

# Westgate 2040 - Drogheda, Co. Louth

## Planning Statement

December 2023



Comhairle Contae Lú  
Louth County Council



Rialtas na  
hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
**2040**

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# 1. Introduction

## Overview

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Louth County Council (the 'applicant').
- 1.2 Louth County Council is seeking planning permission for public realm regeneration works within the Westgate Vision Area of Drogheda in County Louth.
- 1.3 The planning application is submitted to An Bord Pleanála in compliance with sections 175 and 177AE of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).
- 1.4 The purpose of this Statement is to provide a description of the application site and the proposed development and outline the relevant national, regional and local planning policy context.
- 1.5 This Statement also considers the proposals against the relevant planning policy context to identify alignment with the prevailing national, regional and local planning policies and to ensure the development will be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the proposal is situated.
- 1.6 A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared in respect of the proposed development and concludes that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to any significant effects on any designated European sites.
- 1.7 An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has also been prepared in respect of the proposed development and concludes that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to any likely significant effects on the environment.

## Proposed Development

- 1.8 The proposed development comprises public realm regeneration works on lands within the Westgate Vision Area of Drogheda, Co. Louth. Please refer to **Section 5** of this Statement for a detailed description of the proposed development.
- 1.9 The overall objective of the project (known as the 'Westgate 2040 Project') is to act as a catalyst to support positive regeneration, compact growth and sustainable development in the Westgate Vision Area and the broader Drogheda Town Centre.
- 1.10 This planning application represents the next stage of the Westgate Vision, launched by Louth County Council in 2018, which is a targeted planning response aimed at channelling investment into this core area of Drogheda.
- 1.11 Another key objective of the project is to prepare an application for funding under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF). This current project stage is funded under the same scheme. The Project Brief includes the following key themes:

- Create a quality gateway / arrival space, public spaces, pedestrian linkages and public realm.
- Ensure inclusivity for all members of the community; the very young, the youth, the old, the mobility impaired, socially disadvantaged, the pedestrian and cyclist.
- Develop proposals which meet the design principles of national and international best practice.
- Promote an environment which leads to both day and night-time activities.
- Improve connectivity and legibility for all members of the community and for visitors/tourists to the town.
- Capitalise on, and respect, the rich heritage of this town centre location.
- Operate / employ sustainable development principles by minimising energy consumption and maximising the use of renewable energy technology.

### **Structure of the Statement**

1.12 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** - describes the context of the site and the surrounding area.
- **Section 3** - provides a summary of the relevant planning history on the site and in the immediate/surrounding area.
- **Section 4** - summarises the statutory and non-statutory consultation associated with the project.
- **Section 5** - provides a detailed description of the proposed development.
- **Section 6** – reviews the relevant national and regional planning policy context.
- **Section 7** – undertakes an assessment of the proposal against the policy requirements of the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.
- **Section 8** – sets out a summary overview of the report’s conclusions.

1.13 This Statement should be read in conjunction with all the plans and particulars accompanying the planning application including the Natura Impact Statement and the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Volumes 1, 2 and 3).

## 2. Site Context

### Application Site

- 2.1 The application site, as illustrated in **Figure 2.1**, is located within the 'Westgate Vision Area' of Drogheda and covers an area of approx. 1.89 hectares.



**Figure 2.1: Extract - Drawing No. LOUX3001-P-000-101-A - Site Location Plan**

- 2.2 The application site is located in the townland of Moneymore, Drogheda and includes the following lanes/streets/roads/areas and their adjoining footpath/public/junction realm areas: R132/Bridge of Peace/George's Street (including the underpass on the northern side of the River Boyne); George's Square; Father Connolly Way (including part of an existing car park area); Dominick Street; Patrickswell Lane; Old Abbey Lane (including an area to the rear of 56/57 West Street); Scholes Lane; R900/West Street/Narrow West Street; Fair Street; and Wellington Quay.
- 2.3 Figure 2.2 is an aerial photo of the application site taken from the southeast and looking towards the northern embankment of the River Boyne and across the application site in a northwest direction.



**Figure 2.2: Aerial Photo of the Application Site (Source: [www.westgatevision.ie](http://www.westgatevision.ie))**

2.4 The application site contains the following key site features/land uses/public realm areas:

- George’s Square which includes a public parking area, public footpaths, public toilets, a bus stop area and adjoins existing premises;
- Medieval Wall ruins adjacent to the eastern side of the Bridge of Peace/George’s Street (R132);
- The ‘Old Abbey’ ruins within Old Abbey Lane including the freestanding gable ruin;
- Lands beneath and adjacent to the Bridge of Peace/George Street on the northern side of the River Boyne;
- Road infrastructure including carriageways, footpaths, retaining walls, junctions, bus stops, loading bays, car parking spaces, etc;
- Public utilities such as post boxes, street lighting, overhead electrical cabling and poles, underground services, CCTV cameras, electrical boxes, manholes, signage, parking meters, etc;
- Street furniture including public art, seating/benches, planter boxes, raised flower beds, bins, bicycle parking, hanging flower baskets, water fountain, railings, etc;
- The embankment of the River Boyne;
- Hard landscaped areas including stepped, sloping and level components; and
- Soft landscaped areas including grass, trees, shrubs, bushes, flowers, etc.

- 2.5 The application site also comprises third party lands, being the rear of 56/57 West Street and a small area of the Office of Public Work's (OPW) existing car parking adjacent the former town wall and River Boyne.

### **Adjoining/Surrounding Area**

- 2.6 The application site is immediately bound by the River Boyne to the south and a diverse mix of urban development to the north, east and west. Notable buildings and structures in the adjoining/surrounding area include:

- The Abbey Shopping Centre;
- Barlow House (Drogheda Arts Centre);
- Drogheda Courthouse;
- Drogheda Garda Station;
- Drogheda Civic Offices;
- The Dominican Church;
- The Bridge of Peace;
- Mill Lane Apartments (under construction) and
- St. Dominick's Bridge (recently refurbished).

### **Wider Area**

- 2.7 The wider area comprises the urban footprint of Drogheda Town Centre and notable buildings include:

- Drogheda Town Centre Shopping Centre (and cinema);
- St. Dominic's Park;
- Boyne Shopping Centre (and cinema);
- Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital;
- St. Peter's Cathedral;
- St. Peter's Church; and
- St. Peter's National School.

- 2.8 The Design Report accompanying the planning application package provides additional detail and photos with respect to the character and context of the application site.

## 3. Planning History

### Planning History Search

- 3.1 A review of historical planning permissions was undertaken to identify whether there have been previous applications on or adjacent to the application site that either impact on the prospects of planning permission being granted for the proposed development, or that could be impacted upon by the proposed development.
- 3.2 The purpose of considering site planning history is to ensure the Westgate 2040 regeneration proposals are cognisant of existing or emerging planned developments.
- 3.3 For the purposes of this review, a search was undertaken of all planning applications, recorded on Louth County Council's online planning portal as extant permissions or were otherwise under consideration at the time of writing of this report. A further review of An Bord Pleanála's website was undertaken to identify any other relevant applications.
- 3.4 Due to the extent of the site area and the nature of the proposed works it should be noted that the planning history search excludes small scale applications such as:
- Incomplete planning application.
  - Minor change of use applications.
  - New residential schemes of less than 10 units.
  - New commercial schemes (including change of use) of less than 3000 sqm).
  - Retention applications.
  - Minor amendments to permitted applications.
  - Minor signage applications.
  - Other development types of scale that would not exacerbate significant environmental / planning concerns (including car parking proposals, internal reconfigurations etc.)

### Planning History - Application Site

- 3.5 Planning applications previously submitted within the boundary of the application site include for signage and advertising structures and the creation/retention of new shop fronts. These planning applications appear to be historical and minor in nature.
- 3.6 There does not appear to be any recent significant planning history within the boundary of the application site which would be material with respect to the consideration of the proposed development either individually or in-combination with other recent developments/applications.



### Planning History - Adjoining and Surrounding Area

3.7 **Table 3.1** provides details on notable planning applications, including Part 8 planning applications, submitted within the adjoining and surrounding area of the application site within the last 10 years.

**Table 3.1: Recent Planning History for the Adjoining/Surrounding Area**

Planning Reference	Site Location	Proposed Development	Decision
22/831	14 Fair Street, Drogheda, Co Louth	The overall development will provide 9 no. apartments (4 no. 1 bed, 5 no. 2 bed units).	Grant Permission with conditions
21/625	Peters Hill, Drogheda, Co Louth	Part 8 - Louth County Council proposes to carry out the development of a public meeting space at Peter's Hill, provision of a bespoke sculptural art work and all associated services necessary for the aforementioned works.	Approved
20/1055	70 West Street, Drogheda, Co Louth	Permission for the construction of a first floor and second floor extension to the rear of the property, internal alterations at first and second floor for the provision of two no. apartment units and all associated site works.	Refused
20/763	Mill Lane Trinity Street Bridge of Peace, Drogheda, Co Louth	Permission to vary development permitted under P.A. Ref. 18/1056. The proposed development consists of an increase in the number of storeys from 10 to 11 storeys, an increase in the number of apartments from 41 no. to 49 no. The number of car parking spaces permitted under P.A Ref. 18/1056 are unaltered.	Approved
18/1056	Nos.1 & 2 Mill Lane, Mill Lane, Trinity Street and R132/Bridge of Peace, Drogheda, Co. Louth	The development will include the demolition, excavation and clearance of all existing buildings and structures on site, including derelict buildings and the construction of 41no.apartments. The development provides for all associated site works, lighting, parking, open space, landscaping, and boundary treatments.	Approved
18/727	Drogheda Civic Offices, Fair Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth	Part 8: 1. Refurbishment of the existing council office building - 52-53 Fair Street (Single Storey PROTECTED STURCTURE-ref DB-069A; NIAH ref.no.13618043). 2. Refurbishment of the former council chamber building - 54 Fair Street (Two Storey PROTECTED STRUCTURE ref - DB-069b & NIAH ref.no.13618044). 3. Refurbishment of the Former Community Services Building - 55-56 Fair	Approved

		Street (Two Storey PROTECTED STRUCTURE ref no. DB-082. NIAH ref. 13618045).	
18/598	68-69 West Street, Drogheda	Part 8: Change of use of existing ground and part upper floor retail unit to office with public counter area and ancillary facilities, external signage and associated site development works.	Approved
17/243	48 - 51 Narrow West Street, Drogheda	Change of Use/Refurbishment/Extension - Commercial to Residential.	Approved
15/369	George's Street & Fair Street, Drogheda	Change of use - Restaurant to Residential at 1st Floor Level.	Approved
14/510044	South of Bridge of Peace, Drogheda	Part 8: Permission to construct a skateboard park, construction of associated fencing, lighting & access pathways.	Approved
13/510084	Wellington Quay, Drogheda, County Louth	In accordance with the provisions of Part 9, Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (S.I. 600 of 2001), (as amended), The Commissioners of Public Works Ireland propose to carry out the following works to construct a new Courthouse. The development will consist of the construction of a new courthouse of approximately 1385m <sup>2</sup> on a site of 1910m <sup>2</sup> , to include 2 no Courtrooms & ancillary accommodation.	Approved
13/510003	Dominic's Park, Drogheda	Permission for development that will consist of a bandstand & associated site works	Approved

3.8 **Table 3.2** provides details on planning applications within the adjoining/surrounding area of the application site submitted directly to an Bord Pleanála for assessment.

**Table 3.2: An Bord Pleanála related Applications in the Adjoining/Surrounding Area**

Planning Reference	Site Location	Proposed Development	Decision
315460	Townlands of Mell and Moneymore, Drogheda, Co. Louth	Development which involves the construction of the Boyne Greenway - North Bank	Pending
315072	Townlands of Mell and Moneymore, Drogheda, Co. Louth	Construction of the Boyne Greenway - North Bank.	Application withdrawn
309668	Land adjacent to Scotch Hall Shopping Centre, Drogheda	275 no. apartments, creche and associated site works.	Approved

308224	St. Dominick's Bridge, Moneymore, Drogheda.	Refurbishment of St. Dominick's Bridge, Co. Louth	Approved
307652	Ship Street in Drogheda to Mornington Village	Construction of the Boyne Greenway, pedestrian and cycleway linking Drogheda Town to Mornington Village	Refused
305819	Lands at Newtownstalaban, Drogheda.	217 no. residential units (137 no. houses, 80 no. apartments) creche and associated site works.	Approved
305552	Rathmullan Road, Drogheda, Co. Meath.	Construction of 661 no. residential units, childcare facility and associated site works.	Annulled
305110	Newtown, Railway Terrace, Drogheda.	450. no residential units (81 no. houses and 369 no. apartments), creche and associated site works.	Annulled
306389	Nos.1 & 2 Mill Lane, Mill Lane, Trinity Street, R132/Bridge of Peace, Drogheda	Demolition, excavation and clearance of existing buildings and structures on site, including derelict buildings and construction of 41 apartments.	Appeal withdrawn S.140(1)(a)
312544	26, 28, 29, 30 & 31 George's Street & Trinity Gardens, Drogheda, Co Louth.	Demolition of 5 no. houses and construction of 57 no. apartments, creation of new vehicular entrance , usb substation and all associated site works.	Grant permission with revised conditions
303616	Corrigan's Public House, George's Street, Bolton Street, Drogheda.	Change of use from public house to offices	Grant permission with revised conditions

### Planned Projects

3.9 The following planned projects which are currently being progressed by LCC in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA) are of note with respect to the proposed development as the 100m stretch of the R132 that is located within the application site has been designed to integrate with, and enable, these wider active travel projects:

- The R132 active travel project to the north of the Westgate 2040 area – LCC is aiming to submit a planning application in March 2024 for this project.
- The R132 active travel project to the south of the Westgate 2040 area – LCC is aiming to submit a planning application in June 2024 for this project.

