force in Principle Occupation Groups<sup>5</sup>*

Sector	Female	Male	Total	% of Labour Force
Agriculture/Forestry & Fishing	69	861	930	6.7
Producers, Makers & Repairers	926	3313	4239	30.5
Labourers & unskilled	116	915	1031	7.4
Transport & Communications	108	1065	1173	8.4
Clerical	1448	571	2019	14.5
Commerce/ Insurance/Finance	807	1411	2218	15.9
Service Workers	714	617	1331	9.6
Professional /Technical	942	1028	1970	14.2
Others	239	946	1185	8.5
Looking for first regular job	210	310	520	3.7

In 1996 the highest percentage of the labour force for Dundalk and Environs was within the production manufacturing and repairers sector. Whilst the lowest percentage was in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector (excluding the first regular job seekers sector), with 1.2% of the labour force as agricultural workers and 2% of the labour force being farmers. The second and third highest sectors of employment in the area were the commerce/insurance/finance sector and the clerical sector respectively.

In terms of classification, the highest category of employment in Dundalk and Environs region was the non-skilled manual sector (36.5% of the labour force) and the next largest category was within the manual skilled sector (30.1% of the labour force). This can be related to the high level of industry in the area.

**Table 5.5** *Persons aged 15 yrs and over in Dundalk and the Environs classified by socio-economic group.*

Town	Employer/ Manager	Higher profess.	Lower profess.	Non-skilled manual	Manual Skilled	Semi-skilled	Un-Skilled	Own Account workers	Farmers	Agri. Workers.	All others Gainfully Occupied & Unknown
Dundalk & Environs	2799	1034	1883	5075	4260	3476	2331	1195	283	163	2981
% of labour force	20.1	7.4	13.5	36.5	30.1	25.0	16.7	8.6	2.0	1.2	21.4

<sup>5</sup> Source: Dundalk Chamber of Commerce, "Dundalk 2000 and Beyond – A Vision for Economic Development", pp.22, 1998

### 5.3.2 The Quarterly National Household Survey

Since 1996, national unemployment rates have decreased significantly from 14.8% in 1996 to 3.6% in March 2001. One of the main reasons for this is the increase in foreign investment into Ireland's economy, especially the IT sector.

**Table 5.6** *National Unemployment Rates.* <sup>6</sup>

Year	Mar '99	Mar' 00	Mar' 01
<b>Total %</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>

Between the years 1999 and 2001 the rate of unemployment had been decreasing steadily from 5.9% in 1999 to 3.6% in March 2001. However since 2001, it is estimated that unemployment levels have risen somewhat in line with national trends.

**Table 5.7** *Persons aged 15 yrs and over classified by Border region and ILO economic status (in '000s)*<sup>7</sup>

Timeframe	In Labour Force	Unemployed	% Unemployment rate
Mar-May '99	171.3	14.9	8.7
Mar-May '00	173.1	11.5	6.6
Mar-May '01	179.6	9.9	5.5

The overall percentage of unemployed persons in the Border Region in 2001 was 5.5%, which represents a 3.2% decrease since 1999. The Border Region includes Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth.

This unemployment rate is higher than the national average of 3.6%, which indicates lower levels of investment and employment in this region. The geographical location of this area, close to Northern Ireland, has been considered to be the main cause for this lack of interest from outside investors over the previous years. However, with the peace process ongoing, there is significant potential for increased growth and investment within the plan area. Much new growth is already occurring which will gradually help in decreasing the rate of unemployment. The future state of the national economy will also have a major influence on this rate.

---

<sup>6</sup> www.cso.ie

<sup>7</sup> Source: www.cso.ie

### 5.3.3 Dundalk Social Welfare Local Office

**Table 5.8** *Live Register for Dundalk Urban Area<sup>8</sup>*

Year	March '99	March'00	March'01
Total	3900	3303	3200
% Pop. Of DUDC	13.6	11.5	11.2

The Live Register in Dundalk provides details on the numbers of persons receiving social welfare and those who are full-time unemployed in the Dundalk urban area. It also includes those who work part-time or receive other benefit. In this case, the figures cannot be treated as wholly representative of the numbers of unemployed for the plan area as it will include a variety of part-time and other social welfare recipients.

