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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Strategic Context



1.1 Context and Terms of Reference

This Plan was prepared under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and replaces the Longford Town Development Plan, 2004 – 2010. This plan was adopted on 30th July 2009 and came into force on 27th August 2009.

The purpose of the Development Plan is to set out a framework for the sustainable physical development of the Town, while ensuring the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment. It also aims to carefully consider the needs of all groups and individuals within the Town and to promote equal opportunities.

The Development Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development¹ of Longford Town and consists of a written statement and plans indicating the development objectives for the Town.

In order to achieve the primary aims and purposes of the plan, as stated above, the Town Development Plan has three main objectives. These are:

- **To provide a framework of acceptable uses within the Town, defining acceptable forms of development and where it should be directed.**
- **Provide a detailed basis for the promotion and management of development.**

¹ Sustainable Development can be defined as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

- **To implement national and regional development policy provisions at a local level.**

1.1.2 Review Process and Statutory Context

Under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, each Planning Authority is obliged to prepare a development plan for its functional area every six years, the review of which should commence four years after its adoption. Accordingly, the review process of the 2004 – 2010 Town Development Plan commenced in December 2007 with the publication and circulation of the relevant notice.

This Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Sections 9 – 12 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which lays out the timeframes under which the review must be carried out and the mandatory and optional content of the Plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process introduced in 2004 that runs in tandem with the policy formulation of the plan and assesses the potential effects of the implementation of the plan on the environment.

The SEA process runs in tandem with the Town Development Plan review process, which is documented by the SEA statement that accompanies this document. It is an objective of the Council to ensure that there is full compliance with the SEA directive as transposed into Irish Law by the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004.

Appropriate Assessment

The preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, including the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, are essential objectives of general interest pursued by the European Union.

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) formed a basis for the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). These sites are afforded protection because of their habitat type or the presence of

important flora or fauna species. The aim of the Directive is to ensure the long term protection and conservation of the biodiversity within each site.

Similarly, Special Protection Areas (SPA) are legislated for under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds). Primarily the Directive seeks to protect wild bird species, both Annex 1 and regularly occurring migratory species through the conservation of their natural habitats.

Collectively, SACs and SPAs are referred to as Natura 2000 sites. In general terms they are considered to be of exceptional importance in terms of rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species within the European Community.

Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken for any plan or programme that is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. Article 6 Paragraph 3 states:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned, and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

In summary, an Appropriate Assessment is an evaluation of the potential impacts of a plan on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects. Principally the purposes of an Appropriate Assessment is to identify the possible effects of implementing a Plan on the conservation status of designated Natura 2000 sites within the Plan area.

In a situation where it is not possible to fully demonstrate that adverse effects on the site integrity would occur, options must be explored so that any risk of damaging designated sites is avoided. Where avoidance is not possible, it is recommended that mitigation measures should be examined which compensate for any negative effects likely to occur, whether directly or

indirectly.

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, Longford Town Council has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment Screening of the effects of the implementation of the Plan on Natura 2000 sites. It was concluded from the assessment that the Longford Town Development Plan would not result in likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, a full Appropriate Assessment was required.

Consultation

Prior to the preparation of this plan, notification of the review process was issued to all statutory prescribed bodies, local community and voluntary groups, associations, societies, statutory undertakes and service providers. The general public were consulted through a campaign of newspaper advertisements, postal notification and public meetings. A public consultation meeting was held in Longford Town. Submissions were invited on the development of the Town from all interested persons, bodies and organisations.

Following this preliminary consultation phase, a Manager's Report on all submissions received during the preliminary consultation phase was presented to the elected members of the Town Council in March 2008. This report documented issues raised in the submissions received and also outlined recommendations on the policy sections to be included in the Draft Plan as a result of relevant and important issues raised in the submissions received.

This formed the basis of the Draft Plan and, following the consideration of the Manager's Report the elected members had 10 weeks to issue directions regarding the preparation of the Draft Plan. After this period the Draft Plan was prepared.

The Draft Plan was placed on public display for a period of ten weeks and submissions and observations were invited from the public, prescribed bodies and all interested bodies. Following this phase, a Manager's Report on all submissions received during this public consultation phase was presented to the elected members of the Town Council in February 2009.