## 4. Consultation

### Introduction

- 4.1 This section describes the consultation process in respect of the Westgate 2040 proposals.
- 4.2 As outlined previously, the planning application is to be submitted to An Bord Pleanála by Louth County Council under Sections 175 and 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- 4.3 Statutory consultation prior to submission of the planning application is not required under Sections 175 or 177AE, however the applicant acknowledges the importance of effective public participation in decision-making procedures for Council projects. On this basis, extensive non-statutory community consultation has been undertaken. The consultation process is described in detail below.

### Non-Statutory Consultation

- 4.4 In May 2021 Louth County Council undertook preliminary engagement and consultation for the preparation of a vision for the regeneration of Westgate, Drogheda.
- 4.5 As part of the design development process, stakeholders and members of the community were engaged to understand their needs and wants in relation to the Westgate Vision Area and to gain feedback on design principles, as part of a co-design process.
- 4.6 Community and stakeholder engagement was carried out during the public health crisis and varying levels of restrictions applied at different stages of engagement, which may have influenced both the volume and type of responses received.
- 4.7 The survey was live during the ‘circuit breaker’ lockdown during which time the public was advised to stay at home and limit their contact with people outside of their household ‘bubble’. The public information webinars took place shortly after restrictions were eased and the general public could meet with other households outdoors.
- 4.8 To inform this work a consultation survey was carried out online. A total of 458 completed submissions were received from a diverse range of stakeholders with an interest in the Westgate area or connections within Drogheda in general.
- 4.9 The survey was hosted online at [www.westgatevision.ie](http://www.westgatevision.ie) and was live for a fortnight between Monday 26 April and Monday 31 May 2021. The survey sought to gather participant feedback on specific potential, existing key features of the site, and to road-test initial design principles.
- 4.10 Of the completed responses, 23% of respondents primarily use Drogheda for shopping, 22% use restaurants and cafes, 17% use public services such as a post office or GP, 16%

use the town for leisure, 12% live in Drogheda, 8% work in Drogheda, and 2% own a business.

- 4.11 The feedback demonstrated clear demand and support for a safer and more secure town centre, more outdoor dining and gathering, more amenity space and a reduction in traffic in the area.
- 4.12 There was a strong preference for reducing traffic, with 45% of respondents strongly agreeing with the creation of a car-free zone within Westgate. There was also support for pedestrianisation and improved road safety in the area.
- 4.13 In addition to reducing traffic, respondents were supportive of cleaning and revealing the Drogheda town walls, further developing a heritage trail and creating an arrival structure for the town.
- 4.14 There were also strong levels of support for creating more community and civic spaces in Westgate, with the most popular responses being a market space, an outdoor meeting and seating area, and an outdoor performance and festival venue.
- 4.15 Having considered the combined results of the qualitative and quantitative data generated from the survey, a number of very clear themes emerged and demonstrate strong community sentiment. This sentiment was further evidenced in the online breakout room discussions and additional stakeholder consultation meetings. The clear themes that emerged from the consultation included:
- Maximise the potential of and protection for historic assets;
  - Improve traffic congestion and flow, centralised parking and car-free zones;
  - Improve safety and a sense of arrival;
  - Develop a focus on culture;
  - Maximise tourism potential;
  - Create structured outdoor space and amenities; and
  - Address underutilisation of the River Boyne.

#### **Statutory Consultation**

- 4.16 This planning application is submitted directly to An Bord Pleanála for assessment. As part of this planning application process, further consultation will take place. This will comprise:
- Placing of a public notice in a local newspaper;
  - Placing a copy of the application and all accompanying documents on display in the offices of Louth County Council, with access to the documents provided on the Council's website;

- Uploading an electronic copy of the application and all accompanying documents onto the Council's consultation portal; and
- Issuing details of the planning application and a copy of the EIA Report to the Department of Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's EIA Portal.

4.17 Pursuant to Sections 175(4)(b) and 177AE(4)(b) the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), the following prescribed bodies have also been directly notified in respect of this planning application:

- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- An Taisce
- Fáilte Ireland
- Heritage Council
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Uisce Éireann
- Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- National Transport Authority
- Inland Fisheries Ireland

4.18 Any submissions arising from the consultation and notification process will be submitted directly to An Bord Pleanála and considered as part of the planning application assessment process.

## 5. Proposed Development

### Overview

- 5.1 Louth County Council is seeking approval to undertake public realm regeneration works on lands within the Westgate Vision Area of Drogheda, Co. Louth.
- 5.2 The overall objective of the project (known as the 'Westgate 2040' project) is to act as a catalyst to support positive regeneration, compact growth and sustainable development in the Westgate Vision Area and the wider Drogheda Town Centre.
- 5.3 This planning application represents the next stage in delivering the Westgate Vision, launched by Louth County Council in 2018, which is a targeted planning response aimed at channelling investment into this core area of Drogheda Town Centre.
- 5.4 Another key objective of the project is to prepare an application for funding under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF). This current project stage, to seek approval for works to the public realm and for urban regeneration is funded under the URDF scheme.

### Project Brief

- 5.5 The Project Brief established the following key themes:
  - Create a quality gateway / arrival space, public spaces, pedestrian linkages and public realm.
  - Ensure inclusivity for all members of the community; the very young, the youth, the old, the mobility impaired, socially disadvantaged, the pedestrian and cyclist.
  - Develop proposals which meet the design principles of national and international best practice.
  - Promote an environment which leads to both day and night-time activities.
  - Improve connectivity and legibility for all members of the community and for visitors/tourists to the town.
  - Capitalise on, and respect, the rich heritage of this town centre location.
  - Operate / employ sustainable development principles by minimising energy consumption and maximising the use of renewable energy technology.

### Description of Development

- 5.6 The proposed development consists of the following:
  1. Public realm improvement works comprising: new hard landscaping including resurfacing, soft landscaping including new tree planting, a water feature channel with stepped concrete elements and integrated landscaping, a Corten steel ground

insert delineating the location of the former medieval town wall, a wayfinding Corten steel ground insert, Corten steel signs, Corten steel walkways, street furniture, new pedestrian connections, a SUDS rainwater retention pond, cycle lanes, pedestrian footpaths, external steps, tactile paving, road signs, cycle parking stands and provision of new railings;

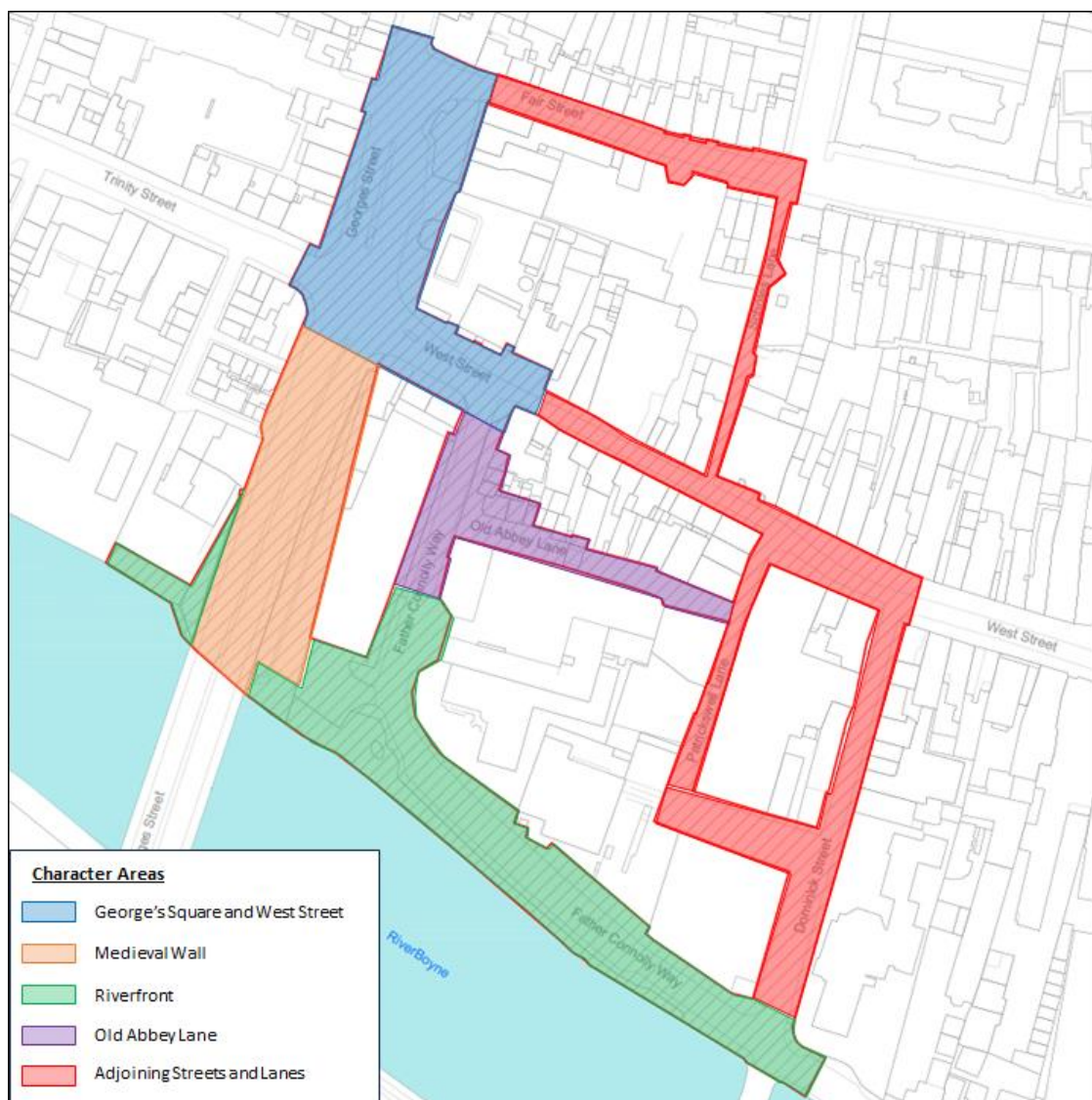
2. Public realm improvement works will also include the creation of a new urban plaza gateway/arrival area at Georges Square and a new enhanced public amenity area adjacent the River Boyne riverfront including a new pedestrian wooden deck promenade/boardwalk;
3. Demolition of the existing public toilet block at George's Square (between the junctions of George's Street/Fair Street and George's Street/West Street), a section of boundary wall located between Old Abbey Lane and Father Connolly Way and a section of wall located between Dominick Street and Dominick Street car park;
4. A new raised, free-standing, curved walkway located between the R132 and the existing Medieval Wall to provide a universally accessible connection from West Street to the River Boyne riverfront;
5. A new freestanding Corten steel pavilion located adjacent the River Boyne riverfront to create a new mixed use/public space;
6. (6) A new freestanding Corten steel canopy located within, and offset from, the remains of the Old Abbey (being a Protected Structure – ID No. DB-187 and a recorded monument - RMP No. LH024-041011) to create a new flexible community and cultural space;
7. Two freestanding Corten steel structures located at the junction of West Street and the R132/George's Street to mark the location of the former medieval West Gate;
8. Repair and restoration of the old Medieval Wall located adjacent the R132/George's Street (being a Protected Structure – ID No. DB-188 and a recorded monument - RMP No. LH024-041014);
9. Repair and restoration of the Old Abbey (being a Protected Structure – ID No. DB-187 and a recorded monument - RMP No. LH024-041011) including the west gable of its north aisle located within Old Abbey Lane;
10. Reprioritisation of traffic and movement patterns for the streets/roads/lanes/footpaths within the application site to accommodate the proposed public realm improvement works and integrate with the Council's emerging Active Travel projects to the north and south of George's Street/R132;
11. Road improvement works to include alteration of road alignment, resurfacing, shared surface treatments, revised access arrangements, cycle lanes, pedestrian crossing points, parking bays, loading bays, accessible parking bays, bus stops and new public lighting; and
12. All associated site works including: drainage, undergrounding of services and all associated ancillary development works.



## Character Areas

5.7 Noting the size of the application site, it has been divided into key character areas, as illustrated in **Figure 5.1** below, for design/development purposes:

- George's Square and West Street;
- Medieval Wall;
- Old Abbey Lane;
- Riverfront; and
- Adjoining Streets/Lanes.



**Figure 5.1: Westgate 2040 - Character Areas**

5.8 The accompanying Design Report provides further details on the character areas and the proposed works within each of these areas/the application site.

## 6. National and Regional Planning Policy Context

### Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter provides an overview of the national and regional planning policy context relevant to the application site and the proposed development.