The unemployment percentages have been calculated against the total population of the Dundalk urban area during the period March 1999 to March 2001. In 2001, the percentage of the population on the live register was 11.2%, which is considerably high. The national average of unemployed was 3.6% and although the live register includes part-time workers, it is still quite a high percentage in comparison. However, there have been more positive signs in recent times, as the percentage has been decreasing slowly since 1999.

**Table 5.9** *Live Register for the Border Area*

Year	March'99	March' 00	March' 01
Total	29752	26006	23800
% of Labour Force	17.4	15.0	13.3

The Quarterly National Household Survey displays that the percentage of persons unemployed in the border region for March 2001 was approximately 5.5% of the labour force. However, according to the Live Register the percentage of those receiving benefit in March 2001 was 13.3%. This significant increase demonstrates the large number of people on the Live Register who may also work part-time. This number is 13,900, which represents those persons receiving welfare whilst working part-time or are receiving other benefit also.

## 5.4 Recent Developments

The role of the Council is largely as the facilitator of economic development, in conjunction with the private sector. The Council would not normally be directly involved in the implementation of the various economic development initiatives but would seek to work in partnership with the various agencies in forwarding the economic objectives for the plan area.

---

<sup>8</sup> Central Statistics Office, 2001

Since 1996 there has been a significant amount of economic development within Dundalk and its environs. A considerable number of the objectives set out in the previous plan have been achieved to help in furthering the employment opportunities of the area.

The objectives achieved include environmental improvements and upgrading of areas in the Coe's Road Industrial Estate, within the town centre and along the main traffic arteries of the town in line with the aspirations set out in the plan. The museum and library complex has been completed which provides an important resource for the further development of the tourism sector;

Dundalk has benefited greatly during the previous plan period from an influx of investment into the town with new technology companies establishing themselves in the area. However, the recent downturn in the technology industry has made Ireland vulnerable and Dundalk is no exception to this.



The Development Plan can help to act as facilitator identifying suitable land for business and helping to ensure through policy implementation and partnership working that Dundalk remains an attractive place in which to locate business.

One of the key areas, which the plan aims to target, is the indigenous sector. Currently, this sector suffers from a lack of appropriate floorspace and provision is made in this plan to identify appropriate land to meet the local business interest in a choice of locations so that there is potential to expand or relocate into the area.

## **5.5 Employment Land Use**

The previous development plan zoned an additional 130 acres (53 hectares) of land for employment purposes. At a density of 25 workers per acre (60 per hectare), this was considered adequate to accommodate 3,250 employees. This land was mainly located immediately to the South West of the town and at the Finnabair Industrial Estate.

The Blackrock/Haynestown Development Plan 2000 also zoned substantial lands for employment purposes. The majority of these lands are located either side of the new link road from the motorway to the junction with the Dublin Road. The amount of land zoned was approximately 300 hectares, which, according to the same density assumptions, could accommodate up to approximately 18,000 workers. This is clearly a substantial amount of land but much of it is not currently serviced by adequate infrastructure. The Blackrock

plan states that the main purpose of these lands is to provide sufficient supply to attract international mobile investment and much of the land is in IDA ownership for inward investment purposes.

While there is a considerable amount of land already zoned for employment purposes, there is still considerable potential to zone land to accommodate local needs as well as for inward investment. Providing a choice of locations for employment will help to stimulate investment in other locations within the plan area allowing for more sustainable development.

A particular need has been identified for accommodating additional employment land and business parks specifically aimed at local enterprise. This would partly be new enterprise setting up as well as incubator units. It would also help to ensure that there are adequate sites in a choice of locations to enable the relocation of some businesses currently within or close to the town centre. This would help to benefit local business, help to improve the town centre environment and enable businesses sufficient space for expansion, in more appropriate locations.

The plan has therefore sought to identify new lands suitable for the development of new business parks and light industrial estates that would be suitable to accommodate such businesses. One of the prime areas identified for new business and light industrial activity has been to the north of Dundalk. Two areas have been identified for office/light industrial and storage and distribution to the north of the Castletown River. This will help to counter balance the level of development that has occurred in recent years to the south, especially at Blackrock and stimulate greater interest in this area.

