



# Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

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## Pre-Draft Public Consultation Strategic Issues Paper for the Drogheda Joint Local Area Plan (February 2024)

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly notes that Louth and Meath County Councils have published a pre-draft public consultation Strategic Issues Paper in preparation for the Drogheda Joint Local Area Plan (JLAP). This submission on the pre-draft public consultation of the Joint Drogheda Local Area Plan (JLAP) has been prepared by the executive and approved by the members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly at the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

### 1.0 Legislative Context

Louth and Meath County Councils intend to prepare a joint local area plan for Drogheda town. The duration of the plan will be six years from the date of its adoption. As part of the first stage of this process the Local Authorities have prepared and published a pre-draft public consultation Strategic Issues Paper containing a number of key issues and topics to be covered within the joint local area plan, and is now engaging in pre-draft public consultation.

The role and function of the Regional Assembly, including the scope of the RSES, is currently provided for in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Regional Assembly is not required under Section 27 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), to prepare a submission and observations on a local area plan prepared by a local authority as is the case for a development plan, or variation thereof, however the Regional Assembly considers that regionally important and strategic plans should be commented upon by the Assembly, and in this case a plan for a designated Regional Growth Centre is considered as such.

It should be noted that this legislation is currently under review, with the new Planning and Development Bill 2023 approved by Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 and published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023.

### 2.0 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region, which was made by the Members of the Regional Assembly on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019, is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future growth throughout the Region. In line with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the Planning Authority shall ensure that a local area plan is consistent with the objectives

of the development plan, its core strategy, and the Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy, thus ensuring full alignment between local, regional and national planning policy.

The Growth Strategy of the RSES identifies Drogheda as located inside the Core Region and is identified as a Regional Growth Centre in Table 4.2 Settlement Hierarchy. Regional Growth Centres are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area. The RSES supports the direction of significant population and economic growth towards the key Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk. These towns, located outside the Dublin Metropolitan Area are, in addition to Dublin, critical to the implementation of effective regional development as set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and will accommodate significant new investment in housing, transport and employment generating activity.

The RSES states that in order to enhance co-ordination of development in Drogheda, where the town and its environs lie within the combined functional area of two local authorities, the preparation and adoption of a statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP), to be jointly prepared by Louth County Council and Meath County Council will be a priority. The UAP should provide a strategic vision for the future development of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre, including the development of critical mass and should set out an overarching land use framework which will form the basis for deciding on appropriate locations for future development in the area. It should provide for a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas so that a minimum of 30% compact growth can be achieved. In addition, Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 4.11 of the RSES sets out further requirements on the preparation of the new joint plan indicating *'A cross boundary statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda shall be jointly prepared by Louth and Meath County Councils in collaboration with EMRA. The UAP will support, the development of Drogheda as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver. The Joint UAP will identify a functional urban area and plan boundary for the plan area and strategic housing and employment development areas and infrastructure investment requirements to promote greater coordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development.'*

The Strategic Issues Paper acknowledges RPO 4.11 of the RSES, and National Policy Objective 70 of the NPF with respect to joint urban area plans and local area plans, and in this regard, Louth and Meath County Councils have stated in the absence of legislation that expressively provides for 'urban area plans', this plan is being prepared in the first instance as a local area plan.

### 3.0 Submission

The Strategic Issues Paper presents an overview of the main issues and challenges affecting Drogheda and sets out by theme some of the key issues that may need to be addressed by the JLAP. The Strategic Issues Paper includes a number of key topics to be addressed which include:-

- 1) Strategy for Future Development in Drogheda
- 2) Height and Density
- 3) Regeneration
- 4) Quality Housing

- 5) Sustainable Communities
- 6) Economy and Employment
- 7) Retail and Town Centre First Approach
- 8) Tourism
- 9) Movement
- 10) Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Recreation and Natural Heritage
- 11) Built Heritage and Archaeology
- 12) Water Services Infrastructure and Utilities

The Regional Assembly considers that these areas of focus align well with the three key principles of the RSES (Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity) and the sixteen Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), outlined in Section 2.3 of the RSES. The Regional Assembly also considers that these key themes give a broad overview of the key issues facing Drogheda.