### National Planning Policy

#### National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040

- 6.2 The *National Planning Framework* (NPF), published in February 2018, sets out a strategic development framework for the Country to 2040. The Framework focuses on:
- a. Growing regions, their cities, towns and villages and rural fabric.
  - b. Building more accessible urban centres of scale.
  - c. Better outcomes for communities and the environment, through more effective and coordinated planning, investment and delivery.
- 6.3 As a strategic development framework, the Plan sets the long-term context for Ireland's physical development and associated progress in economic, social and environmental terms and in an island, European and global context. Ireland 2040 is underpinned by supporting policies and actions at sectoral, regional and local levels.

#### National Policy Objectives

- 6.4 The NPF outlines National Policy Objectives, which set out broader aspirations for national and regional planning. Several of these are relevant when considering the proposed Westgate 2040 proposals in Drogheda. These include:
- **National Policy Objective 2b** - *The regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands, Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West and the Letterkenny-Derry and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border networks will be identified and supported in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.*
  - **National Policy Objective 4** - *Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.*
  - **National Policy Objective 6** - *Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.*
  - **National Policy Objective 7** - *Apply a tailored approach to urban development, that will be linked to the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund. With respect to the proposed development, there should be a particular focus on:*

- *Strengthening Ireland’s overall urban structure, particularly in the Northern and Western and Midland Regions, to include the regional centres of Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West, Athlone in the Midlands and cross-border networks focused on the Letterkenny-Derry North-West Gateway Initiative and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry on the Dublin-Belfast corridor;*
- *Encouraging population growth in strong employment and service centres of all sizes, supported by employment growth;*
- *Addressing the legacy of rapid unplanned growth, by facilitating amenities and services catch-up, jobs and/or improved sustainable transport links to the cities, together with a slower rate of population growth in recently expanded commuter settlements of all sizes; and*
- **National Policy Objective 26** - *Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.*
- **National Policy Objective 27** - *Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.*
- **National Policy Objective 30** - *Local planning, housing, transport/accessibility and leisure policies will be developed with a focus on meeting the needs and opportunities of an ageing population along with the inclusion of specific projections, supported by clear proposals in respect of ageing communities as part of the core strategy of city and county development plans.*
- **National Policy Objective 44** - *In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, to further support and develop the economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network and to promote and enhance its international visibility.*
- **National Policy Objective 60** - *Conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural and cultural heritage of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their significance.*
- **National Policy Objective 64** - *Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.*

6.5 The Framework also identifies key national environmental challenges which include the need to accelerate action on climate change, protecting important and vulnerable habitats, dealing with air quality problems in urban areas and making space for nature as the country’s population increases.

### **Drogheda**

6.6 As illustrated in **Figure 6.1**, Drogheda is identified as a 'Regional Centre' in the NPF and it is also identified as being located along the strategic 'Dublin to Belfast Economic Corridor', being the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland, with the cities and towns along the corridor home to a population of around 2 million people.



**Figure 6.1: Extract from the NPF illustrating the overarching Strategy**

- 6.7 This corridor is identified as being of national importance as it links the two largest cities and several of the largest towns on the island by high-capacity road and national rail links and plays a critical role in supporting economic growth and competitiveness.
- 6.8 The NPF recognises the key cross-border networks/links between Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry and that the growth potential associated with these interrelated networks is important for regional development, particularly in the context of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor.

- 6.9 Noting this, the NPF advises that *'It will be necessary to prepare co-ordinated strategies for Dundalk and Drogheda at both regional and town level to ensure that they have the capacity to grow sustainably and secure investment as key centres on the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border network'*.
- 6.10 Furthermore, the NPF identifies the following key future planning and development and place-making policy priority for the Eastern and Midland Region:
- 'A focused approach to compact, sequential and sustainable development of the larger urban areas along the Dublin – Belfast economic and transport corridor, along which there are settlements with significant populations such as Dundalk and Drogheda'*.

## **Regional Planning Policy**

### **Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031**

- 6.11 The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future growth and to better manage regional planning and economic development throughout the Region. It identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives.
- 6.12 The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) area has 3 no. Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), which have an administrative sub-regional planning remit. The application site is located in Co. Louth, which is in the East Region SPA alongside Counties Meath, Kildare and Wicklow.
- Drogheda is designated as a 'Regional Growth Centre' in by the RSES, see Table 4.2 - Settlement Hierarchy of the RSES, which describes the role of a Regional Growth Centre as follows:
- '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'*.
- 6.13 The RSES' Settlement Strategy confirms that Regional Growth Centres should support significant population and economic growth to drive effective regional development and that *'The vision for Drogheda...[is] to reach a target population in the region of 50,000 by 2031'*.
- 6.14 Drogheda is described by the RSES as being *'...an established centre of agglomeration strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast rail corridor and M1 Motorway in proximity to both the metropolitan centres of Dublin and Belfast'*. The RSES further states that *'Drogheda, and Dundalk have the potential to form part of a sustainable network of centres of scale, including Newry, connected by public transport within the Region and within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor'*. However, the RSES notes that the *'...realisation of a sustainable linear sequence of urban centres of scale at Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry will require further promotion and investment in public transport infrastructure'*.



- 6.15 The RSES acknowledges that there are underutilised areas in Drogheda where there is opportunity for regeneration and placemaking and confirms that the revitalisation and redevelopment of the town centre will be prioritised, including the regeneration of opportunity sites and their surrounding areas.
- 6.16 Indeed, the RSES confirms that *‘The physical, economic and social regeneration of the Heritage Quarter is promoted **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’ **[our emphasis]**.*
- 6.17 The RSES notes that *‘The vision supports the adaption 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**’ **[our emphasis]**. The RSES confirms that it supports this approach as an alternative option to new development on greenfield sites.*
- 6.18 The RSES contains the following Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSO) and Regional Policy Objectives (RPO), which relate specifically to Drogheda and which are of note with respect to the proposed development:
- **RSO 1 - Sustainable Settlement Patterns:** *Better manage the sustainable and compact growth of Dublin as a city of international scale and develop Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda and a number of key complementary growth settlements of sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth. (NSO 1, 7, 10 relate).*
  - **RPO 4.11:** *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 the EMRA. The UAP will support, the development of Drogheda as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver.*
  - **RPO 4.13:** *Promote and enhance cross-border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important crossborder network for regional development.*
  - **RPO 4.14:** *Promote self-sustaining economic and employment-based development opportunities to match and catch-up on rapid phases of housing delivery in recent years to provide for employment growth and reverse commuting patterns.*
  - **RPO 4.15:** *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:*
    - *The town’s role as a gateway to the Boyne Valley heritage sites and World Heritage site at Brú Na Bóinne;*
    - *Amenity potential of the River Boyne including the Boyne Greenway; and*
    - *Fáilte Ireland’s Ancient East designation.*

- **RPO 4.16:** Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, up skilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.
- **RPO 4.17:** Support the proposed Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme, subject to the outcome of the planning process and appropriate environmental assessment.
- **RPO 4.18:** Enhance Drogheda's role as a strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and provide for employment opportunities through identification of suitable sites for new industry including FDI.
- **RPO 6.3:** Support the effective planning and development of large centres of population and employment along the main economic corridor, in particular Drogheda and Dundalk.
- **RPO 6.30:** Support existing smart city initiatives such as Smart Dublin and the All Ireland Smart Cities Forum and support the development of smart city programmes in Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda.

6.19 In terms of growth enablers for the entire/wider EMRA, the RSES identifies the following 'enablers' which relate to Drogheda:

- *'Facilitate collaboration to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, to drive synergy in the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border network and strengthen economic links with the south east extending to Rosslare Europort'.*
- *'Target significant growth in the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk to enable them to act as regional drivers, with a focus on improving local economies and quality of life to attract investment and the preparation of urban area plans (UAPs)'.*

6.20 It is further noted that the RSES identifies Drogheda as being located within the 'Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor' and within the 'Core Region' of the EMRA. Noting this, the RSES outlines the following 'enablers' which relate to Drogheda:

- **Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor:** *'Compact and focused growth in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk to grow to city scale'.*
- **Core Region:** *'Drogheda to realise its potential to grow to city scale and secure investment to become a self-sustaining Regional Growth Centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, driving synergies between the Drogheda - Dundalk - Newry cross border network'.*

6.21 In terms of strategic cultural infrastructure assets in the region, the RSES acknowledges Drogheda as both a medieval and a walled town.

6.22 The EMRA also contains a number of other general Regional Policy Objectives, which are of note with respect to the proposed development, including the following:

- **RPO 7.25** - Support local authorities and state agencies in the delivery of sustainable strategic greenways, blueways, and peatways projects in the Region under the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways.
- **RPO 8.6:** In order to give local expression to the regional level Transport Strategy within the Region in conjunction with the NTA, Local Transport Plans (LTP) will be prepared for selected settlements in the Region.
- **RPO 9.10** - In planning for the creation of healthy and attractive places, there is a need to provide alternatives to the car and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking in the design of streets and public spaces. Local authorities shall have regard to the Guiding Principles for 'Healthy Placemaking' and 'Integration of Land Use and Transport' as set out in the RSES and to national policy as set out in 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS).
- **RPO 9.14** - Local authorities shall seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve.

## Relevant National Policies, Strategies and Guidelines

### Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns

- 6.23 The Town Centre First Policy (TCFP) was launched on 4 February 2022 and provides a co-ordinated, whole-of-government policy framework to proactively address the decline in the health of towns across Ireland and support measures to regenerate and revitalise them.
- 6.24 The TCF policy is described as '*...an enabling framework that will co-ordinate actions across Government, Local Authorities and key stakeholders to support towns to identify, develop and progress their own unique town centre revitalisation plans which incorporate best-practice with regard to place-making*'.
- 6.25 The policy has the potential to be '*...applied to a wide range of towns of varying population size and varying characteristics. In total, there are over 500 towns in Ireland... The largest of these towns include the five Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, **Drogheda**, Dundalk, Letterkenny and Sligo identified in the National Planning Framework (NPF) [our emphasis]*'.
- 6.26 The TCFP aims to create town centres that '*...function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the business, service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community*'.
- 6.27 The TCFP also aims to '*...empower local communities and businesses, working with Local Authorities, to develop plans to maximise the particular strengths and assets of their town*'.



- 6.28 TCFP outlines 9 opportunity areas that can be implemented to drive future growth and development in towns. The 'Regeneration of Public Space' is identified as an opportunity area. The Policy states that public spaces are vital for town centres, providing visual amenity and spaces within which people can rest and interact (including for cultural events). The benefit of public spaces for quality of life is stated, which has been compromised as public spaces have become less user-friendly. Car dominance is noted as having a major impact on the quality of public realm.
- 6.29 TCFP encourages and supports local communities to be creative and ambitious in developing a public realm that is welcoming to all, is safe, is easy to access for all modes of travel (particularly walking), has low noise and air pollution levels. A TCF approach provides a community with things to do, places to sit and relax and enjoy attractive views. We must also use this opportunity to adapt towns and public spaces to fully cater for persons with a disability or limited mobility.
- 6.30 TCFP recognises that Irish towns are diverse places and that supporting these towns requires a flexible, adaptive, and strategic approach.
- 6.31 In addition, TCFP promotes a balance between a reliance on the car with a need to provide safe and accessible public realm for all, which in turn promotes active travel.
- 6.32 The proposed development has been designed to align with and complement the Town Centre First policy approach.

**Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) (2013 – Updated 2019 and 2022)**

- 6.33 The Manual offers a holistic approach to the design of urban streets in cities, towns, suburbs and villages in Ireland and promotes a collaborative and consultative design process.
- 6.34 A key objective of DMURS is to achieve safe, attractive and vibrant streets by balancing the needs of all users, and prioritising alternatives to private car trips. A further aim of the Manual is to put well designed streets at the heart of sustainable communities.
- 6.35 The document includes a vision to create a strong cycling culture in Ireland and ensure that all cities, towns and villages become cycling-friendly and that cycling becomes a preferred means of travel, especially for short trips. The manual advocates a design-led approach, which takes account of both the physical and social dimensions of place and movement.
- 6.36 The proposed development has been designed in accordance with the guidance set out within this document.

**Department of Transport Ireland - National Sustainable Mobility Policy (April 2022)**

- 6.37 The National Sustainable Mobility Policy sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for promoting active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport journeys to help Ireland meet its climate obligations. It is accompanied by an action plan to 2025 which contains actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options by providing safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to private car journeys.

- 6.38 The policy aims to deliver at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030 and a 10% reduction in the number of kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars.
- 6.39 The proposed development has been designed to align with this policy document by responding to, and integrating with, wider active travel proposals and providing enhanced connectivity through the development area including new universally accessible links, such as the elevated winding walkway. A key design characteristic of the proposals is to align with the principles of this policy encouraging safe and green mobility (Principle 1); people focused mobility (principle 2) and better integrated mobility (Principle 3).