The first area is to the south of the Armagh Road and another immediately to the south west of the Ballymascanlon roundabout. These two areas amount to an additional 110 hectares (approx.) of zoned land, sufficient to accommodate potential additional 6,600 workers. This is expected to provide more than enough land to the needs arising from the population forecast in this plan period, which is 37 hectares, based on an additional 6,405<sup>9</sup> population, 2,754 of whom would be anticipated to be economically active. These areas provide for additional employment land supply to allow choice in the market and the opportunity for existing business to relocate to alternative locations beyond that available in Dundalk at the current time.

In addition to these lands to the north of the Castletown River, a new significant area of land has been zoned for business purposes to the east of the Dublin Road. In recognition of the residential nature of this area, the residential interest will be protected but there is considerable flexibility to extend the mix of uses to include light industry, offices etc.

An additional area has been zoned for town centre uses to the south of the Ramparts Road. This additional town centre zoning allows for strategic town

---

<sup>9</sup> Estimated population projection, based upon Louth County Housing Strategy figures.



centre expansion space over the long term and will also provide for a substantial level of employment opportunities.

The Development Plan has sought to increase flexibility and encourage more opportunities for employment. This is to be achieved through the development of new employment zones and new business parks. Overall, an additional 200ha's approx. of land has been zoned for business and industrial use, to provide opportunities for the growth and enhancement of Dundalk as a regional employment centre, over the plan period and beyond.

## **5.6 Tourism and Leisure Potential**

Dundalk has not traditionally been seen as a tourism destination but the town and environs has considerable potential to capitalise on its picturesque and historic environment. The setting in the context of the Cooley Mountains makes the area a particularly attractive one and the rivers and coastal scenery adds to the attraction.

Dundalk is steeped in a rich heritage and the Development Plan seeks to prioritise the protection and enhancement of the heritage interests for the local community and visitors. One of the priority areas within the Plan is to designate the Castletown Motte and Bailey as a Local Archaeological Heritage Site. Dundalk has a substantial archaeological and historical heritage that can be explored and promoted. The historic association with Cu Chulainn and the Tain, could well be capitalised upon to make Dundalk and environs a heritage and cultural destination for tourists.

In addition, there are opportunities to open up the river and coastal areas of the town and this is an objective of the Development Plan, particularly to encourage low intensity development for leisure and recreation purposes and improving access to these areas. Building on its traditional status as a resort serving a wide hinterland, there is also significant potential to develop Blackrock as an amenity area catering for watersports (windsurfing, water-skiing, boating etc.) and for the enhancement of its beaches and on-shore facilities.

## **5.7 Economic Development Policy**

While there are clear limitations to the influence that the Council can have on employment creation, the Council will wherever possible use its influence to promote and facilitate employment creation in Dundalk, in land-use terms and through working with the key organisations to identify needs and requirements.

In particular, the Council will have regard to the need to continually improve and upgrade the environment of the town in such a manner as to provide an increasing range of social, sporting and recreation facilities. Similarly, the Council will seek to continue to improve the physical appearance of the town so as to increase the attractiveness of Dundalk as a place to live and to locate new businesses.

### 5.7.1 Control of Major Accidents

The Council will also have regard to relevant EU, National and Regional Policy in relation to the zoning of new employment land and the siting of major new employment uses.

The Council will seek to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents are taken into account in the land use policies. Most notably through the siting of new establishments, the modification of existing establishments and new developments in the vicinity of existing establishments, in line with the Major Accidents Directive 96/82/EC (SEVESO II).

#### **ED1 Control of Major Accidents;**

*The Council will have regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive 96/82/EC and will seek to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents are taken into account in land-use policies through controls on;*

- a) the siting of new establishments.*
- b) modifications to existing establishments.*
- c) new developments.*

Member states are required to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents are taken into account in land use policies. In addition the Local Authority must identify establishments or groups of establishments where the risk or consequence of a risk could be increased due to the location and the proximity of the establishments and their holdings of dangerous substances.

In seeking to minimise the potential and impact of possible major accidents, it is vital that adequate healthcare services are maintained and enhanced within the plan area. This includes ensuring that full services, and particularly accident and emergency services are maintained at the local general hospital to cater for the growing population.

