

Submission to National Planning Framework

The Greater Drogheda Area – Designation as a City & Primary Development Centre

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We have been operating our business in Drogheda for 20 years. Our city needs to be considered in the National Planning Framework. By 2030 the population will grow to 120,000 people.

In response to the first draft of the National Planning Framework, which failed to recognise Drogheda as one of the largest urban areas in the State, I wish to propose that Drogheda and its full surrounding urban area in both Louth and Meath be counted and administered as one single unitary urban area and designated as a City & Primary Development Centre in the National Planning Framework / Ireland 2040.

The Greater Drogheda Area has a population in the region of 80,000 people straddling both counties Louth and Meath when Drogheda itself and the adjoining Laytown, Bettystown, Mornington (LBM) urban area are combined. It makes no sense for these areas to be counted in isolation of one another in either statistical or planning terms. Doing so leaves a huge gap in the services and infrastructure required and actually provided to what is actually one of Ireland's largest urban areas and deprives the State of an alternative Primary Development Area to counter congestion in Dublin. The Greater Drogheda Area including the town itself plus LBM should be counted as one contiguous interlinked urban area for statistical and planning purposes.

The area surrounding Drogheda stretching from South Louth down through the town itself and on to the Meath Coast is a contiguous urban area that forms a natural geographical entity which should be recognised as one city.

Until such time as the size and population of Drogheda is recognised properly through the recognition of its real status issue the area will not reach its full potential for the attraction of FDI. Drogheda is on a par in terms of surrounding infrastructure and location with parts of Fingal such as Swords and the Airport Zone and major urban centres such as Galway and Limerick but attracts much less Foreign Direct Investment. Drogheda has the potential to be a major economic hub for the North East region with a critical mass of employment opportunities which would end the daily commuting misery into Dublin City for thousands of people in the Louth/Meath/North County Dublin areas and reduce inbound traffic and rail line congestion on the M1/M2 and Northern Rail Line services, using the outbound lanes on the M1/M2/N2/R152 and empty outbound morning trains and buses on northern commuter services.

Drogheda's true size both in urban spread and population size needs to be represented more accurately in census data and national statistics which inform Government and Local Authority decisions on planning, resource allocation and prioritisation for public services and promotion of foreign direct investment. Drogheda's absence from the previous National Spatial Strategy should be addressed by nominating the full urban area as a city and Primary Development Centre in the National Planning Framework.

 **GEOFF FITZPATRICK**
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