**National Transport Authority (NTA) - Cycle Design Manual (2023)**

- 6.40 The Cycle Design Manual (CDM) has been prepared by the National Transport Authority (NTA) and overseen by the Department of Transport. It replaces the previous National Cycle Manual, published by the NTA in 2011, which is now withdrawn.
- 6.41 The CDM draws on the experience of delivering cycling infrastructure across Ireland over the last decade, as well as learning from international best practice, and has been guided by the need to deliver safe cycle facilities for people of all ages and abilities.
- 6.42 The new manual places more emphasis on the range of cycles that cycle infrastructure will have to accommodate and the recommendations focus on segregating cyclists from traffic where speeds and volumes make roads unsuitable for sharing. There is also a general presumption towards segregating pedestrians and cyclists where possible.
- 6.43 The Manual embraces the Principles of Sustainable Safety to support a safe traffic environment for all road users including cyclists. It offers guidance on integrating cycling in the design of urban areas. The Manual challenges planners and engineers to incorporate cycling within transport networks more proactively than before.
- 6.44 The Manual identifies the following five main requirements to ensure cycle infrastructure can cater for the needs of people who currently cycle and to also attract new cycle users to the network:
- (i) Safety
  - (ii) Coherence
  - (iii) Directness
  - (iv) Comfort
  - (v) Attractiveness
- 6.45 The proposed development has been designed to ensure that the new cycle routes proposed will integrate with the wider Drogheda Active Travel scheme and are properly aligned, dimensioned and offer an appropriate level of safety to help achieve a balance between the various transport modes and road functions.

### **Climate Action Plan (2023)**

- 6.46 The Government's Climate Action Plan (2023) documents a broad spectrum of potential actions which can mitigate the effects of climate change as caused by pollution and the overexploitation of natural resources.
- 6.47 With regard to the built environment, these measures include the rational siting of urban development, the building of compact, dense and well-designed neighbourhoods, and the imposition of higher energy efficiency performance standards.
- 6.48 The Climate Action Plan commits to achieving a net zero carbon energy systems objective for Irish society and in the process, create a resilient, vibrant and sustainable country. With respect to Transport, the plan is aiming for a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030.
- 6.49 The proposed development has been designed to align with the aims and objectives of the Climate Action Plan.

### **Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments (2018)**

- 6.50 These Guidelines are issued to planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála (the Board) under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act) and both are required to have regard to the Guidelines in the performance of their functions under the Act.
- 6.51 The purpose of the Guidelines is to '*...provide practical guidance for planning authorities and the Board (Competent authorities) on legal and procedural issues and matters of interpretation arising from the amended Directive, which should result in greater consistency in procedures adopted by competent authorities in the planning system*'.
- 6.52 The Guidelines, for the greater part, address key areas of change introduced by Directive 2014/52/EU and contain an outline and guide to sections 171A and sections 172, 172A, 172B, and 172C of the Act, arising from the transposition of the Directive.
- 6.53 An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has also been prepared and is submitted in respect of the proposed development. The EIAR concludes that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to any significant effects on the environment.

### **Appropriate Assessment of Plans & Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (2010)**

- 6.54 The Appropriate Assessment Guidance was published to guide compliance with the Birds Directive, 1979 and the Habitats Directive, 1992.
- 6.55 This guidance is intended to assist and guide planning authorities in the application of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as it relates to their roles, functions and responsibilities in undertaking Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects. It applies

to plans and projects for which public authorities receive an application for consent, and to plans or projects which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt.

- 6.56 It sets out the different steps and stages that are needed in establishing whether a plan or project can be implemented without adversely affecting the integrity of a Natura 2000 site.
- 6.57 A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared in respect of the proposed development and concludes that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to any significant effects on any designated European sites.

**Architectural Heritage Protection Guideline for Planning Authorities (October 2011)**

- 6.58 The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines is a practical guide for planning authorities and all others who must comply with Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 on the protection of architectural heritage.
- 6.59 The core objectives of these guidelines are as follows:
- *a) for protecting structures, or parts of structures which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, and*
  - *b) for preserving the character of architectural conservation areas.*
- 6.60 Whilst primarily addressed to planning authorities, these guidelines also set out to assist owners and occupiers of protected structures, of proposed protected structures or buildings within ACAs, and those proposing to carry out works which would impact on such structures.
- 6.61 The proposed development has been designed in a careful, sensitive and respectful manner to reduce the potential for any negative impacts with respect to built heritage. Further details on the built heritage components of the proposed development are provided in 'Chapter 17 – Architectural Heritage' of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report which forms part of the planning application package.

**The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)**

- 6.62 These Guidelines introduce comprehensive mechanisms for the incorporation of flood risk identification, assessment and management into the planning process.
- 6.63 The core objectives of the Guidelines are to:
- Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
  - Avoid new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface water run-off;
  - Ensure effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains;

- Avoid unnecessary restriction of national, regional or local economic and social growth;
- Improve the understanding of flood risk among relevant stakeholders; and
- Ensure that the requirements of EU and national law in relation to the natural environment and nature conservation are complied with at all stages of flood risk management.

6.64 In accordance with Guidelines, a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment has been completed with respect to the proposed development and concludes that flood risk can be sustainably managed to an acceptable level.

**Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999)**

6.65 This policy document was published by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands to help further the implementation of the Valletta Convention in Ireland.

6.66 This document sets out basic principles of national policy on the protection of the archaeological heritage and seeks to avoid conflict between protection of the archaeological heritage and development.

6.67 Part III of the document sets out principles for the protection of archaeological heritage, which include:

- Archaeological heritage is non-renewable resource requiring careful and responsible management. The gathering of archaeological information should not destroy any more of that heritage than is necessary.
- There should always be a presumption in favour of avoidance of developmental impacts on the archaeological heritage and preservation in-situ of archaeological sites and monuments must be presumed to be the preferred option.
- If archaeological sites or monuments have to be removed due to development, then it is essential that the approach of preservation by record be applied.
- Carrying out of archaeological assessment is the first step in ensuring that preservation in-situ and preservation by record take place. Archaeological monitoring is another method of ensuring this occurs.
- Issues arise in relation to the protection of the archaeological heritage within urban areas, but the overall principles, approaches and methods still apply.
- Costs of archaeological are a legitimate part of development costs.

6.68 The proposed development has been designed in a careful, sensitive and respectful manner to reduce the potential for any negative impacts with respect to archaeological heritage. Further details with respect to the proposed development and archaeology are provided in 'Chapter 16 – Archaeology' of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report which forms part of the planning application package.

## 7. Planning Assessment of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

### Introduction

- 7.1 This Section sets out the key provisions of local planning policy relating to the proposed development and undertakes an evaluation of the proposed development in terms of compliance with the relevant policies, objectives and standards.
- 7.2 The Louth County Development Plan (LCDP) 2021-2027 sets out the statutory local planning policy context for the proposed development/application site. The Plan came into effect on the 11 November 2021, and as a point of clarity, the LCDP superseded the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017.
- 7.3 The LCDP provides a framework for the growth and development of the County with an underlying theme of promoting the creation of sustainable, healthy communities where people can access jobs, housing, and services, and enjoy a high quality of life.

### Strategic Vision and Strategic Objectives

- 7.4 The Strategic Vision of the LCDP is to:

*“Promote County Louth, in particular the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk, as uniquely attractive places in which to live, work, visit and do business and where the quality of employment and educational opportunities, natural and built environment, cultural experiences and provision of inclusive communities are all to the highest standards, while transitioning to a low carbon and climate resilient society.”*

- 7.5 The proposed development has been designed to align with and will help deliver the following Strategic Objectives of the LCDP:

- **SO 1** - *Realise the potential and promote the development and growth of County Louth through harnessing the economic and employment potential of the competitive advantages of the County. This includes its strategic location, connectivity and accessibility to external markets and having regard in particular to the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres located on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.*
- **SO 2** - *Support and promote the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as key designated Regional Growth Centres with high levels of self-sustaining employment and services, to act as regional economic drivers, playing a significant role for a wide catchment area and to help achieve a more coordinated and sustainable settlement and travel pattern across the region.*
- **SO 5** - *Ensure a more sustainable and integrated concept of development with regard to land use, transportation, water services, energy supply and waste management over the lifetime of the Plan.*

- **SO 6** - Conserve and enhance the County's Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services supporting the sustainable management of natural assets and the biodiversity of the County's protected habitats and species to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.
- **SO 7** - Protect and enhance the built, cultural and natural heritage assets of Louth, the intrinsic value of which helps to define the character of both urban and rural areas, contributes to the attractiveness, vibrancy and sense of place for residents, tourists and visitors, including improved access to the countryside through the development of greenways, walking trails and blueways in support of and advancing sustainable communities.
- **SO 8** - Develop and support vibrant, inclusive, sustainable and healthy communities in Louth where people can live, work, invest and visit, enjoying access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities and amenities, suitable for all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy.
- **SO 9** - Protect and enhance the unique character and identity of Louth's towns and villages and improve quality of life and well-being through the application of Healthy Placemaking, underpinned by good urban design with the creation of attractive public spaces that are age friendly vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate positive social interaction.
- **SO 10** - Support implementation of the objectives and actions for strengthening economic and community development in the County in accordance with the Louth Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).
- **SO 15** - Ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning through the increased use of sustainable transport modes and the minimisation of travel demand to achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with excellent connectivity both within and beyond the County.
- **SO 17** - Facilitate the development of infrastructural projects, which will underpin sustainable development throughout the County during the period of the Plan.
- **SO 18** - Afford suitable protection to the environment and natural resources of the County and ensure the fulfilment of environmental responsibilities.

## Core Strategy

- 7.6 Chapter 2 of the LCDP contains the Core Strategy which '*...facilitates and promotes a more consolidated compact urban form and ensures that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development, delivering a high-quality living and working environment meeting the needs of all residents*'.
- 7.7 In keeping with the national and regional planning context, Drogheda is identified as a 'Regional Growth Centre' in the Settlement Strategy for Co. Louth (see **Figure 7.1**). Table 2.4 of the LCDP, entitled 'Settlement Hierarchy for County Louth', describes Regional Growth Centres as being '*...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’.



**Figure 7.1: Extract of ‘Map 2.1 - Core Strategy Map’ of the LCDP 2021-27**

- 7.8 The Core Strategy notes that the population of Drogheda in 2016 was 34,199<sup>1</sup> and that the population of Drogheda is anticipated to grow to 41,113 by 2027 which represents an annual average population increase of 629 people per annum between 2016 and 2027. The trajectory of population growth for Drogheda is based on the population increasing to 50,000 in 2031 as set out in the EMRA’s RSES.
- 7.9 The Core Strategy states that the population of Drogheda is supported by ‘...a wide range of services and amenities including an extensive convenience and comparison retail portfolio in town centre and edge of centre locations, a regional hospital at Our Lady of Lourdes, primary and secondary schools, an adult education facility, community centres, play parks, and open spaces, as well as a range of local and international businesses,

<sup>1</sup> Excluding South Drogheda in County Meath. If South Drogheda is included, the overall population of Drogheda in 2016 was 40,956.



*production, and manufacturing facilities located in the business and enterprise parks in the town'.*

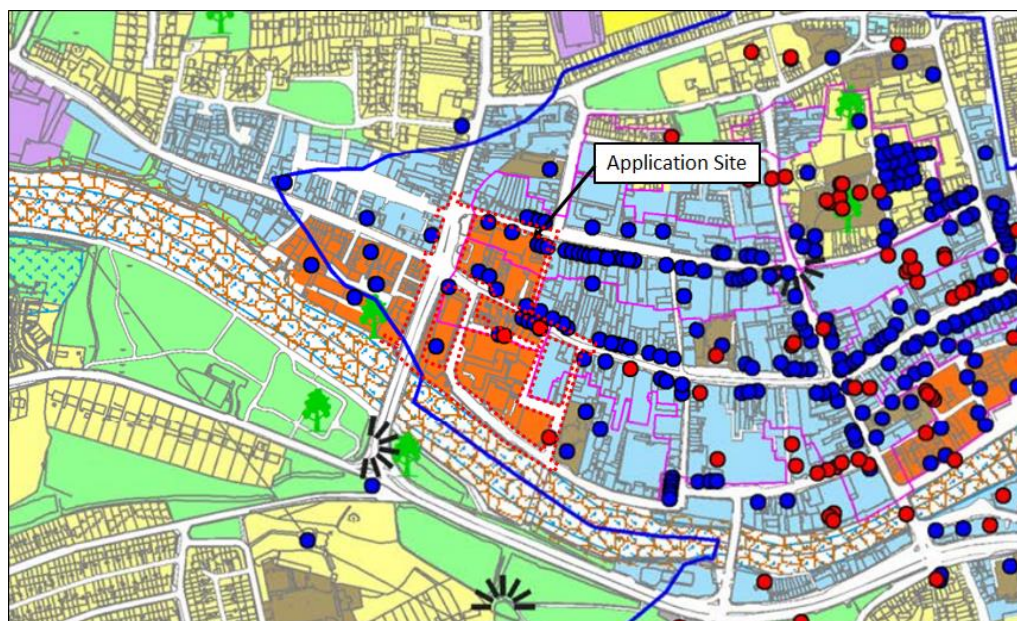
- 7.10 In terms of economic growth, the strategy for Drogheda is to focus on building on the competitive advantage of the town and in particular with its location along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and accessibility to Dublin Airport and City Centre.
- 7.11 The Growth Strategy also seeks to support significant population and economic growth that will ensure the town continues to function as a regional driver for economic growth and to strengthen the economic base of the town.
- 7.12 Indeed, the Growth Strategy places a '*...significant focus on promoting the regeneration of the town centre through the identification of specific areas and land for regeneration uses and the progression of regeneration projects such as the Westgate Vision'.*
- 7.13 In terms of the Westgate area, it is stated that it '*...has the capacity to accommodate commercial, office, and residential uses in a part of the town that has experienced high levels of vacancy and dereliction'.*
- 7.14 The proposed development has been designed to align with and/or help deliver on the following Strategic Settlement Strategy Policy Objectives for Drogheda:
- **SS 1** - *To support the role of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre and a driver of growth along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to facilitate the continued expansion and growth of the town based on the principles of balanced, sustainable development that enables the creation of employment, supports economic investment, and creates an attractive living and working environment.*
  - **SS 2** - *To continue to support and promote the economic role of Drogheda as a regional centre of employment along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to facilitate any infrastructural investment or employment generating sustainable development that will strengthen the role of the town and maintain its competitiveness.*
  - **SS 7** - *To support the progression and implementation of any projects in Drogheda funded by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund including the Westgate Vision.*
  - **SS 8** - *To support the implementation of the Urban Design Framework Plan for the Heritage Quarter in Drogheda.*
  - **SS 13** - *To support investment in public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services in Drogheda including the progression of the DART Expansion Programme which includes the electrification of the rail line and the extension of DART services to Drogheda.*
  - **SS 14** - *To enhance the established role of Drogheda town centre and position it as a destination of choice for both visitors and residents alike with a special emphasis on the role played by the town walls.*

- **SS 15** - To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area.
- **SS 17** - To work with the NTA, local landowners, and developers to implement an integrated pedestrian and cycle path network throughout Drogheda, recognising the highest priority to be given to cycling and walking over other modes of transport.
- **SS 18** - To develop a network of green areas throughout the town including the delivery of a greenway along the north and southern banks of the River Boyne stretching from Townley Hall to Baltray and Oldbridge to Mornington in County Meath while maintaining the integrity of the Boyne Natura 2000 sites.