The Strategic Issues Paper outlines the strategic policy framework, which highlights that the JLAP sits within and will be informed by a hierarchy of planning guidance including the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and the Louth and Meath County Development Plans.

In order to assist the Local Authorities in ensuring that the JLAP is consistent with the RSES, the following are the key areas and Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) of the RSES, that the Regional Assembly would like to bring attention to in order to inform the preparation of the draft JLAP.

### **3.1 Strategy for Future Development in Drogheda**

The Strategic Issues Paper acknowledges the designation of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre in both national and regional policy with the town having a target population of 50,000 by 2031 as set out in the RSES. The Strategic Issues Paper confirms that the growth strategy for Drogheda will focus on prioritising growth in the right locations, supporting economic development, strengthening the urban core, facilitating regeneration, enabling climate resilience and supporting infrastructure investment that will improve connectivity and unlock undeveloped lands for employment and residential related uses.

The key priorities set out in the RSES are to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of Drogheda as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031. The objective is to provide for the regeneration of the town centre, the compact planned and co-ordinated growth of the town's hinterland along with enhancing Drogheda's role as a self-sustaining strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. The dynamic of securing investment, while driving synergies between the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border network, and building on the existing education and skills base in the Region are promoted within the Strategy period.

Table 4.3 of the RSES sets out the Region's settlement typologies and policy responses with a particular focus on socio-economic functions, transport profile and policy response relevant to

Regional Growth Centres. The preparation of the JLAP will achieve RPO 4.11 of the RSES and supports the development of Drogheda as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible regional centre and economic driver.

### 3.2 Compact Growth

The Strategic Issues Paper outlines that the JLAP will consider the delivery of compact growth in Drogheda having regard to the principles outlined in the 'Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018) and urban design and placemaking. Louth and Meath County Councils have also put forward a number of candidate sites for Transport Orientated Development (TODs) in the Drogheda area following a request from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Under Section 2.2 of the RSES, it is outlined that a key challenge facing the Region, along with all other regions, is the transition to a low carbon society. One of the primary areas of transition in the overall RSES strategy is the sustainable development patterns which promote compact growth, reduce transport demand and encourage low carbon transport modes. This is supported by RSO 2 of the RSES which relates to Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration seeking to *'promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-utilised land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region's citizens'*.

The achievement of a compact growth settlement pattern in Drogheda would also support key Growth Enablers in the RSES for both the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and the Core Region where compact and focused growth for the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk to grow to city scale is promoted, along with a target to achieve at least 30% of all new homes to be within the existing built up area of settlements, as set out in RPO 3.2 of the RSES.

### 3.3 Regeneration

The Strategic Issues Paper states that as part of the policy of promoting compact growth there will be support for the regeneration of vacant and under-utilised lands throughout Drogheda with the potential areas for regeneration being highlighted as the North and South Quays in the Docklands area, the Westgate area and the former quarry north of Cement Road.

The Regional Assembly welcomes reference in the Strategic Issues Paper on the emphasis to be provided on regeneration in order to provide more vibrant and sustainable communities, as the promotion of town centre enhancements and public realm improvements contribute to the sustainability of the town centre and improve opportunities for sustainable transport choices. In this respect, this aligns with RPO 4.16 of the RSES which supports measures that provide for the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development.

The RSES also states that there are underutilised areas in Drogheda where there is opportunity for regeneration and place making. The revitalisation and redevelopment of the town centre will be prioritised including the regeneration of opportunity sites and their surrounding areas. The integrated physical, economic and social regeneration of identified areas will be promoted capitalising on existing facilities. It is recognised that the regeneration dynamic can present opportunities to combat social exclusion in the town. This is also recognised in RPO 4.16 of the RSES.

