

DÚN CHAOIN LOCAL AREA PLAN

1.0 CONTEXT

1.1 Location

Dún Chaoin is located at the western-most tip of the Corca Dhuibhne peninsula and is the most westerly settlement in Ireland. The settlement is located mainly along the R559 (Slea Head Drive) and a local road which connects on to the R559 and is dispersed in nature. Dún Chaoin is approximately 16km west of Daingean Uí Chúis.

Dún Chaoin is nestled in a fertile valley with Mount Eagle as a backdrop to the east and the Bealach an Bhlascaoid (Blasket Sound) to the west. The coast is characterized by dramatic cliffs and there is a pier to the southwest of the settlement. Tráigh an Choma (Coumeenole Beach) is also to the southwest of the settlement.

Dún Chaoin has traditionally been strongly linked with the Na Blascaodaí. The parish of Dún Chaoin comprises eleven townlands on the mainland and Na Blascaodaí which are approximately three miles offshore

1.2 Population

There are no specific population statistics for the plan area of Dún Chaoin. Dún Chaoin is located in Dún Chaoin ED, the population of which has been fluctuating since 1996 when it was 174. The population rose to 212 in 2002 and dropped again to 163 in 2006 (a decrease of 23.1%). The population for the DED in 2011 is 172.

1.2.1 Irish Language and Cultural Heritage

In 1996, 86% of the total population of Dún Chaoin DED were able to speak Irish. This dropped substantially to 71% in 2002 and increased to 79% (120 persons) in 2006. 84% of the total population spoke Irish on a daily basis in 1996 while this dropped to 62% in 2002 and 59% in 2006. This drop in the numbers of persons able to speak Irish is the largest drop in the Dingle Functional Area and is a cause for concern.

Dún Chaoin has long been associated with the Irish language and culture and has traditionally been a destination for international scholars interesting in studying the Irish language, culture and stories of the area. It was the birth place of Peig Sayers and several of the famous Blasket writers such as Peig Sayers, Tomás Ó Criomhthain and Muiris Ó Súilleabháin are buried in the graveyard in Dún Chaoin.

1.3 Functions & Facilities

There are very few facilities or services in the area. There is currently one public house (Krugers), a Church (Seipéal Naomh Gobnait), a primary school (Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Gobnait), an An Óige hostel and a pottery shop which is open in the summer.

Ionad an Bhlascaoid Mhóir opened in 1993 and is open from Easter to October. The Office of Public Works operates the centre which provides exhibitions and presentations on the life of the Islands.

The pier is located at Fáill Mór from where passenger ferries operate to the Blasket Islands from April to October each year. There is presently no shop in the development node. There is a daily bus service during the summer months and a less frequent service during the rest of the year. The Siúlóid na Cille and the Dingle Way Walking Routes passes through Dún Chaoin on their perambulation of Sleah Head. There are a number of Bed & Breakfast and quite a number of holiday homes in the settlement.

1.4 Infrastructure

There is no public sewage infrastructure in Dún Chaoin and there are no plans to provide any in the near future, reflecting its essentially rural nature. The development node is serviced by adequate public water supply.

1.5 Settlement Pattern

Dún Chaoin is a dispersed rural settlement with a geographically identifiable centre at the cross roads close to Kruger's pub, and An Portán. The remainder of the facilities in the settlement such as the school and the pottery shop are located at the southern end of the settlement on the R559.

There are two identifiable areas with a large in-depth grouping of dwellings at An Ceathrú or Ferriters Quarter and a large number of linear dwellings at Baile na Ratha close to Kruger's. There are smaller clusters of dwellings on minor cul-de-sacs, Vicarstown being one of the oldest. In recent years, linear development along the roads has tended to reduce this definition and merge these areas.

The settlement pattern is of low density rural houses scattered over a wide geographic area. In recent years there have been a number of developments comprising identical houses which is not in keeping with the rural nature. The area has seen a significant amount of one-off dwellings built in the last few years, many of these being holiday homes. Even though the area is visibly quite densely populated with dwellings, the majority of these developments are holiday homes.