### Land Use Zonings

7.15 **Figure 7.2** below is an extract of the ‘Drogheda Composite Map’ which accompanies the LCDP. The general extent of the application site is identified by a dotted red line.

7.16 The application site principally comprises public realm areas and public road/footpath areas, but it is noted that parts of the site are zoned ‘D1 – Regeneration’ (see orange hatching). The site also adjoins lands that are zoned ‘B1 – Town Centre’ and ‘G1 - Community Facilities’ but no works are proposed as part of this application to lands within the ‘B1 – Town Centre’ or ‘G1 - Community Facilities’ zoning.



**Figure 7.2:** Extract from Drogheda Composite Map of the LCDP 2021 – 2027

7.17 The Zoning Objective for ‘D1 – Regeneration’ is ‘*To facilitate social, economic and physical regeneration and/or rejuvenation of an area or specific lands*’. The LCDP provides the following additional guidance for this zoning:

- ‘*The purpose of the ‘Regeneration’ zoning is **to encourage and facilitate opportunities for regeneration and place making***’.

- *The lands or areas are strategically located within settlements and consist of vacant or under-utilised buildings or land **with significant potential to stimulate the rejuvenation of an area or neighbourhood.***
- *The potential uses of the lands in these zones are specific to the location of each area or piece of land and can include residential, commercial, business, retail, employment, or community uses. **The primary objective is to support regeneration, make a positive contribution to urban spaces, and improve quality of life for all.** [our emphasis.]*

7.18 **Table 7.1** summarises the land uses which the LCDP considers to be a ‘Generally Permitted Use’ and an ‘Open for Consideration’ use with respect to the ‘D1 – Regeneration’ zoning.

**Table 7.1: ‘Generally Permitted’ and ‘Open for Consideration’ Land Uses within the ‘D1 – Regeneration’ land use zoning**

<b>Generally Permitted Use</b>	Taking account of the broad potential uses associated with these lands, it was considered more prudent to identify uses as ‘Open for Consideration’.
<b>Open for Consideration</b>	Bank/Financial Institution, Business Enterprise Centre, Coffee Shop/Tea Room, Childcare Facility, <b><u>Community Facility</u></b> , Conference/Event Centre, <b><u>Cultural Facility</u></b> , Digital Innovation Hub/Co-working Space, Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), Education Facility (Third Level or Training Centre), E-Charging Facility, Health Care Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, High Technology Manufacturing, Home Based Economic Activities, Industry Light, Nursing Home, Offices, <b><u>Park/Playgrounds</u></b> , <b><u>Recreational/Amenity Open Space</u></b> , <b><u>Recreational/Sports Facility</u></b> , Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Restaurant, Science and Technology Based Enterprise, Service Station, Sheltered Accommodation, Shop, Shop (Convenience) ≥1,500m <sup>2</sup> , Shop (Convenience) ≤1,500m <sup>2</sup> , Takeaway/Fast Food Outlet, Telecommunications Structures, Tourist Facility, Traveller Accommodation, Vehicle Servicing/Maintenance Garage, Veterinary Surgery.

[our emphasis.]

#### Assessment

7.19 The LCDP identifies ‘Community Facility’, ‘Cultural Facility’, ‘Park/Playgrounds’ and ‘Recreational/Amenity Open Space’ as ‘Open for Consideration’ land uses within the ‘D1-Regeneration’ zoning.

7.20 The proposed development will act as a catalyst to support positive regeneration, compact growth and sustainable development in the Westgate Vision Area and the wider Drogheda Town Centre. The proposals also aim to reprioritise and improve the public realm areas, public roads and public footpaths within the application site.

- 7.21 The proposed development has been carefully designed to align with the ‘D1-Regeneration’ zoning objective, i.e. *‘To facilitate social, economic and physical regeneration and/or rejuvenation of an area or specific lands’* and is therefore considered to represent a compatible and compliant land use.
- 7.22 It is further noted that the proposed development will also align with and support prevailing national and regional planning policy/objectives with respect to regeneration, compact growth, town centre first, health and well-being, climate resilience, active travel, and etc.
- 7.23 The principle of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in planning policy and it is further considered that it will be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the proposal is situated.

### **Social and Community**

- 7.24 Section 4.5 of the LCDP states that *‘The provision of community and social infrastructure of a high standard, in appropriate locations, and in tandem with housing and other development is important for all ages and abilities and is an essential component of building sustainable, properly planned, healthy communities’*.
- 7.25 The following Social and Community Policy Objectives are a material consideration when considering the proposed development:
- **SC 6** - *To ensure the integration of age friendly and family friendly strategies in all new neighbourhoods including the provision for flexible housing typologies, buildings and open spaces that are designed so that everyone, including older persons, people with disabilities, and people with younger children can move about with ease, avoiding separation or segregation.*
  - **SC 8** - *To support the planning provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities and all ages have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve, are physically integrated with residential and employment areas and are provided concurrently with new residential development.*
  - **SC 9** - *To support the sharing and clustering of social and community facilities at appropriate locations to improve viability of and accessibility to these facilities.*
  - **SC 15** - *To facilitate and encourage open space areas and greenway corridors to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating measures to promote and protect ecosystems, climate change measures and to incorporate key landscape features including archaeological considerations into their design.*
  - **SC 18** - *To maximize the range of public play opportunities available to all children.*
  - **SC 21** - *To support and facilitate the provision, development and sustainability of arts and cultural infrastructure at appropriate locations throughout the County and which are accessible to all members of the community.*

## Assessment

- 7.26 As set out in Section 5 of this Statement, a key objective for the Westgate 2040 project is to *'Ensure inclusivity for all members of the community; the very young, the youth, the old, the mobility impaired, socially disadvantaged, the pedestrian and cyclist'*.
- 7.27 The proposed development has been designed to incorporate enhanced connectivity and permeability within and throughout the application site with a range of new Part M compliant and universally accessible routes, particularly the new terraced and stepped plaza at George's Square and the new raised walkway within the Medieval Wall area.
- 7.28 In addition to this, the proposals have also been carefully designed to align with the relevant social and community policy objectives of the LCDP by delivering new and enhanced public realm areas that will:
- physically integrate with residential and employment areas, i.e. the urban footprint of Drogheda Town Centre;
  - cluster closely to each other within the Westgate area to improve viability and accessibility;
  - be accessible and available to all to enjoy;
  - facilitate greenway corridors and promote and protect ecosystems, climate change measures;
  - incorporate key landscape and heritage features including built heritage and archaeological considerations into the design;
  - maximise the range of public play opportunities available to all children; and
  - support and facilitate the provision, development and sustainability of arts and cultural infrastructure at appropriate and accessible locations.

## Economy and Employment

- 7.29 Chapter 5 of the LCDP provides details on the Economic Strategy for the County and the relevant planning policies and objectives to support this strategy.
- 7.30 The LCDP advises that *'The identification of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres (RGCs) in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Strategic Economic Strategy (RSES) is recognition of the importance of these settlements at both a regional and national level in facilitating future population and economic growth.'*
- 7.31 The LCDP further advises that *'The RSES has identified Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres and recognises the significant potential of these settlements to function as drivers for economic development in the Region.'*
- 7.32 The LCDP also notes that *'Economic development and employment in the County is concentrated in business parks, industrial estates, and town centres in Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee, and Dunleer.'*



7.33 Relevant policy objectives of the LCDP with respect to the proposed development include:

- **EE 1:** *To maximise the economic potential of Louth by building on its locational advantage along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and promoting and marketing the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk for economic investment.*
- **EE 28:** *To prioritise economic development in Drogheda and Dundalk taking account of the strategic importance of the settlements along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and their designation as Regional Growth Centres in the RSES.*
- **EE 29:** *To take a positive and pro-active approach when considering the economic impact of major planning applications in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk in order to support economic development and employment growth and to deliver high quality outcomes.*
- **EE 30:** *To promote and facilitate the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk as creative and innovative centres that are competitive, accessible and attractive, each with their own distinct identity and built heritage.*
- **EE 32:** *To support the development of Smart City Programmes in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.*

#### **Assessment**

7.34 The proposed development will not introduce additional economic or employment floorspace. However, the proposals will align with and support the overall thrust of the LCDP's economy and employment strategy and policy objectives for Drogheda by delivering high quality public realm interventions to act as a catalyst for positive regeneration within the Westgate area.

7.35 The regeneration of the Westgate area is intended to improve the appearance and perception of the area which in turn will make the area more attractive to potential investors, developers, the local community and visitors.

7.36 The proposed interventions have also been designed to align with international and national best practice, drawing inspiration from urban regeneration projects from across Ireland and Europe. A further objective is to celebrate and maximise the distinctive local identity and built/natural heritage within the Westgate area which will help to attract additional footfall (residents/visitors/tourists) to the area and further stimulate investor confidence.

#### **Tourism**

7.37 Chapter 6 of the LCDP sets out the Council's policies for Tourism. This chapter of the LCDP recognises that '*Louth has a strong tourism product with significant potential for growth*' and that '*Tourism has played a significant role in the economic recovery in recent years and is fundamental in terms of the opportunities it generates for businesses and employment throughout the country*'.

7.38 The LCDP advises that the future development of the tourism sector needs to capitalise on County Louth's unique location in relation to the Boyne Valley and the Mourne/Cooley/Gullion Regions.

7.39 The LCDP sets out a number of Tourism Policy Objectives with the following being a material consideration for the proposed development:

- **TOU 1:** *To co-operate with all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the 'Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016 -2020', and any subsequent strategy published during the life of this Plan.*
- **TOU 2:** *To support the implementation of the 'County Louth Tourism & Heritage Action Plan 2016 -2021' and any subsequent plans published during the life of this Plan.*
- **TOU 4:** *To promote and facilitate tourism as one of the key economic pillars of the County's economy and major generator of employment and to support the provision of necessary significant increase in facilities, visitor attractions and improvement in public spaces to promote attractive and vibrant town centres as key places for tourists.*
- **TOU 5:** *To support the work of the Boyne Valley Strategy Working Group and its core objective of making the Boyne Valley a leading sustainable tourism destination.*
- **TOU 8:** *To promote and facilitate the development of walkways and cycleways at appropriate locations throughout the County utilising disused transport links where feasible.*
- **TOU 9:** *To protect the integrity and scenic quality of existing and future walking and cycling routes and their setting.*
- **TOU 11:** *To continue the development of a network of greenways in County Louth in accordance with the 'Strategy for Future Development of National and Regional Greenways'.*
- **TOU 12** - *To work with the relevant stakeholders including the OPW, the Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, the Arts Council, local communities and businesses to support the development of heritage and cultural tourism in Louth.*
- **TOU 17** - *To facilitate the sustainable development of the tourism sector and provide for the delivery of a unique combination of tourism opportunities drawing on the network of attractions in County Louth and potential future attractions.*
- **TOU 20** - *To promote the sustainable development of County Louth as a quality tourist destination in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and associated agencies themed on heritage, culture and an unspoilt natural environment and support innovative tourism projects that would boost employment and promote County Louth as a tourism destination, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Development Zones as detailed in Chapter 3.*



- **TOU 23** - *To support and promote Drogheda as a designated 'Destination Town' and engage with Fáilte Ireland in developing and promoting the tourism potential of the town.*

#### **Assessment**

- 7.40 Detailed stakeholder and community consultations were undertaken in advance of the concept development stage for the Westgate 2040 Regeneration Project, including consultations with Fáilte Ireland, to help inform the overall design approach/strategy.
- 7.41 The proposed project has been designed to respond to the feedback received during the detailed consultation stage and the design approach/strategy can be described as being multifunctional in how the proposals respond to an array of needs including those of residents, businesses, visitors and tourists.
- 7.42 The following components of the project are of note with respect to the abovementioned tourism policy objectives:
- The proposals will provide enhanced connections to the riverfront along with enhanced permeability and priority for the pedestrian to make the Westgate area a more attractive and conducive area to visit and enjoy.
  - The proposed development will sensitively and carefully celebrate the unique identity and natural/built heritage within the Westgate area to attract new visitors/tourists and provide enhanced amenities for residents.
  - New cultural and community spaces, such as the Old Abbey Lane community space, the freestanding Corten Steel structure within the Old Abbey ruins and the Riverside Pavilion will provide additional opportunities for cultural/art/community/social events to help attract residents/visitors/tourists.
  - Segregated walking and cycling paths will be provided along the riverfront to integrate with and extend existing and emerging greenway/blueway active travel initiatives along the River Boyne.
  - George's Square and the Westgate will undergo a significant transformation to create a new high quality gateway and arrival point that is accessible by walking, cycling and bus and which will further benefit the areas' tourism credentials.
  - The entire application site will undergo a rationalisation and decluttering process to improve its visual appearance and functionality and new high quality and strategically located soft landscaping and street furniture will be provided to further enhance the attractiveness and functionality of the area.
- 7.43 The proposed development has been designed to deliver new public realm interventions that will support the overall tourism strategy for Drogheda as a 'Destination Town' for the Boyne Valley and County Louth.