The physical, economic and social regeneration of the Heritage Quarter is promoted in the RSES including the renewal of the Westgate area, as provided for in the townscape recovery guide

‘Westgate Vision’, which has secured funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF). The vision supports the adaptation and reuse of vacant buildings, the sensitive redevelopment of vacant lands for new homes and businesses within a dynamic public realm investment program to provide an attractive and well-designed urban district. The RSES supports this approach as an alternative option to new development on greenfield sites. The RSES also states that additional regeneration opportunities such as the regeneration of the Drogheda Docklands will be identified in the JLAP.

### **3.4 Sustainable Communities**

The Strategic Issues Paper outlines that 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 Drogheda it is important for the JLAP to consider how the town will cater for new and growing communities and an increasingly diverse population.

The Regional Assembly supports the emphasis for creating sustainable communities to be included in the JLAP. It is considered that this proposal compliments the key principle of Healthy Placemaking in the RSES which aims to promote people’s quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work and study in. Section 4.3 of the RSES also expands on the above by listing healthy placemaking as a growth enabler for the Region to meet its potential whereby healthy placemaking includes the realisation of sustained economic growth and employment including the integration of better urban design, public realm, amenities and heritage to create attractive places to live, work, visit and invest in. The focus on placemaking shall create attractive and sustainable communities to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling.

### **3.5 Economic Development and Employment**

The Strategic Issues Paper outlines that Drogheda is strategically located along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor with excellent access to Dublin and Belfast City centres, airports and ports. The designation of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre is recognition of the importance of Drogheda in facilitating future population and economic growth along this corridor. The JLAP will continue to promote the strategic location of Drogheda and strengthen economic links along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and improve the economic competitiveness of the town. The Strategic Issues Paper refers to the importance of the IDA Business and Technology Park in South Drogheda which has been subject to new development. The importance of Drogheda Port is also highlighted as an important asset to both the town and local businesses. In addition, the Strategic Issues Paper indicates that the docklands area of Drogheda has significant regeneration potential including the creation of a new urban quarter on both sides of the River Boyne.

The RSES sets out that Drogheda is strategically located between the Dublin and Belfast Metropolitan areas with access to the deep labour markets in both the Dublin and Belfast city regions. The further development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor providing improved accessibility for setup or relocation of indigenous businesses and FDI to the area will enhance its role as a key regional economic driver. To support economic growth and competitiveness and realise the potential of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, continued cross-border collaboration and co-operation between the relevant departments, agencies and stakeholders will be necessary.

The RSES highlights that Drogheda has developed a strong and broad employment base in the range of services and manufacturers it supports, principally in the financial, payment, shared services and

food technology sectors. The RSES also states that Drogheda shall promote further employment growth based on the attractiveness of its assets and the quality of life offering for workers and residents. This can include additional employment opportunities, including high value jobs, to provide for a greater job to resident ratio. The establishment of The Mill in Drogheda hosting numerous start-up companies highlights the existing pool of entrepreneurial talent present that will continue to be supported and developed. There is opportunity for Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) to continue to develop as a centre for excellence for education with a Drogheda campus. There is also potential with the Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE), enhancing the educational offer in the north-east. The retention of indigenous talent can be achieved by providing appropriate and career advancing employment opportunities locally or in sustainable urban centres of scale within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor accessible by public transport. The above employment assets for Drogheda are supported by specific Regional Policy Objectives, including RPO 4.12 in relation to Drogheda Docklands and Port, RPO 4.13 in relation to cross border interactions to realise the growth of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross border network for regional development, and RPO 4.18 in relation to the strategic employment location for Drogheda on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

### **3.6 Retail**

The Strategic Issues Paper provides an outline of the challenges facing the Drogheda town centre area including advances in technology and online shopping trends which were accelerated by Covid-19. This has resulted in many well known and high-profile shops being closed. Revitalising and developing the resilience of the town centre area is a key challenge of the JLAP. The primary role of the town centre as a retail destination is facing significant challenges with evident levels of vacancy along West and Narrow West Street and the principal shopping centres of Scotch Hall and the Laurence Centre. The publication of the Westgate Vision and Townscape Recovery Guide in 2018 identifies opportunities for improvements to the public realm and built environment, and the sensitive adaptation and re-use of vacant lands and buildings for new homes and businesses. In addition, the JLAP will have regard to the Town Centre First Approach to the revitalisation of the town centre with initiatives to address vacancy and under-use of building stock in the town centre.