The elected members considered this Manager's Report, and material amendments of the Draft Plan were placed on public consultation in April 2009. A final Manager's Report with respect to submissions received with relation to the proposed amendments of the Draft Plan only, was prepared and circulated to the members for their consideration in Jun 2009. The elected

members considered this Manager's Report and the plan was subsequently made in July 2009 and came into force in August 2009.

1.1.3 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Plan is to set a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town over the relevant period in accordance with the provisions of the governing legislation and ministerial guidelines. The format, layout and content of the plan have been guided by the recent publication *Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2007*.

The structure of this Plan has been formulated to facilitate greater readability and access to the most frequently used sections, particularly those most used in the development management process.

An attempt has been made to co-ordinate and cross-reference sections in order to provide a comprehensive and easy to read guide for developers and the public in general on particular types of development.

1.1.4 Implementation

The previous Development Plan 2004 – 2010 has had significant success in the achievement of some of the goals outlined in the plan with ongoing commitments over the remaining period of the plan. The following examples outline some of the areas where significant progress has been made.

- Regeneration and Redevelopment

Redevelopment of the areas around Little Water Street, Bridge Street and Great Water Street is ongoing over the period of the current plan, significantly reducing the number of derelict properties and sites in these locations. This will greatly improve the character of this area of the town upon completion. The Courthouse has recently been upgraded and works at Market Square further contribute to the appearance and attractiveness of the public realm in the Town Centre. Longford Town Council has also redeveloped and facilitated the redevelopment of a number of derelict sites.

- Building on recent growth

The number of applications received over the plan period to date indicates that the town has

capitalised on recent national economic growth in the area. Economic benefit is evident from the number of industrial and commercial developments that have taken place in Longford Town over the plan period. It is anticipated that the social benefits, which are less obvious and require different scales of measurement, will also accrue as part of this process.

- Affordable Housing

Longford Town Council has provided 29 no. social housing units through social housing schemes during the plan period and in addition, 57 no. second-hand family units have been purchased into stock for the Town Council area. There is also a development of 72 no. dwellings at construction stage in the Town area in 2009. This compares favourably with towns of a similar size and profile throughout the Country.

- Protect and conserve the unique identity and character

As part of the review of the development plan, a review of the Record of Protected Structures also took place. All buildings included on the Record of Protected Structures of the 2004 Development Plan have been protected from inappropriate development, in particular the areas along the Battery Road, protecting and enhancing the unique character of this part of the town.

- Amenity

There have been significant improvements in amenity facilities over the plan period, most notably in the Mall area, with the provision of the relocated swimming pool and enhanced sports complex. Improvements to the Mall area itself are ongoing. The regeneration of the Market Square as a public space, combined with car-parking improvements in the vicinity have significantly improved the public experience of this location. A more human scale is presented to the pedestrian, while the motorist and the pedestrian can enjoy a more pleasurable vista on approaching the Market Square from New Street.

Conclusion

Attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to facilitate the development of additional industry and other employment generators to the Town is crucial within the strategy of this plan.

The further expansion and development of the commercial base of the Town will be necessary to support the existing resident's needs and to meet the needs and expectations of potential future residents.

The completion of the N5 bypass remains an important issue for the town and this will greatly

alleviate traffic congestion in the Town and will eliminate many of the heavy goods vehicles, which currently have to pass through the Town's main streets. This will result in a safer and more attractive pedestrian realm, providing enhanced opportunities for the development of a higher order shopping and commercial environment and a town core that can fulfil its regional and national role.

The provision of a number of car parks around the town during the lifetime of the previous plan has aided the economic growth of the town centre and the Council will continue to facilitate the regeneration of the town centre in terms of improving accessibility and enhancing the pedestrian environment.

1.2 Planning Policy Context

This plan should be read in the context of legislation and plans that exist at National, Regional and local level. Of particular relevance are those plans that have come into existence since the adoption of the previous Town Development Plan 2004 – 2010.