## **Movement**

7.44 Chapter 7 of the LCDP relates to pedestrian and vehicular movement. The LCDP sets out a number of policy objectives which are of relevance for the proposed development. These are set out and discussed below.

## **Sustainable Transport**

7.45 The following 'Sustainable Transport' policy objectives are of note with respect to the proposed development:

- **MOV 1:** *To work with national transport agencies in supporting the delivery of a high quality, climate resilient and sustainable transport network in the County.*
- **MOV 2:** *To support the implementation of the 'National Climate Action Plan' 2019, and any subsequent plans, and in particular the measures included that will assist in achieving the target of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction by 2030 in the transport sector as set out in Section 10.2 of the 'Climate Action Plan'.*
- **MOV 6:** *To promote and support the principles of universal design ensuring that all environments are inclusive and are accessible to and can be used to the fullest extent possible by all users regardless of age, ability or disability.*
- **MOV 7:** *To support a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking and the attainment of any national targets relating to modal change published during the life of this Plan.*
- **MOV 9:** *To support investment in sustainable transport infrastructure that will make walking, cycling or public transport more attractive and appealing, and facilitates accessibility for all, regardless of age, physical mobility, or social disadvantage.*
- **MOV 14:** *To encourage a modal shift from use of the private car towards more sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, and public transport.*

## **Assessment**

7.46 An overall objective and key design principle of the proposed development is to encourage/support alternative and active modes of transport.

7.47 This objective/principle will be achieved through a number of proposed interventions including: prioritising the pedestrian and cyclist in the design approach; providing universally accessible routes/connections; integrating George's Street/R132 with wider active travel schemes in Drogheda; reprioritisation of roads/junctions/parking/footpath areas; incorporating shared spaces; and provision of new cycle parking infrastructure.

7.48 It is considered that the proposed development will align with the Sustainable Transport policy objectives of the LCDP.

### **Bus Services**

7.49 The following 'Bus Services' policy objective is of note with respect to the proposed development:

- **MOV 20:** *To support the National Transport Authority (NTA) and other stakeholders and community groups in improving bus services and infrastructure in the County.*

### **Assessment**

7.50 Consultation was undertaken with the NTA and LCC's Active Travel section during the concept development stage of the proposed development to appropriately inform the design approach with bus stops/infrastructure and integration of alternative transport modes.

7.51 The proposed development seeks to accommodate existing bus stop facilities and to improve these facilities where possible. A bus lay-over area at the southern side of Father Connelly Way will be removed to provide a 2.0m wide cycle lane, footpath and enhanced hard and soft landscape areas as part of the River Boyne riverfront area. The existing bus lay over area along the western side of Dominick Street will be retained to provide bus parking and drop off/set down services for local bus and tour operators.

7.52 It is considered that the proposed design approach will facilitate safer pedestrian, cycle and public bus access and will ultimately support and improve bus services/infrastructure in the area.

### **Cycling and Walking**

7.53 The following 'Cycling and Walking' policy objectives are of note with respect to the proposed development:

- **MOV 25** - *To support the retrospective provision of walking and cycling infrastructure in existing settlements, where feasible, to achieve growth in sustainable mobility and strengthen and improve the walking and cycling network.*
- **MOV 28** - *To promote walking and cycling as a safe, convenient, healthy, efficient, and environmentally friendly mode of transport for all age groups.*
- **MOV 29** - *To continue to work and engage with the National Transport Authority, the Department of Transport, any other agencies in developing a modern network of walking and cycling infrastructure in the County.*
- **MOV 31:** *To encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities in town and villages in the County.*

### **Assessment**

7.54 A key design principle and objective of the proposed development is to promote cycling and walking within and throughout the Westgate area. The proposals include design features and interventions to assist with prioritising the pedestrian and cyclist, including: new Part M compliant routes/connections; cycle lanes; pedestrian walkways; level shared surfaces; cycle parking; improvements to the quality of the streetscape; and new pedestrian crossing points.

### **Public Realm Improvements**

7.55 The following 'Public Realm Improvements' policy objective is of note with respect to the proposed development:

- **MOV 40:** *To support the design and implementation of public realm projects in town and villages throughout the County that will make these locations more attractive and liveable spaces which are climate resilient and facilitates accessibility for all, regardless of age, physical mobility, or social disadvantage.*

### **Assessment**

7.56 The proposed development is a public realm/urban regeneration project and has been carefully designed to accommodate persons of all ages and mobility and so by its nature will align with and support this policy objective of the LCDP.

### **Car Parking**

7.57 Section 13.16.11 of the LCDP entitled 'Parking Standards that Reflect the Demand and Location' states that *"It is considered appropriate that the car parking requirement in the towns and villages in the County should be reflective of the anticipated parking demand"*.

7.58 Table 13.11 of the LCDP entitled 'Car Parking Standards' sets out the car parking standards for various land uses. It is noted that no provision has been assigned to public realm works in a town centre location and none of the development types listed in Table 13.11 are representative of the proposed development.

### **Assessment**

7.59 The proposed development will not incorporate any new or additional building floorspace and so there is no specific requirement to provide additional parking as part of the development. The development proposals do, however, propose to reduce the level of car parking within the application site, with the spaces reallocated for urban realm and to facilitate walking and cycling to/from and within the site.

7.60 The proposals include the removal of: 9 no. on-street car parking spaces from the George's Square and Fair Street area; 10 no. parking spaces and space for approximately 2 no. buses in a parking / lay-over area is to be removed from the southern side of Father Connolly Way; and a further 22 no. on-street parking spaces along Dominick Street and Patrickswell Lane will be removed.

7.61 In total, 41 no. car parking spaces and a bus lay-over area are proposed to be removed from within the application site to provide new and improved public realm areas and to enhance permeability and walking/cycling connectivity within and to/from the site. The reconfiguration of spaces has also facilitated a consolidation of the existing disabled parking spaces and allows for the provision of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points.

7.62 However, 36 no. new bicycle parking facilities (capable of accommodating approx. 72 no. parked bicycles) will be provided within the application site at accessible locations to help facilitate and encourage the transition to more sustainable and active modes of transport in the area.

7.63 A total of 2 no. accessible parking spaces are also proposed for the area with 1 no. located along Fair Street and 1 no. space located along Dominick Street. It is further

noted that disabled car parking spaces are provided within existing car parking areas located adjacent the application site including the parking areas at Fair Street, Patrickswell Lane, Dominick Street and the multi-storey Haymarket car park.

- 7.64 Furthermore, the accessibility credentials of the bus stops along George's Street will be improved with a new Part M compliant terraced and stepped plaza at George's Square, a new Part M compliant ramped walkway to the riverfront, adjacent the medieval wall, and with new/upgraded designated pedestrian crossing points and use of shared spaces.
- 7.65 All car parking / loading bays etc. provided as part of the development will comply with the minimum standards set out in Table 13.9 of the LCDP entitled 'Dimensions of Parking Spaces'.
- 7.66 The reconfiguration of parking spaces has also facilitated a consolidation of the existing disabled bay parking spaces and will allow for the future provision of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points.
- 7.67 It is considered that the car parking provision proposed for the development is adequate to serve the needs of the wider community and visitors to the town whilst encouraging sustainable modes of transport in compliance with national, regional and local policy and the objectives of the Climate Action Plan 2023.

#### **Disabled Car Parking Provision**

- 7.68 Section 13.16.7 of the LCDP entitled 'Disabled Parking' states that *"parking spaces shall be generally applied at the rate of 5% of spaces for developments requiring 10 or more spaces, with a minimum of one no. space"*.

#### **Assessment**

- 7.69 The proposed development will not incorporate any new or additional building floorspace and so there is no specific requirement to provide additional disabled parking as part of the development.
- 7.70 A disabled car parking space will be provided along Fair Street and Dominick Street. It is further noted that disabled car parking spaces are provided within existing car parking areas located adjacent the application site including the parking areas at Fair Street, Patrickswell Lane, Dominick Street and the multi-storey Haymarket car park.
- 7.71 All proposed disabled car parking bays will comply with the minimum standards set out in Table 13.9 of the LCDP entitled 'Dimensions of Parking Spaces'.

#### **Electric Vehicles**

- 7.72 The following 'Electric Vehicles' policy objectives are of note with respect to the proposed development:
- **MOV 10:** *To facilitate the switch to Electric Vehicles through the roll-out of additional electric charging points at appropriate locations within the County in association with relevant agencies and stakeholders.*

- **MOV 11:** *To facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in the Development Management Guidelines in Chapter 13.*

7.73 In addition to the above policy objectives, Section 13.16.9 Charging Points for Electric Vehicles of the LCDP states that *“In all car parking areas, provision shall be made for charging points for electric vehicles. This shall include the necessary wiring and ducting. Pending the publication of guidance on the minimum requirement of these spaces, an assessment shall be made on a case-by case basis; however, applicants shall strive to provide these charging points in a minimum of 20% of the total spaces”*.

7.74 The proposed development has been designed in a manner to enable electric vehicle charging points to be accommodated should Louth County Council roll out a wider electric vehicle charging point strategy in the area/wider Drogheda area.

### **Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure**

7.75 Chapter 8 of the LCDP sets out the Councils policy objectives with respect to Natural Heritage, Biodiversity & Green Infrastructure.

#### **European Sites in Co. Louth**

7.76 The following policy objectives are of note with respect to the proposed development:

- **NBG 3:** *To protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives.*
- **NBG 4:** *To ensure that all proposed developments comply with the requirements set out in the DECLG ‘Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010’.*
- **NBG 6:** *To ensure a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) on all plans and/or projects and/or Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Report/ Natura Impact Assessment) where appropriate, is undertaken to make a determination. European Sites located outside of the County but within 15km of the proposed development site shall be included in such screenings as should those to which there are pathways, for example, hydrological links for potential effects.*

#### **Assessment**

7.77 A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared by RSK and is submitted as part of the planning application package to address the relevant policy objectives and requirements with respect to Appropriate Assessment and European Sites.

7.78 The NIS confirms that the southern boundary of the application site adjoins the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, and that a small section of the application site is located within the SAC. However, none of the qualifying interests of this SAC are located within the overlapping section of the application site and the SAC, and so there will be no direct effects on the SAC.

- 7.79 The NIS also identifies three other European Sites located within 4km of the subject site, these being: Boyne Estuary SPA (4080) – 2.2km east; River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (4232) – 2.6 km west; and Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (1957) 3.4km east.
- 7.80 The NIS concludes, subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

### Protecting Biodiversity

7.81 The following policy objectives are of note with respect to the proposed development:

- *NBG 8: To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, taking account of their views and any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development, which is likely to affect plant, bird or other animal species protected by law.*
- *NBG 9: To ensure that proposals for development, where appropriate, protect and conserve biodiversity sites outside designated sites and require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professionals to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such sites.*
- *NBG 13: Development sites must be investigated for the presence of invasive species, which if present must be treated and/or eradicated in accordance with best practice. Where appropriate, Invasive Species Management Plans will be prepared for such sites.*

### Assessment

7.82 An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared by an expert multi-disciplinary team and is submitted as part of the planning application package. ‘Chapter 8 – Biodiversity’ of the EIAR assesses the potential impacts of the proposed development on the biodiversity of the site.