The predominant settlement pattern is of small to medium sized detached single storey dwellings on small plots with a random layout reflecting a traditional clachan style settlement. Extensive development of one off housing has occurred on local roads in the vicinity of the village creating a haphazard development pattern which is unsustainable and erodes the rural environment.

1.6 Built Heritage & Archaeology

The area has a rich archaeological heritage and has one of the highest concentrations of archaeological features in the county. This is evident in the Land zoning map. Seipéal Naomh Gobnait is a protected structure.

1.7 Natural Environment and Amenity

The sea at Bealach an Bhlascaoid (Blasket Sound) is designated an SAC. In addition, the coastal strip area forms part of the Dingle Peninsula SPA. The area is renowned for its natural beauty due to its setting, spectacular landscape and the dramatic sea views of the Atlantic Ocean and Na Blascaoid. The area forms part of the scenic tourist route; the Sleah Head drive.

1.8 Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic

The village is located on a cross roads within a network of local roads (L-5006-0, L-12044-0 and L-8031-0) and traffic through the settlement peaks during the summer season. There is no public car park in the plan area or immediately outside of the plan area.

1.9 Growth and Residential Development

Dún Chaoin experienced a period of growth over the last number of years as evidenced by the number of new dwellings built. The majority of dwellings built in the last ten years have been second homes and holiday homes. The level of residential planning permissions granted in the period 2008 – 2011 has indicated a limited growth potential over the next number of years

The development boundary for Dún Chaoin defines the existing extent of the area where new development may be considered, whilst also allowing for some expansion for development adjacent to the housing areas. During the lifetime of this Plan, development will focus mainly in the three housing areas.

It is an objective of the plan to encourage the development of the housing areas by ensuring that new development is contiguous with existing development and makes effective use of backland and infill sites. All new development shall occur within the development boundary and shall reflect the existing vernacular design

The provision of local based industry/ Craft is seen as forming a significant part in the provision of sustainable employment in the area. This concept needs to be combined with nurturing existing indigenous talent to provide products which are unique to the area and capitalise on creative local talents.

It is considered therefore, rather than allocating prescriptive areas of zoned lands for smaller settlements such as Dún Chaoin, that managing the growth in a manner which will retain their character and create functional, attractive and well designed communities is a preferable approach. Housing areas have been identified and are indicative areas intended to provide for the full range of housing types required to meet demand and changing population projections in the area. These housing areas are adjacent to existing clusters of dwellings and make full use of infill and back land sites. All proposed residential units in these housing areas shall be in compliance with chapter 3 of the County Development Plan 2009-15.

The development boundary map identified the visual units, a preferred commercial area and housing areas as detailed below.

Two areas are identified which have seen a substantial amount of residential development in recent years, An Ceathrú and Baile na Ratha Thuaidh near Kruger's. An Ceathrú has historically been a traditional localized settlement in Dún Chaoin while the area identified at Baile na Ratha Thuaidh is more of a recent settlement.

Housing Areas

The visual unit has therefore been broken down into three different housing areas:-

- Housing Area 1 (HA-1): An Ceathrú
- Housing Area 2 (HA-2): Baile na Ratha Thuaidh
- Housing Area 3 (HA-3): The remaining land within the development boundary and outside the above two areas

Housing Areas HA-1 and HA-2 are identifiable clusters of houses and the development of further sites at suitable locations will consolidate existing development and will not detract from the visual amenities of the area, subject to appropriate scale and mass. It is envisaged that in these areas, housing will only be permitted for permanent use only and for persons who can show an intrinsic link to the area.

Housing Area HA-3 is considered to be relatively undeveloped landscape which is rural in character. It is felt that this sensitive landscape cannot absorb much further development. New dwellings will only be permitted for sons and daughters of landowners and for locals in the area (i.e. persons from the area residing permanently within the plan area purchasing sites).