### 5.7.2 General Economic Development Policy

#### **ED2 Promotional Activity;**

*The Council will seek to promote the economic development of Dundalk and seek to maximise opportunities presented by its strategic advantages. In particular this includes Dundalk's strategic location as a regional employment growth centre between Dublin and Belfast, offering good quality transport and communication links, ample supply of zoned land and proximity to; port facilities, railway services, Dublin /Belfast airports and Dublin/Belfast economic centres.*

The Council will work with other local organisations involved in this regard, such as the County Enterprise Board, Dundalk Chamber of Commerce, IDA and Enterprise Ireland. In this regard, proposals put to the Council for employment generating uses will be treated in a positive manner, unless there are clear reasons in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to adopt a contrary view. In this regard the Council will ensure that valid planning applications are dealt with as efficiently as possible.

**ED3 Employment Land Supply;**

*The Council will seek to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for employment generating development throughout the plan period, in a choice of locations that are attractive to potential users. The adequacy of employment generating land supply will be regularly monitored in consultation with the various stakeholders.*

A range of areas has been identified as suitable for mixed use/business and other employment generating uses. This will help to encourage a diversity of employment opportunities. Such an approach will provide assistance to the diversification of the local economy and thereby ensure that it is more resistant to adverse changes in the structure of employment activity.

**ED4 Employment location;**

*Employment generating development proposals will normally be expected to locate within suitably zoned areas for business, commercial, industrial and mixed uses, as identified on the (Map 1A/B) Land use Zoning Plan and within the specific policies.*

*Where employment-generating development is proposed on land, which has not been zoned for such purposes, it will only be permitted where:*

- a) there are no suitable alternative sites available within land zoned for employment generating development purposes;*
- b) the use cannot be suitably accommodated within an existing building;*
- c) the use will not have a detrimental impact on the local amenity interest or have an adverse impact on the local environment;*
- d) the development proposal is in accordance with the other policies of this Plan.*

In order to encourage the sustainable use of land and influence travel patterns, the plan policy seeks to provide the majority of new land in proximity to the Dundalk urban area and to major transport nodal points. This policy seeks to protect other areas such as the fringe areas and countryside from inappropriate employment generating development proposals.

**ED5 New Employment Development;**

***Within the zoned areas for employment generating development proposals, new employment development will be permitted provided that it;***

- a) accords with the other policies in the plan;***
- b) is proposed on appropriately zoned land;***
- c) is appropriate to the respective area in terms of size and use;***
- d) would not prejudice the safety and free flow of traffic on the surrounding highway network; and***
- e) would have no significant detrimental effect on the surrounding area or on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers.***

Development proposals should pay particular regard to the local area in terms of design, scale, setting and form of buildings. A comprehensive landscaping scheme,(incorporating landscaped buffer areas where appropriate) will also be required as part of any detailed application.

New employment development should be provided on appropriately zoned land and it is important that such uses provide an attractive façade and setting. Encouraging more sensitively designed developments will help to increase the quality of stock within the plan area. It may also help to encourage more quality employment development. It may also help to attract more inward investment into the area.

***ED6 Tertiary Sector Development;***

***The Council will promote the development of the tertiary sector and knowledge intensive industries and will continue to promote the decentralisation of Government offices to Dundalk.***

***The Council will work closely with the key organisations and stakeholders in attracting such investment to the area and will ensure that a choice of locations is made available for a range of industry requirements through the Development Plan.***

Dundalk has made much progress in recent years in diversifying the local economy beyond the traditional manufacturing industries with the establishment of industries such as Xerox and Quantum. For Dundalk to achieve its full potential, additional action and investment is needed in developing the economy still further towards the knowledge intensive and high technology industries.

In more recent times, Dundalk has benefited from the development of new government offices adjacent to the County offices on St Alphonsis Road. New accommodation has been provided for the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs; the Revenue Commissioners, The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

The works on the offices were completed in 2002 and the development has helped to strengthen and diversify the local economic base and provided a much-needed boost to the local economy.