7.83 This Chapter of the EIAR identifies the following important ecological/biodiversity features within and adjoining the application site:

Ecological feature	Importance	Legal status*	Important feature?
River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, Boyne Estuary SPA and Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC	International	HR	Yes
Other designated sites	International / National	HR / WA	No
Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)	Negligible	-	No
Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)	Local	-	Yes
Scrub (WS1) / Treelines (WL2)	Negligible	-	Yes, secondary importance for fauna
Ornamental / non-native shrubs (WS3)	Negligible	-	
River Boyne Estuary (MW4)	International	-	Yes
Invasive species	Negligible	-	No
Bats (foraging on Boyne estuary)	Local	HR, WA	Yes



Bats (roosting)	Negligible	HR, WA	No
Birds	Negligible	WA	Yes
Otter	Local	HR	Yes
Other terrestrial mammals	Negligible	-	No
Atlantic salmon and river lamprey	Local	HR	Yes

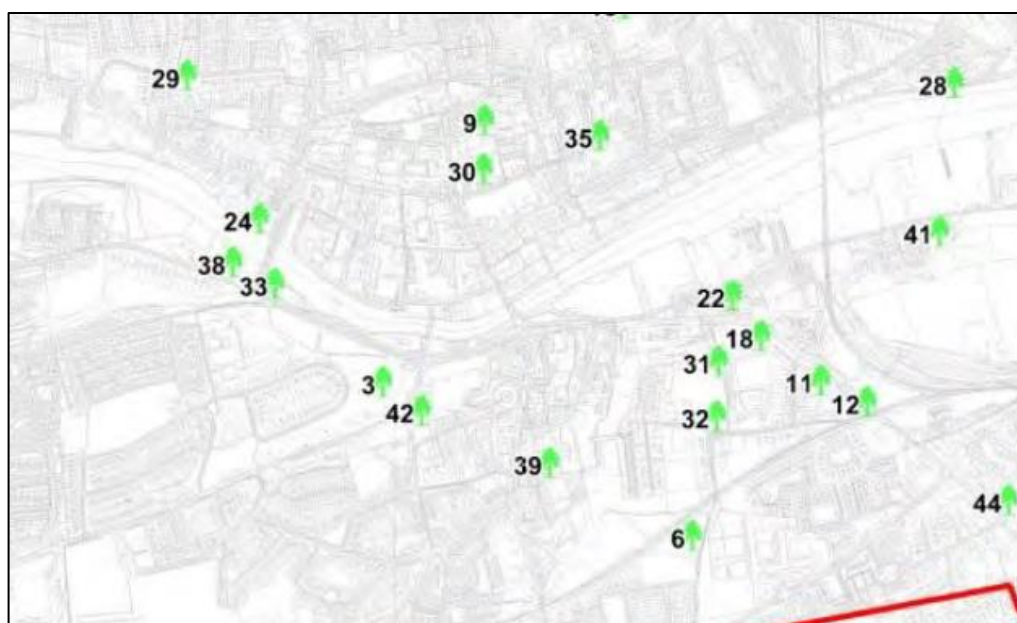
\* HR – EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011; WA – Wildlife Act 1976

7.84 The assessment undertaken in ‘Chapter 8 – Biodiversity’ concludes, subject to mitigation measures, that the proposed development will not lead to the creation of any likely significant direct or indirect effects on the environment with respect to biodiversity.

#### Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value

7.85 Section 8.11.2 relates to ‘Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value’. This section states that *‘Having regard to the important role that trees and woodlands fulfil, the Council has identified and recorded trees and groups of trees considered to be of Special Amenity Value within the County. As such, and in recognition of the value of the trees, their conservation as part of any grant of planning permission will be required’*.

7.86 **Figure 7.3** includes an extract from Map 8.11 of the LCDP indicating Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in Drogheda. It is noted that there are no trees or woodlands of special amenity value located within the application site.



**Figure 7.3: Extract from Map 8.11: Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value in Drogheda of the LCDP**

7.87 Nevertheless, with respect to Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value, it is considered that the following Policy Objectives are a material consideration for the proposed development:

- **NBG 30** - *To protect trees and woodlands of special amenity value. Review and where appropriate make Tree Preservation Order(s) in relation to trees of special amenity value.*

- **NBG 33** - To assess the implications of proposed development on significant trees and hedgerows located on lands that are being considered for development, seeking their incorporation into design proposals where appropriate and in compliance with procedures detailed in Appendix 6.
- **NBG 34** - To increase native tree coverage in the County to also act as carbon sinks by promoting the planting of suitable native trees and hedgerows along public roads, residential streets, parks and other areas of open space.

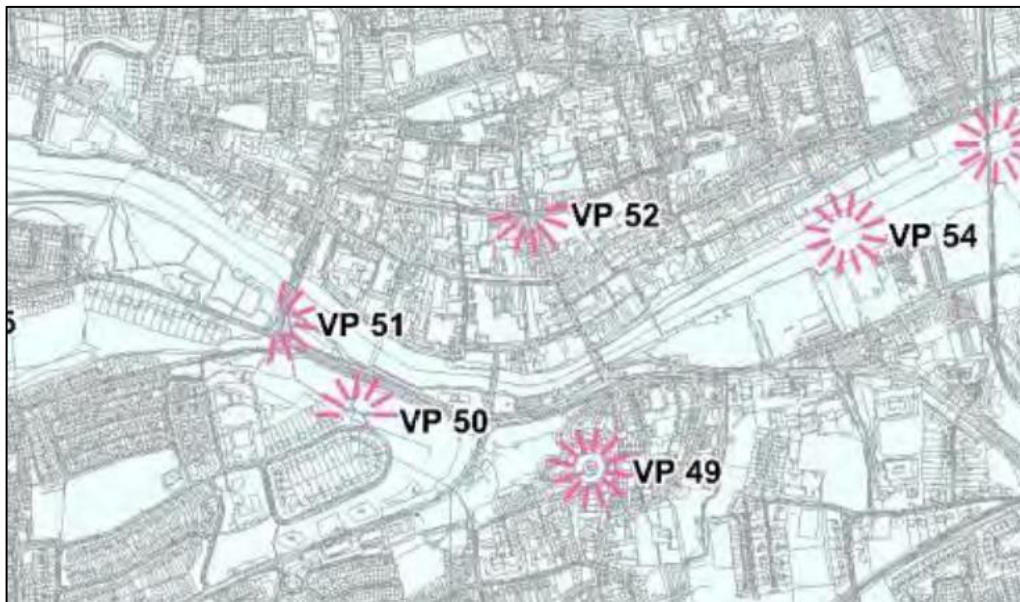
**Assessment**

7.88 A Tree Survey was undertaken by M Large Tree Services to help inform the design process and is submitted as part of the planning application package.

7.89 The proposed development has been designed to align with the abovementioned policy objectives by seeking to retain all existing trees within the application site, where practicable, and providing a significant amount of new trees in the area along with additional areas of soft landscaping.

**Views and Prospects of Special Amenity Value**

7.90 **Figure 7.4** includes an extract from Map 8.18 of the LCDP showing protected views in Drogheda.



**Figure 7.4: Extract from ‘Map 8.18 – Views and Prospects Drogheda’ of the LCDP 2021 - 2027**

7.91 The following views are located outside of the application site but are of note with respect to the proposed development:

- VP 49 - Views of the town from Millmount.
- VP 50 - Views of the town from Ballsgrove.
- VP 51 - Views of Millmount from the West

7.92 With respect to Views and Prospects, the following Policy Objectives are a material consideration with the proposed development:

- **NBG 38** - *Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views and prospects listed in Tables 8.14 – 8.18 of this Plan that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape, from inappropriate development.*
- **NBG 39** - *To improve, where necessary, public access to viewing points, subject to availability of resources.*

#### **Assessment**

7.93 Chapter 18 of the EIAR, titled 'Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)' assesses the potential visual impact of the proposed development on the landscape/townscape including built heritage, natural heritage and protected views.

7.94 The proposed development mainly comprises low impact developments, including public realm upgrades and associated infrastructure. New structures will be of a minimum scale, have a low-impact design and comprise complementary materials.

7.95 The LVIA does not anticipate any adverse effects with respect to landscape/townscape. On this basis, it is considered that the proposed development complies with the abovementioned policy objectives of the LCDP.

#### **Green Infrastructure**

7.96 Section 8.14.1 of the LCDP states that "*Green infrastructure is an interconnected network of green spaces that help conserve natural ecosystems, in both urban and rural locations, and provide benefits to human populations through water purification, flood control, carbon capture, food production and recreation. Such spaces include woodlands, coastlines, flood plains, hedgerows, urban parks and street trees*".

7.97 The following policy objectives are of note with respect to the proposed development:

- **NBG 41:** *To support the green infrastructure network of County Louth and ensure its implementation in the assessment of all development proposals to prevent adverse impact on the ecological connectivity of County Louth's Core Areas.*
- **NBG 45:** *To prepare specific Green Infrastructure Strategies for the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and integrate into the local area plan for each settlement.*
- **NBG 46:** *To develop linear parks, particularly along waterways, and to link existing parks and open spaces in order to provide green chains that promote permeability for pedestrians and cyclists in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.*
- **NBG 48:** *All future development proposals shall require within the overall design scheme the integration of environmental assets and existing biodiversity features including those identified in Table 9 of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Appendix 8, Volume 3, to enhance the quality, character and design of the proposal.*

- **NBG 49:** *To require the integration of green infrastructure and inclusion of native planting schemes in all development proposals in landscaped areas, open spaces and areas of public space.*
- **NBG 51:** *To require the integration of climate change mitigation measures in any future spatial plans and climate change adaptation measures in proposed developments.*
- **NBG 55:** *To create an integrated and coherent green infrastructure for County Louth by ensuring compliance with the objectives listed in the Green Infrastructure Strategy outlined in Appendix 8, Volume 3, to improve pedestrian and cycle access routes within this green infrastructure network while ensuring that ecosystem functions and existing amenity uses are not compromised and existing biodiversity and heritage is protected and enhanced.*
- **NBG 56:** *To focus on ‘greening’ key streets in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and key towns and villages by way of higher standards for planning and amenity along key routes.*
- **NBG 57:** *To ensure that no development, including clearing or storage of materials, takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse.*

#### **Assessment**

- 7.98 The proposed development has been designed to align with the abovementioned policy objectives and will include new green infrastructure features such as new tree planting, a SUDS rainwater retention feature for the water channel and upgraded soft landscaped areas with a mix of planting types to add interest and diversity.
- 7.99 The proposals will improve the overall connectivity and legibility in the area for all members of the community and for visitors/tourists to the town. This will be achieved through the development of new and improved high quality public realm areas, universally accessible connections/routes, new cycle lanes which will integrate with existing and planned active travel infrastructure.
- 7.100 The proposed development will respect, and where possible enhance, the biodiversity features listed in Table 9 of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Appendix 8, Volume 3 and be in full compliance with the abovementioned policy objectives of the LCDP.

#### **Built Heritage and Culture**

- 7.101 Chapter 9 of the LCDP seeks to ‘*To protect, conserve and manage the archaeological and architectural heritage of the County and encourage sensitive, sustainable development to ensure its survival and maintenance for future generations*’. The following policy objectives are of note with respect to the proposed development:

#### **Walled Towns / Archaeology**

- **BHC 1:** *To protect and enhance archaeological sites and monuments, underwater archaeology, and archaeological objects listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and/or the Register of Historic Monuments and seek their*

*preservation (i.e. presumption in favour of preservation in situ or in exceptional cases, at a minimum, preservation by record) through the planning process and having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the principles as set out in the 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands 1999).*

- **BHC 2:** *To protect the built heritage assets of the county and ensure they are managed and preserved in a manner that does not adversely impact on the intrinsic value of these assets whilst supporting economic renewal and sustainable development.*
- **BHC 3:** *To protect known and unknown archaeological areas, sites, monuments, structures and objects, having regard to the advice of the National Monuments Services of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.*
- **BHC 4:** *To ensure any development, either above or below ground, adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of a recorded monument or a Zone of Archaeological Potential (including formerly walled towns) shall not be detrimental to or detract from the character of the archaeological site or its setting and be sited and designed to protect the monument and its setting. Where upstanding remains exist, a visual impact assessment may be required.*
- **BHC 6:** *To ensure any development, either above or below ground, adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of a recorded monument or a Zone of Archaeological Potential (including formerly walled towns) shall not be detrimental to or detract from the character of the archaeological site or its setting and be sited and designed to protect the monument and its setting. Where upstanding remains exist, a visual impact assessment may be required.*
- **BHC 7:** *To require applicants seeking permission for development within Zones of Archaeological Potential and other sites as listed in the Record of Monuments and Places to include an assessment of the likely archaeological potential as part of the planning application and the Council may require that an on-site archaeological assessment is carried out by trial work, prior to a decision on a planning application being taken.*
- **BHC 8:** *To protect and preserve in situ all surviving elements of medieval town defences (both upstanding and buried) and associated features in accordance with the Conservation and Management Plans as applicable and with 'National Policy on Town Defences' (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2008).*
- **BHC 9:** *To retain the surviving medieval street pattern, building lines and burgage plot widths in historic walled towns.*
- **BHC 10:** *To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical surveys, test excavations and monitoring, as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground*



*clearance of more than half a hectare or for linear developments over one kilometre in length or for developments in proximity to areas with a density of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery, as identified by a licensed archaeologist.*

#### **Architectural Heritage**

- **BHC 20:** *To ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a protected structure and / or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, is compatible with the special character and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, density, layout, and materials of the protected structure.*
- **BHC 21:** *The form and structural integrity of the protected structure and its setting shall be retained and the relationship between the protected structure, its curtilage and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, designed views or vistas from or to the structure shall be protected.*
- **BHC 25:** *To promote best conservation practice and the use of skilled specialist practitioners in the conservation of and for any works to protected structures.*

#### **Architectural Conservation Areas**

- **BHC 31:** *To require that all development proposals within or affecting an Architectural Conservation Area preserve or enhance the character and appearance of that area, protect architectural features of special interest and ensure that the design respects the character of the historic architecture in terms of height, scale, layout, and materials. All development proposals shall have regard to the Architectural Conservation Area objectives in Appendix 11, Volume 3 and objectives contained in applicable Character Appraisals where available.*
- **BHC 33:** *To ensure any new service infrastructure (installed by the Local Authority or Public/Private Sector Utility Companies) shall not be located where it will be detrimental to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area.*
- **BHC 36:** *To ensure that new trading bays and all associated signage shall not be located where it will be detrimental to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area or any important building or vista in the Architectural Conservation Area.*

#### **Assessment**

7.102 **Figure 7.5**, which is an extract of the Drogheda Composite Map contained within Volume 1A of the LCDP, identifies the general extent of the application site (dotted red line) as well as the built heritage within and adjoining the application site. The following is noted:

- Parts of the application site are located within/adjacent to the following Architectural Conservation Areas: Fair Street; West Street and Surrounding Streets; and Old Abbey Lane;
- There are no Protected Structures located within the application site, however a number of Protected Structures are located adjacent the site's redline boundary

and within the surrounding area, Barlow House is of particular note as it represents a site of national significance;

- The application site is predominantly located within the zone of archaeological potential for the historic town of Drogheda (LH024-041);
- There are three individual recorded monuments within the proposed development area, comprising the Old Abbey [St Mary d'Urso (LH024-041011)] and the path of the medieval town wall and the site of two gates (recorded as town defences LH024-041014), which are both National Monuments and a site of a quay (LH024-041079).
- There are two further recorded archaeological sites within 100m of the application site.
- A cultural heritage asset has also been identified within the application site, this being the 'Shafts of Light' sculpture which draws inspiration from the solar alignments seen with some passage tombs, particularly in the Boyne Valley.