The Regional Assembly supports the publication of the Westgate Vision and Townscape Recovery Guide for Drogheda (2018) and the related phasing of public realm improvement works which are to be supported by URDF funding applications. The JLAP should include objectives supporting and emphasising placemaking in the town centre which will align with RPO 6.12 in the RSES. The JLAP should also acknowledge the status of Drogheda as a Level 2 Major Town Centre and County Town Centre in the Retail Hierarchy for the Region as set out in Table 6.1 of the RSES.

In addition, the RSES states that there is a requirement for a Retail Strategy to be prepared as part of the JLAP process in order to co-ordinate land use and transportation and to provide for sustainable retail development in Drogheda and its hinterland.

### **3.7 Tourism**

The Strategic Issues Paper states that Drogheda has significant tourism potential including the historic town core with built and archaeological heritage assets and also being a gateway to the heritage sites outside of the town in the Boyne Valley under 'Ireland's Ancient East' tourism branding. Drogheda is also a Fáilte Ireland 'Destination Town' being an initiative to boost the attractiveness and tourism potential of the town. The River Boyne is acknowledged as an asset in the town that can be utilised to develop water-based recreational activities.

The RSES acknowledges Drogheda as being the gateway to the Boyne Valley and is a town of international significance in terms of its historical narrative, archaeology, architecture and urban heritage. The historic significance of Drogheda with its foundation in the 12th century and significant events in Irish history, most notably, the sacking of Drogheda by Cromwell's forces in 1649 and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Drogheda offers significant heritage and tourism potential, both within the town itself where the town's rich urban heritage is evident in the archaeology and architecture within the historic town core, and also as a gateway to heritage sites outside the town in the Boyne Valley.

The River Boyne is the most important natural amenity of Drogheda and should be central to any future strategy for the town and its regeneration. Enhancing and developing the existing parklands and open space to the west of the town will provide an important new link to Brú na Bóinne and beyond and allow the recreational value and leisure uses of this area to be maximised.

In particular, RPO 4.15 aims to promote Drogheda as an urban tourism destination while protecting its natural and built heritage resources with a particular focus on capitalising on the following assets; being a gateway to the Boyne Valley heritage sites and the World Heritage Site at Brú na Bóinne, the amenity potential of the River Boyne including the Boyne Greenway, and also Fáilte Ireland's Ancient East designation.

### **3.8 Transport**

The Strategic Issues Paper states that in order to integrate land use and transportation and to encourage a shift from private car use to walking, cycling and public transport measures, a Local Transport Plan will be prepared for Drogheda as part of the JLAP. It will also provide a framework for the development of transport infrastructure in Drogheda, and will be reinforced through the identification, confirmation and development of Transport Orientated Development sites. The JLAP will also continue to support the progression of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR) with phase 1 of this road currently under construction. This road is seen as a critical piece of infrastructure by removing HGVs and port-related traffic from the town centre whilst also releasing strategically located lands to the north of the town centre for residential and employment-related uses. The Assembly notes the official opening of the first phase of this road on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

The RSES outlines that the JLAP will require a coordinated planning framework by both Louth and Meath County Councils and other agencies to identify and deliver strategic development and regeneration area to achieve compact growth targets and to prioritise infrastructure development. With this in mind, this will increase the need to improve accessibility and sustainable mobility. The RSES states that there will need to be investment in the requisite infrastructure to enable Drogheda develop as a sustainable Regional Growth Centre. Drogheda will benefit from the proposed DART expansion programme identified in Project Ireland 2040 (forming part of the DART+ Coastal North Project) which will provide a fast-high frequency electrified rail service to the town to enhance the existing heavy rail service. The existing McBride Rail Station will continue to be the main public transport hub for Drogheda and its environs. The RSES states that accessibility to the station will need to be improved, including access to the undeveloped lands to the east of the station and stronger linkage should be forged between the rail and bus services in the town. The RSES, through RPO 4.12, also recognises and supports the regional significance and role of Drogheda Port including its potential for relocation and the future development of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR).