**ED7 Supporting Initiatives that raise the skills of the existing workforce;**

***The Council will seek to support the development of an appropriately skilled workforce through working in partnership with the various groups, encouraging research to be undertaken into future skills requirements for the plan area and supporting initiatives which raise the skills of the existing workforce where possible.***

Working with the County Enterprise and Development Boards, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the Chamber of Commerce will enable a greater understanding of the potential for the area as well as the weaknesses. Research needs to be undertaken to gain a greater understanding of likely skills needs for the future and the current skills shortages. Identifying this will help to strengthen particular areas and promote opportunities.

**ED8 Dundalk Institute of Technology;**

***The Council will work with and encourage the development of the Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) and assist in the development of linkages with the Institute between existing and new employers in Dundalk.***

The DKIT has a business plan for the expansion and development of their campus. The Council will support initiatives for the expansion of the campus, in line with the policy requirements of the plan, unless there are clear and compelling planning reasons for not doing so.



The DKIT is planning to embark on a number of exciting initiatives, which can help to further the links between education and enterprise. One such initiative is the potential development of a new Creative Media Enterprises centre. Proposals are currently being discussed for a North East Creative Media Cluster.

In addition to this, a feasibility study has recently been completed on constructing a Regional Sports Centre, incorporating an all-weather running track, artificial soccer pitch and other sports facilities.

**ED9 Local Enterprise;**

***The Council will co-operate with other Government and local community organisations involved in economic development and employment creation/training initiatives.***

***In particular, the Council will encourage the further development of enterprise development centres and incubation units for new and developing local enterprises.***

There are a wide range of organisations involved in various initiatives which all have the goal of local economic development in mind. The Council will seek to work with these employment creation and training initiatives and where appropriate, assist and facilitate such organisations in terms of their projects and proposals. These organisations will include, but are not limited to, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, the Dundalk Institute of Technology, the Dundalk Chamber of Commerce and the Dundalk Employment Partnership.

***ED10 Tourism Sector Development;***

***The Council will promote and support tourist development and will seek to provide effective access to recreation and leisure opportunities within the natural environment and to maximise the local economic development opportunities while safeguarding the natural and built heritage.***

Dundalk has great potential to benefit from increased tourism, given its heritage and environment. There is particular opportunity to exploit the advantages of being located between the two major cities of Dublin and Belfast and the close proximity to the Colley Peninsula and the Mourne Mountains in the North. The existing platform for the development of the tourism sector is the recently developed museum and library complex in Jocelyn Street; recent approvals for leisure to the north of the town and the refurbishment of the courthouse will also form part of this platform. At the more strategic level, further investigation is proposed to be undertaken into the feasibility for increased use of the Castletown River and the regeneration of the Port & Harbour areas. There is also potential to develop heritage trails, based on history and archaeology – some examples could include Castletown Motte & Bailey, Soldiers Point and the Navy Bank. The potential of Blackrock as a tourist and water based recreation Centre will also be developed.

***ED11 Tourism Related Development;***

***The Council will normally grant permission for a new or extended tourist attraction or facility for visitors if:***

- a) access is available by a choice of means of transport; and***
- b) car parking is proposed in accordance with the standards established in the Plan; and***
- c) vehicular access to and from the highway is safe; and***
- d) the access roads are suitable for the likely levels of traffic generated by the proposal; and***
- e) there will be no significant impact on any conservation interest, heritage interest, landscape or residential amenity.***

There is a range of tourism related developments that could be developed during the plan period, some of which have been mentioned previously.

The Retail Study, which was undertaken on behalf of the Council, identified that Dundalk is the preferred location within the County and has the most potential to accommodate a factory outlet development. A factory outlet centre, while primarily retail based could have potential to act as a tourism attraction. The Retail Study recommends that the most appropriate location is one, which relates to the existing built up area of the town, preferably within the urban area of Dundalk. One, which is also far enough away from the existing town centre so that it does not directly compete, but with good public transport links to the town centre.

This type of development would be likely to have significant tourism potential and would raise the profile of the town. It is considered that there is potential to accommodate such a facility within the plan area, preferably within or on the edge of the urban area.

The Retail Study recommends that a factory outlet centre should not be located on a greenfield site. However, if there is no brown field site suitable for development, it is recommended that the Council should adopt an area of search for a factory outlet centre to the north of the Dundalk urban area. The development will be subject to the strict conditions set out within the Development Plan policy and Retail Strategy for County Louth.