**Figure 7.5: Extract from Drogheda Composite Map (Volume 1A of LCDP)**

- 7.103 A full assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development on the built heritage of Drogheda is included in 'Chapter 16 – Archaeology and Cultural Heritage' and 'Chapter 17 - Architectural Heritage' of the EIAR, submitted with the planning application package.
- 7.104 'Chapter 16 - Archaeology and Cultural Heritage' of the EIAR concludes that following the application of mitigation measures, there will be no likely direct or indirect significant effects with respect to the proposed project on the archaeological and cultural resources within and adjoining the application site.
- 7.105 'Chapter 17 - Architectural Heritage' of the EIAR concludes that following the application of mitigation measures, there will be no likely direct or indirect significant effects with respect to the proposed project on architectural/built heritage assets within and adjoining the application site.



## Infrastructure & Public Utilities

**7.106** Chapter 10 of the LCDP provides policy objectives for Infrastructure & Public Utilities. The following policy objectives are relevant to the proposed development:

### Sustainable Drainage Systems

- **IU 19:** *To require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of SuDS measures be incorporated in all new development (including extensions to existing developments). All development proposals shall be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment including run-off quantity, run off quality and impacts on habitat and water quality.*
- **IU 21:** *To seek to avoid the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and solutions to maximise the capacity of towns with combined drainage systems.*
- **IU 22:** *To ensure all new development incorporates appropriate measures to protect existing water bodies, through appropriate treatment of runoff. In particular, discharges from car parks shall be appropriately treated so as to remove pollutant materials.*

### Riparian Corridor

- **IU 25:** *To ensure that no development including clearing or storage of materials takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse.*

### Flood Risk Management

- **IU 26:** *To reduce the risk of new development being affected by possible future flooding by:*
  - *Avoiding development in areas at risk of flooding and*
  - *Where development in floodplains cannot be avoided, taking a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and adaptation to the risk.*
- **IU 27:** *To ensure all proposals for development falling within Flood Zones A or B are consistent with the “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” 2009. Proposals for development identified as being vulnerable to flooding must be supported by a site specific Flood Risk Assessment and demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the development and its infrastructure will avoid significant risks of flooding and not exacerbate flooding elsewhere. In Flood Zone C, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%), site specific Flood Risk Assessment may be required and the developer should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. The County Plan SFRA datasets and the most up to date CFRAM Programme climate scenario mapping should be consulted by prospective applicants for developments in this regard and will be made available to lower-tier Development Management*

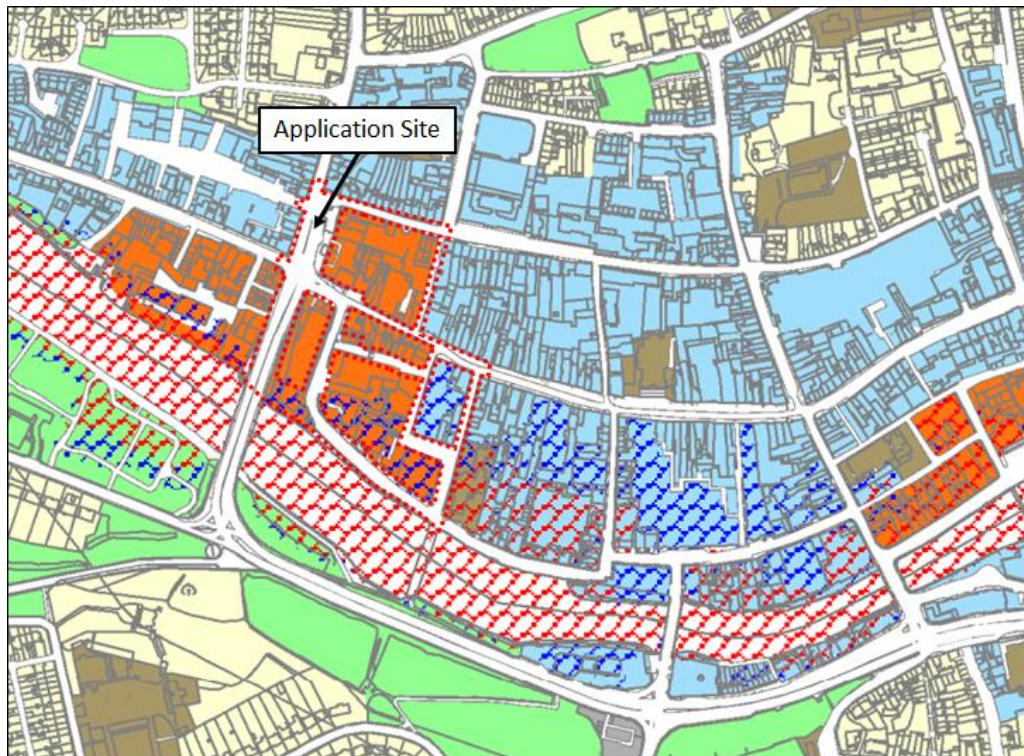
processes in the Council. Applications for development in flood vulnerable zones, including those at risk under the OPW's Mid-Range Future Scenario, shall provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures, such as those relating to floor levels, internal layout, flood-resilient construction, emergency response planning and access and egress during flood events.

- **IU 28:** Where a site specific Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that there are significant residual flood risks to a proposed development or its occupiers in conflict with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2009, planning permission will normally not be granted unless the requirements of Section 5.28 'Assessment of minor proposals in areas of flood risk' can be satisfied.
- **IU 29:** To implement the Flood Risk Management Measures as detailed in the Neagh Bann Flood Risk Management Plan, the Eastern Flood Risk Management Plan and the Dunleer Flood Risk Management Plan, ensuring that proposals for development support and do not impede the progression of these measures. Louth County Council will, in partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW) deliver the following Flood Relief Schemes:
  - Dundalk, Blackrock and Ardee;
  - Drogheda and Baltray; and
  - Carlingford and Greenore.
- **IU 30:** To work with the Office for Public Works in the development and implementation of catchment-based strategies for the management of flood risk – including those relating to storage and conveyance.
- **IU 31:** To contribute towards the improvement and/or restoration of the natural flood risk management functions of flood plains subject to compliance with the environmental legislation and availability of resources.
- **IU 32:** To ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.
- **IU 33:** Where a portion of a site is at risk of flooding, the lands at risk will be subject to the sequential approach to ensure first and foremost that new development is directed towards lands at low risk of flooding; and to restrict the type of development to that 'appropriate' to each flood zone in accordance with Tables 3.1 and 3.2 of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines.
- **IU 34:** To consult with the Office of Public Works (OPW) in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible.

- **IU 35:** To consult with the Office of Public Works (OPW) in relation to proposed developments which include the construction, replacement or alteration of a bridge or culvert and to require that the developers obtain consent from the OPW under Section 50 of the EU (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 and Section 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act 1945, where appropriate.

**Assessment**

7.107 **Figure 7.6** below, which is an extract of the ‘Drogheda Zoning and Flood Zones Map’ of the LCDP, illustrates that the southern portions of the site are affected by Flood Zone A (red hatching) and Flood Zone B (blue hatching). The general extent of the application site is identified with a red dotted line.



**Figure 7.6: Extract of the ‘Drogheda Zoning & Flood Zone Map’ of the LCDP 2021-27**

- 7.108 A Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment and detailed drainage plan for the proposed development have been prepared and submitted as part of the planning application. These documents/plans confirm that the proposed development aligns with the relevant policy objectives outlined above.
- 7.109 Chapter 15 of the EIAR, titled ‘Material Assets (Site Services)’ confirms that the proposed development is not likely to create any direct or indirect significant effects with respect to site services within and adjoining the application site.

## Environment, Natural Resources and the Coast

7.110 Chapter 11 of the LCDP sets out the Council’s policy objectives with respect to the environment, natural resources and the coast. The following policy objectives are relevant to the proposed development:

- **ENV 8:** *To ensure that all external lighting whether free standing or attached to a building shall be designed and constructed so as not to cause excessive light spillage, glare, or dazzle motorists, and thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties, traffic and wildlife.*
- **ENV 9:** *To require all details of on-site lighting associated with all future development are submitted to and agreed with the planning authority.*
- **ENV 10:** *To promote the use of low energy LED (or equivalent) lighting in support of Climate Action.*

### Assessment

7.111 A Detailed Lighting Plan and Strategy have been jointly prepared and submitted with the planning application.

7.112 The lighting approach/strategy takes into account the mitigation measures recommended by the project ecologist in relation to limiting the impact of lighting on wildlife, including bats. The design proposes to use low energy LED lighting, as agreed in consultation with Louth County Council’s Lighting Department.

7.113 On this basis, and noting the carefully considered lighting strategy proposed for the project, it is considered that the proposals comply with the above named policy objectives of the LCDP.

### Climate Action

7.114 Chapter 12 outlines the Council’s approach to climate adaptation and mitigation which has is incorporated within the LCDP. With respect to urban regeneration, section 12.7.3.5 of the LCDP states that *“Urban and Rural Regeneration Urban and rural regeneration has the potential to greatly enhance the climate resilience of towns and villages. Regeneration projects can help to inject new life into declining urban and rural areas, stimulating both social and economic regeneration.”*

7.115 The delivery of the Council’s Climate Action plans is embedded in policy objectives throughout the entire LCDP including policy objective CA 5 (see below) as well as the objectives included in the following tables of the LCDP:

- *Table 12.2 – National Climate Action Plan Targets versus Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 Policy Objectives – Built Environment.*
- *Table 12.3 – National Climate Action Plan Targets versus Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 Policy Objectives – Transport.*

- **CA 5:** *To actively promote and encourage nature-based approaches and green infrastructure solutions as viable mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and optimize the multifaceted benefits through:*
  - *Conservation, promotion and restoration of the natural environment;*
  - *Integrating an ecosystem services approach and promote healthy living environments through enhanced connection with nature and recreation/amenity;*
  - *Enhancing biodiversity in urban and rural settings;*
  - *Assist with water and flood risk management; and*
  - *Carbon storage or sequestration.*

**Assessment**

- 7.116 The proposed development has been designed to assist in the delivery of the Council's Climate Action aspirations and is designed in accordance with international and national best practice design principles.
- 7.117 The proposed development will align with policy objective CA 5 and the above referenced tables of the LCDP by: conserving, promoting and restoring the natural environment; promoting healthy living environments through enhanced connection with nature and recreation/amenity; enhancing biodiversity in this urban setting; assisting with water and flood risk management; and enhancing opportunities for carbon storage/sequestration.

## 8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Louth County Council is seeking approval to undertake public realm regeneration works on lands within the Westgate Vision Area of Drogheda, Co. Louth.
- 8.2 The overall objective of the project (known as the 'Westgate 2040 Project') is to act as a catalyst to support and encourage positive regeneration, compact growth and sustainable development in the Westgate Vision Area and Drogheda Town Centre.
- 8.3 This planning application represents the next stage to deliver the Westgate Vision, launched by Louth County Council in 2018, as a targeted planning response aimed at channelling investment into this core area of Drogheda.
- 8.4 The proposals are designed to positively respond to the unique challenges and opportunities of the application site and the feedback received during detailed consultation with stakeholders and the community.
- 8.5 The proposals are also informed by national and international best practice and align with the relevant national, regional and local planning policies and objectives.
- 8.6 It is respectfully submitted that the proposed development is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the proposals are situated.





Comhairle Contae **Lú**  
**Louth** County Council



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