The granting of permission in the above areas is also subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area i.e. dwellings should be designed to integrate with the landscape and should be satisfactory in terms of traffic safety, public health, design and be compatible with the Natura 2000 conservation objectives..

Commercial/Community Facilities

There are very limited commercial and community facilities within the plan area and at present there does not seem to be a huge demand for commercial facilities. It is envisaged, however, that in the event of commercial or community facilities being provided that they should be directed to a central area close to the cross roads near Kruger's.

Any such facilities to be provided in this area should be small in scale. Outside this area, small scale businesses which are ancillary to the residential use at the site will be considered subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The overall vision for Dún Chaoin is to maintain the character of this distinctive dispersed settlement pattern, to promote the area as an attractive place to live in and to visit, while preserving and enhancing the use of Irish as the daily communal language.

Dún Chaoin is a dispersed rural settlement located in a dramatic coastal landscape and is unique in its settlement pattern when compared to other settlements in An Daingean Functional Area. The preparation of a development strategy for Dún Chaoin is complex and needs to address a number of issues. Firstly, Dún Chaoin is a popular destination due to its location in an area of majestic scenery and its cultural identity.

The proliferation of holiday homes has had a negative impact on both of these characteristics. The landscape of the area is sensitive to development and is reaching the stage where the capacity for future development is very limited.

Secondly, the level of holiday home development has an adverse impact on social and community interaction and impact negatively on the usage and viability of the Irish language. Whether the large increase in holiday homes is the reason for the dramatic decrease in the daily use of Irish is difficult to determine. **No other area however has experienced such an increase in holiday home developments or such a decrease in the usage of Irish.**

The development strategy for Dún Chaoin therefore is to:

- Protect the landscape
- Preserve and promote the Irish language
- Maintain the character of the area. Ensure that all new development is of traditional design and layout and does not detract from the character of the area. New developments should have reference to the settlement pattern found in the grouping of buildings (Housing Areas)
- Ensure that all new development is located within the development boundary of the housing areas.
- Ensure that all residential development within the housing areas shall cater for the needs of the local population who wish to live in the area on a permanent basis.
- Promote strong social identity and community interaction.
- Encourage the creation of commercial services & craftwork enterprises within the village which in turn will provide local employment and improve the quality of life of the local community.
- Facilitate the development of ecotourism and other niche markets along with the sustainable extension and diversification of tourist facilities as possible sources of employment

3.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Objective No.	It is an objective of the Council to:
OO-1	Ensure that all new residential units are permanent places of residence
OO-2	Ensure that new development takes place within the housing areas.
OO-3	Seek to protect and enhance the linguistic and cultural heritage of Dún Chaoin and to promote the use of Irish as the community language.
OO-4	Facilitate the development of ecotourism and other niche markets. Encourage the sustainable extension and diversification of tourist facilities.

4.0 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Objective No.	Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic It is an objective of the Council to:
T-1	Facilitate the provision of a lay-by/set down area and car park to serve the national school.

Objective No	Views & Prospects It is an objective of the Council to:
VP-1	Protect the views and prospects from the Sleah Head Drive (R559) and L-8047 as indicated on the zoning map.

Objective No.	Employment & Enterprise It is an objective of the Council to:
EE-1	Ensure that lands as indicated be zoned as Preferred for Commercial /craftwork development.

Objective No.	Prime Special Amenity It is an objective of the Council to:
PSA-1	Ensure the provisions of the Kerry County Development Plan 2009-15 are applied to these areas.

Objective No.	Nature Conservation It is an objective of the Council to:
NC-1	Ensure that development proposals shall pay due regard to the rich natural heritage and biodiversity of the area. All proposals shall be screened for Appropriate Assessment so as to ensure the conservation objectives of adjacent Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity are safeguarded.

Objective No.	Flood Risk Management It is an objective of the Council to:
FM-1	Ensure that any development proposals on these lands shall be subject to a flood impact assessment