

SUBMISSION TO NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Greater Drogheda Area – Designation as City and Primary Development Centre

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FROM - Melcorpo Commercial Properties t/a DROGHEDA TOWN CENTRE & ARC CINEMA
ADDRESS -West Street, Drogheda , Co. Louth

Drogheda Town Centre is a development situated on West Street, Drogheda in what was once considered a 'Golden Mile' for retailing. Sadly, it has been quite some time since Drogheda has been the thriving town for Shopping, Community or indeed Manufacturing Industries or Tourism that its location, population and history would indicate that it could and should be.

The Centre has been owned and managed by Melcorpo Commercial Properties since 1998. As a landlord/commercial investor in Drogheda we have experienced many changes in the level of retail trade and resulting rental income through the last 20 years. Current employment in the Centre is approx. 100 full and part-time jobs, a significant decrease from levels in 1998/2007 but also a significant increase from lowest levels in 2008/2011.

Drogheda Town Centre records over 3,500,000 visitors annually. We can grow but only if the Drogheda gets its deserved designation as a CITY, acknowledgement of its true size and real population of close to 80,000 and the resources and investment to develop to its full potential.

We note with dismay that in the first draft of the National Planning Framework document **Drogheda, the 5th largest urban centre in the country was not even mentioned once!**

Our investment experience, which includes other similar properties in south Leinster and Dublin, is that **Drogheda has suffered higher levels of decline and slower recovery from recent recession times and this is a result of the town being very much overlooked or undermined by previous National Planning initiatives.**

Development and recovery in the town and its locality have been seriously impaired by the dual effects of removal of Town Management to Dundalk, at a particularly critical time economically and a Tourist Strategy centred in Navan which does not fully exploit or utilise attractions in Drogheda.

As a Retail entity we have identified some of the many factors which contribute to the current lack of vibrancy in trade and industry in Drogheda and particularly note * difficulty attracting national and international retailers due to failings identified with infrastructure * general lack of investment * high level of Local Authority Rates * proximity to the Border * lack of focus on Tourist related attractions.

None of these factors can be taken in isolation but the combined effect is a persistently difficult trading environment for both Landlord and Tenant which, in our opinion, has been exacerbated by poor planning and the knock on effect of miscategorisation of Drogheda as a 'support' town in previous National Planning Framework.

Drogheda is the largest town in Ireland and should not continue to be overlooked in terms of a NPF. In the past 3 years Melcorpo has invested over 2 million euro in redevelopment of our retail space as a newly branded Cineplex and we are continuing to invest in Drogheda with a total refurbishment of our 'Façade' on West Street which will give a new look to a very prominent area of West Street.

However, efforts such as ours are far from encouraged and will be very much undermined unless Drogheda is given due consideration as part of the NPF 2040.

The size, location and assets of Drogheda and its environs need to be utilised and capitalized on as part of a concerted forward thinking policy which does not continue to ignore this large urban centre which is so well placed to become part of any initiative to alleviate growing commuter and residential problems in the greater Dublin area and to contribute to the development and recovery to the country as a whole.

Yours sincerely

Karen Durnin
Centre Manager
Drogheda Town Centre