The RSES supports the preparation of a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Drogheda, prepared jointly by Louth and Meath County Councils and in collaboration with the relevant transport agencies. This aligns with Section 8.3 and RPOs 4.11 and 8.6 of the RSES. The guidance provided in the RSES in relation to Local Transport Plans also suggests that Local Link Offices (Transport Coordination Units) should be consulted in the development of LTPs. As part of the LTP and JLAP, the Local Authorities may give consideration to a transport orientated development approach. The policies, objectives and measures which emerge from the LTP are required to be incorporated into the relevant statutory land use plans pertaining to each settlement.

In addition, it should be noted that the draft All-Island Strategic Rail Review (“the Review”) aims to decarbonize the island's transport systems, promote sustainable connectivity, enhance regional accessibility, and support balanced development by focusing on the rail network's potential. Where relevant the LTP may give consideration to the strategic options that are proposed for Drogheda in the draft Review, or any finalised version of same.

### **3.9 Green Infrastructure**

The Strategic Issues Paper sets out the green infrastructure assets of Drogheda including the River Boyne which flows through the town along with the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA associated with same. These habitats, in addition to other green spaces in the town such as parks and open spaces, perform multiple functions that deliver social, economic and environmental benefits.

In relation to the above, the RSES sets out the importance of the preparation of green infrastructure strategies as part of the LAP making process, their linkage to nature conservation measures (including the protection of European sites) and supports the co-ordination of mapping of strategic green infrastructure across the Region. To assist in the making of same, the planning authorities should note the guiding principles for the preparation of green infrastructure strategies as set out Section 7.7 of the RSES.

### **3.10 Water Servicing**

The Strategic Issues Paper highlights that wastewater servicing infrastructure serving Drogheda is from the wastewater treatment plant on the Marsh Road which has current capacity to accommodate the additional loading associated with population and economic growth. Uisce Éireann are currently preparing a strategic plan for the servicing of undeveloped lands in Drogheda. A Drainage Area Plan for the town is also under preparation. In relation to water supply, Drogheda is sourced from the South Louth and East Meath Water Resource Zone. The Uisce Éireann National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) will develop options for addressing any capacity issues in the water supply serving Drogheda.

RPO 10.3 of the RSES requires the Regional Assembly and local authorities to liaise and cooperate with Uisce Éireann to ensure the delivery of Uisce Éireann's Investments and other relevant investment works programme of Uisce Éireann that will provide infrastructure to increase capacity to service settlements in accordance with the settlement strategy of the RSES and local authority core strategies, and provide for long term solutions for wastewater treatment for the Region.

### **3.11 Flood Risk Management**

The Strategic Issues Paper indicates that the JLAP will be informed by the preparation of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) which is in line with RPO 7.12 of the RSES. In addition, the Strategic Issues Paper indicates that as part of the management of flood risk in Drogheda, Louth County Council



in partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW), are advancing the Drogheda and Baltray Flood Relief Scheme. On completion, it is anticipated that this flood relief scheme will provide protection to approximately 450 properties from 1/100 year flood events.

The RSES supports the preparation of the above SFRA and flood relief scheme. In addition, it is further recommended that the planning authorities fully take into account the recommendations of the SFRA whilst also taking opportunities to enhance biodiversity and amenities, including where flood risk management measures are planned, in line with RPOs 7.14 and 7.15 of the RSES. It is further recommended that the most up-to-date flood mapping should clearly inform the preparation and detail in the JLAP.