Major new leisure developments would also be an attraction to potential tourists to the area. There is potential for providing further recreational development to the east and north east of Dundalk<sup>10</sup>. This includes the opening up of natural attractions such as the coastal lands and the area to the north of Castletown River to prioritise the preservation of the natural wetland areas and bird life.

**ED12 Visitor Accommodation;**

***A proposal for a hotel, guest house, public house with visitor accommodation or other catered visitor accommodation will be permitted if it;***

- a) is within a defined settlement or involves only the reuse and adaptation of rural buildings if it is outside a defined settlement***
- b) will be served by a satisfactory access to a public highway;***
- c) complies with car parking and servicing standards;***
- d) does not create or aggravate traffic problems;***
- e) is accessible by a choice of means of transport; and***
- f) does not have a significant detrimental effect on the surrounding area or on the residential amenities of nearby occupiers;***
- g) is in accordance with the other plan policies.***

Tourist and visitor accommodation can bring great benefits to the local economy. As well as facilitating traditional holiday tourism, accommodation plays an important role in catering for the needs of business visitors. In addition, many hotels have the potential to act as venues for a variety of conferences, seminars and field trips held by different organisations. From an

---

<sup>10</sup> Refer to Chapter 9

environmental point of view, many of the buildings providing accommodation, (especially the long-established hotels), make a positive contribution to the character of the local scene. It is therefore considered appropriate to seek to maintain, improve and increase the provision of good quality visitor accommodation.

## **5.8 Specific Plan Policies**

Dundalk has a long history of industrial development. However, in line with national trends the town has suffered from unemployment and a decline in the industrial base.

While the town has attracted more technologically based firms such as Xerox, the current climate is less favourable and high tech business world-wide is suffering decline. Dundalk's industry is dominated by small business, and there are particular strengths in the engineering, IT and internationally traded services. Manufacturing is still a major employer in Dundalk - employing over 25% of the labour force in 2000.

Recognising skills needs and improving linkages between education and local enterprise will help to encourage the growth of more indigenous industry while improved research and development will help to attract in associated business.

This section sets out the specific economic development policies for particular sites within the plan area, which the Council aims to achieve during the plan period:

### ***ED13 Dundalk Harbour and Port Feasibility Study;***

***The Council will seek to support the Port Authority in ascertaining the future potential for operations in the port and harbour area and the implications on land uses.***

***The Council will seek to undertake a feasibility study in partnership with the Port Authority to identify the means of regenerating and enhancing the port and harbour area.***

***An Action Area plan will be devised to take cognisance of the tourism and amenity value of the port as well as the ports commercial remit, the project will have regard to the sensitive nature of the conservation interests of the harbour and the lands identified to the north of the Castletown River.***

Dundalk Port is located on the Castletown River, some 8 kms from the open sea. It is primarily a commercial port with little or no tourism or recreational facilities. It is ideally suited for the development of a commercial port, being equidistant between Dublin and Belfast. While the Port of Dundalk has suffered from a lack of investment, the port has steadily increased in profitability and is now at a stage where additional investment is needed for comprehensive regeneration and expansion.



The Port has limited opportunities for expansion in its current location as it is surrounded mainly by residential developments. The Feasibility Study will consider the potential for relocation of the port activities to enable expansion.

There is potential to expand the economic role of the port and enhance the recreational and amenity uses of the harbour area. The Port Authority will play the key role in ascertaining potential for the future of the area and the Council will seek to support initiatives in line with the other policy requirements in the plan. It is recommended that a feasibility study and action plan be undertaken to help in determining the future for the port area.

The Harbour and Port area can not be examined in isolation and there is a need to ascertain the potential for the lands to the north of the Castletown River, in terms of seeking to improve potential for recreation and amenity while safeguarding the nature conservation interest. An Action Area Plan can set out a framework for the future development of the area.

**ED14 Working in Partnership for the City of Technology Initiative;**

***The Council recognising the importance of technology to Dundalk's future growth, will seek to encourage and support the work of the Chamber of Commerce, DKIT and other organisations involved in the Technology City Initiative.***

The Council recognises the importance of knowledge based and information technologies to the future growth and development of Dundalk and as such will support the work undertaken in developing the City of Technology initiative in line with the other policy requirement in the plan.