In addition, it should be noted that RPO 4.17 outlines support for the proposed Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

## 4.0 Environmental Assessments – SEA and AA

As part of the overall process, the JLAP will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Appropriate Assessment (AA), which are required under the EU SEA and Habitats Directives. The Regional Assembly recommends early engagement with the relevant bodies in this regard, including the Office of Public Works, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and Uisce Éireann.

## 5.0 Recommendations

The Regional Assembly advises the Local Authorities to pay particular attention to the following issues in the preparation of the Drogheda JLAP in order to ensure consistency with the RSES, and makes the following recommendations:

- The JLAP should ensure that specific policies relating to Drogheda, contained within the RSES, are considered as part of the JLAP. This includes RPOs 4.11 to 4.18 of the RSES. The Assembly notes and welcomes that some of these policy objectives have been met whilst others are still ongoing.
- The plan should seek to address the requirements of the JLAP as set out in the RSES, including those listed on pg. 64 of the RSES. This includes but is not limited to;
  - The JLAP should provide for a population target of 50,000 for the entire settlement of Drogheda up to 2031.
  - The JLAP should provide for a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas for the future physical, economic and social development of Drogheda to ensure that it achieves targeted compact brownfield/infill growth of a minimum of 30% and ensure a coordinated approach is taken to the future growth and development of the town to ensure that it has the capacity to grow sustainably and secure investment as a Regional Growth Centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.
  - The JLAP should support the regeneration of the Westgate area of Drogheda's historic town centre to address vacancy and dereliction in the town core.

- The JLAP should support the implementation of the Urban Design Framework for the Heritage Quarter.
  - The JLAP should provide for the redevelopment or renewal of obsolete areas of lands at Mell / North Road.
  - The JLAP should facilitate the regeneration of the lands at McBride Station to capitalise on existing and planned public infrastructure, including the DART Expansion Programme.
  - The JLAP should support the sustainable development of existing zoned lands in the northern and southern environs of the town with a particular emphasis on the promotion of the IDA Business Park as a location for economic investment and the creation of compact, residential communities in key locations in proximity to established residential areas and transport hubs.
- Regeneration opportunities to be appraised within the JLAP should explore potential sites in the Drogheda Docklands area, in keeping with the content of the RSES at page 61 which addresses regeneration in Drogheda.
  - The JLAP should include social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration which align with RPO 4.16.
  - The JLAP should include objectives supporting and emphasising placemaking in the town centre which align with RPO 6.12.
  - Table 6.1 Retail Hierarchy for the Region in the RSES which outlines Drogheda under Level 2 of the retail hierarchy entitled '*Major Town Centres and County (Principal) Town Centres*' should be clearly outlined in the JLAP.
  - In addition, a Retail Strategy should be included as part of the JLAP process in order to coordinate land use and transportation and to provide for sustainable retail development in Drogheda and its hinterland, in keeping with the content of the RSES at page 62 which addresses economic development in Drogheda.
  - A Local Transport Plan should be included as part of the JLAP process, aligning with Section 8.3 and RPOs 4.11 and 8.6 of the RSES. Local Link Offices (Transport Coordination Units) should be consulted in the development of LTPs.
  - The JLAP should align with RPO 7.22 in the RSES in relation to green infrastructure and the guiding principles for the preparation of green infrastructure strategies as set out in Section 7.7 of the RSES.
  - The JLAP should align with RPOs 7.14 and 7.15 in the RSES regarding flood risk management and RPO 4.17 which supports the proposed Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The Regional Assembly acknowledges the work of both Local Authorities and welcomes the publication of the Pre-Draft Public Consultation Strategic Issues Paper for the Drogheda Joint Local Area Plan. The Assembly looks forward to engaging with the Local Authorities on the forthcoming stages of the Joint Local Area Plan process, and as part of ongoing engagement activities to progress the implementation of the policies and objectives of the RSES.

Regards,



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Clare Bannon

A/Director

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

11<sup>th</sup> March 2024