The DKIT has a fine reputation, as one of the leading colleges of technology nation-wide and as such there is potential to further develop the College and create new linkages to encourage more research and development with the local industry.

**5.8.1 New Mixed Use Zones**

The new land uses such as the mixed-use zones have been formulated to allow for a degree of flexibility in terms of the uses that are considered acceptable within the zones. This desire for flexibility was a theme in the previous plan and continues in this plan with a new set of land use zonings. The aim is to remove the potential land-use barriers to employment generation so allowing greater flexibility in terms of the locations available for business related development in Dundalk. This, however, is not at the expense of the usual town planning considerations such as amenity, the environment and the overall planning and development of the town.

New mixed use-zoning areas have been identified to help to integrate, develop and promote employment and innovation opportunities in Dundalk. Table 4.1 sets out the proposals and locations and the areas are displayed on the Land use Zoning Plan Map 1A.

It is a priority of the plan to seek to foster Dundalk's position as the major economic driver within the region through encouraging the provision of additional suitable land to accommodate investment needs for commercial development, prioritising the requirement of meeting local business needs.

Dundalk's industry is dominated by small business and sectors showing particular strengths in recent years include engineering, IT and Internationally trades services.

**ED15 Employment Mixed Use Zones;**

***The Council will encourage the development of employment mixed use zones for the uses identifies on table 4.1 and identified on the land use zoning plan in accordance with the other plan policies.***

At present there is a lack of suitable accommodation to meet the requirements of small businesses within Dundalk and the development of such accommodation to meet local needs will be encouraged, in line with policy requirements.

There are a number of mixed-use zones identified with potential for the development of a number of associated mixed uses. Two new areas have been identified for this type of development to the north of Dundalk, which have the potential to be developed as new business parks. This will help to stimulate further investment to the north of the town. The policy also seeks to encourage the strengthening of links between the various uses and educational and institutional uses. There is potential to improve links between the College of Technology and the industrial park adjacent to encourage inward investment of a technological nature as well as encouraging start up companies.

**ED16 New General Business Use Adjacent to Golf Course;**

***The Council will encourage mixed-business use development to include offices, workshops, hotels, motels, guesthouses, public houses restaurants, and light industrial and residential to include apartments and flats, in accordance with the other policies in the plan.***



Maintaining and extending the residential amenity will be a key policy priority. However, there is potential to extend the range of uses permitted to open up this prominent location, just off the industrial access interchange, for a mix of ancillary associated uses, which would not be deemed likely to detract from

the residential amenity. This would aid in consolidating the overall area and creating a link between the associated uses.

This new-zoned area will help to link the industrial area with the DKIT and the IDA industrial land bank providing an arc of employment land opportunities around the town. This area will also help to consolidate the zoning; offering opportunities for some limited services in this area and residential accommodation to help create a balanced environment where people can live, work and recreate.

The policy will require that any new business industrial or commercial uses for the area would respect the residential amenity and not be deemed likely to be detrimental to the enjoyment of the residential amenity.

**ED17 Dundalk Institute of Technology and Environs (DKIT)**

***The Council will work in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, IDA and DKIT to seek to enhance and promote the role of the DKIT within the region through encouraging linkages between education, enterprise and innovation.***

The Dundalk Institute of Technology makes a significant contribution to research and development and the development of technology based enterprises in the region through accommodating new enterprise and research and technology transfer projects.

There is considerable opportunity to enhance and widen the role of the DKIT within the region with local industry. This could be achieved through encouraging additional enterprise and innovation uses associated with the college. There is potential to develop additional incubator units or serviced accommodation to advance growth of indigenous industry and attract starter companies from the wider region.

Additional accommodation associated with the business units and college could also be developed to help to encourage an enterprise and innovation type park as a spin off from the college.

**ED18 Education, Recreation, Enterprise and Innovation;**

***The Council will encourage the provision of educational and institutional uses along with leisure and recreational uses and light industrial, enterprise, research and development, in accordance with the other plan policies.***

This land use zoning refers to the DKIT site. DKIT has recently expanded and there are plans to develop a regional sports facility within this area. There is also potential to introduce additional compatible uses into this area and create linkages between the adjacent industrial areas and the DKIT.

**ED19 Land along Railway Line;**

***The Council will encourage the development of an employment mixed-use zone to incorporate industrial offices, warehouse, storage, distribution and ancillary uses, in accordance with the other plan policies.***

A part of this area is located within the southwest drainage area. A Local Area Plan for the South West of Dundalk is being produced which covers this area. The principles outlined within the Local Area Plan with regard the southwest sector land will largely accord with the Development Plan.

The area offers significant potential for redevelopment, adjacent to the train station with good communication links, has historic importance, and is in close proximity to the town centre.

The policy for this area is to prioritise a mixed-use scheme to incorporate commercial industrial and ancillary uses. This may include an Enterprise Centre for local business start-ups.

**ED20 Land Adjacent to the Hill Street Junction;**

***The Council will encourage the development of a mixed-use development in this area to incorporate enterprise/high tech, and commercial uses, in accordance with the other plan policies.***

***Development within this area should take into account the future potential for a public transport interchange in the vicinity of this area.***

Although this area is located within the defined boundary of the South West Sector Local Area Plan, the site is of prime importance given its pivotal location as a gateway to Dundalk. The land adjacent to the Hill Street Junction has great potential for redevelopment for employment and enterprise uses. This area in general is in a prime gateway position to Dundalk and it is important that development within this area is designed and laid out in a manner, which compliments its strategic position.

**ED21 Leisure  
Recreational  
and  
Residential  
Mixed Use  
Zones;**

***The Council will encourage the provision of leisure, recreational and residential uses and ancillary associated uses on the appropriately zoned land.***



A new mixed-use development has recently been permitted off the Racecourse Road in Dundalk, the Plan recognises this mixed-use zone and has proposed that an additional mixed-use zone be provided along the Dublin

Road to Blackrock. This type of zone is in keeping with the existing character of the area and would not detract from the local residential amenity or detrimentally impact upon the vitality and viability of the town centre or the village centre. Uses which would be permitted include recreational and leisure uses and ancillary and associated uses. Other uses permitted would be on a local scale, local shop or public house or community facilities to serve the local area.

## 5.9 Land Use Zoning

<b>To provide for Employment Mixed Use Zone</b>	<b>Colour Code Brown</b>
<i>Industrial/ light industrial/ offices ancillary to industrial/ warehousing/wholesale warehousing/ storage &amp; distribution/ car showrooms/ motor sales outlets/ car parks/ heavy vehicle parks/ petrol filling stations &amp; services stations/ recycling facilities/ service industries [as defined under the Industrial Development (Service Industries) Order 1998; to include but not exclusively, software development; data processing and electronic commerce; technical and consulting services; commercial laboratory services; administrative centres; co-ordination and headquarter services; research and development services; media, multimedia and recording services; entertainment and leisure services; training services; publishing services; international financial services; healthcare services; construction related services; environmental services; and logistics management services].</i>	
<i>Offices, which are normally found in town centre areas, such as professional services and practices that would normally be visited for business purposes by people living in the local community will not be permitted.</i>	

<b>To provide for Education, Recreation, Enterprise and Innovation</b>	<b>Colour Code Mustard</b>
<i>Educational and Institutional Uses, recreation and development/ enterprise/ offices ancillary to/ start up units/ leisure/ recreation and amenity.</i>	

<b>To provide for General Business Uses</b>	<b>Colour Code Light Blue</b>
<i>Offices, professional and financial services, technology park, hotels, motels, guest houses, public houses, restaurants, light industry, recreational buildings, car parks, open spaces and dwellinghouses (including flats or apartments).</i>	

<b>To provide for employment, retail and recreational mixed use.</b>	<b>Colour Code Orange</b>
<i>Industrial/ light industrial storage and distribution/ recreation/ leisure and amenity/ non food retail warehousing of bulky household and D.I.Y goods of which not more than 10 percent of gross floor area may be used for ancillary non bulky goods retailing.</i>	

<b>Action Area Plan to enhance opportunities for recreation and amenity and promotion of opportunities for regenerating the Port and Harbour area while having regard to the sensitive nature conservation interests</b>	<b>Colour Code Purple dotted line</b>
<i>Uses to be permitted in accordance with the Action Plan once approved.</i>	