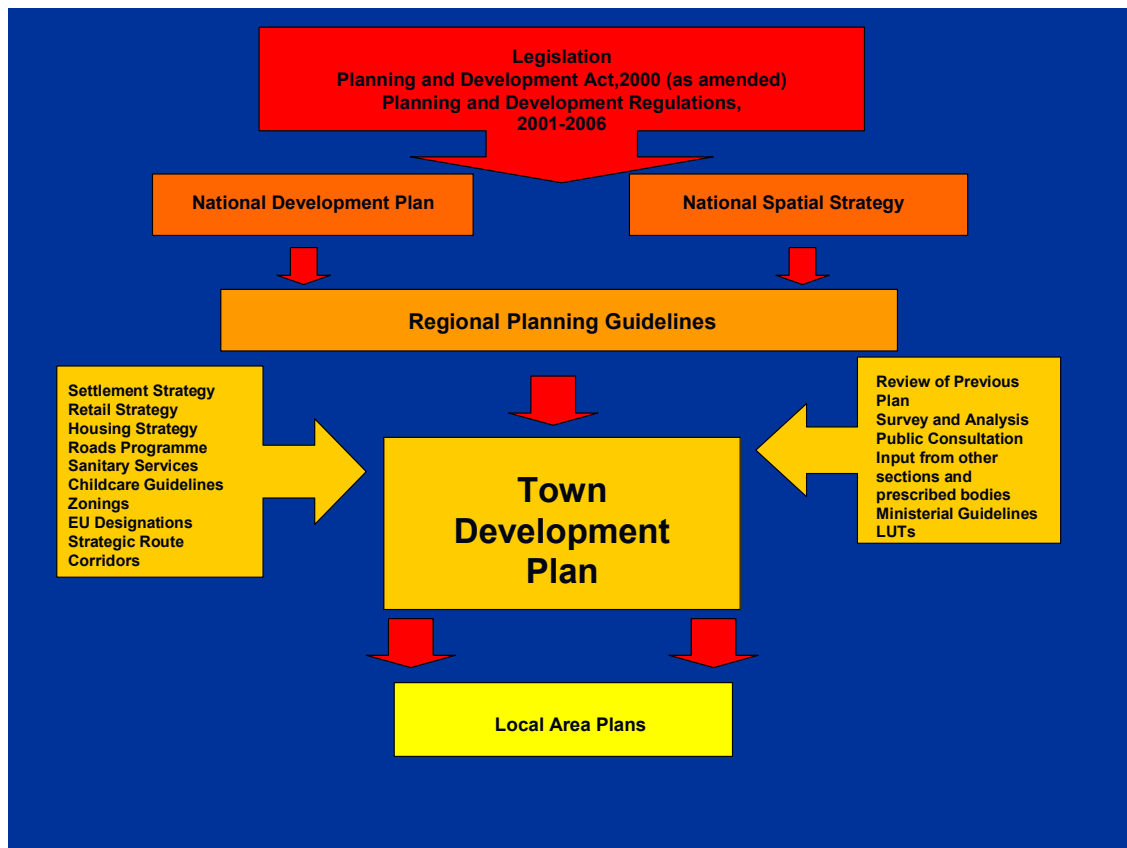


Fig 1.1: Planning Policy Context Hierarchy of Plans

1.2.1 National and Regional Planning Policy Context

National Development Plan 2007 – 2013

The National Development Plan is characterised by the principles of sustainable economic growth, greater social inclusion and balanced regional development. The National Development Plan sets out a regional development strategy which centres on the framework provided within the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002. This strategic approach to regional development intends to deliver an investment programme that is environmentally and economically sustainable.

National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020

The National Spatial Strategy is designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. The strategy aims to uncover potential for progress, growth and development in a more balanced way across Ireland, supported by more effective planning.

Longford town is identified in the NSS as a town strategically placed on national road and rail links, which can be enhanced in competitive terms to drive development at the county level and as an urban strengthening opportunity.

Midland Regional Planning Guidelines:

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines were adopted in 2004, creating a long-term strategic planning framework for the development of the Midlands Region. National policy contained in the Spatial Strategy, is translated to a regional level in the Regional Guidelines, which will guide policy making decisions at a local level, through the County Development Plan.

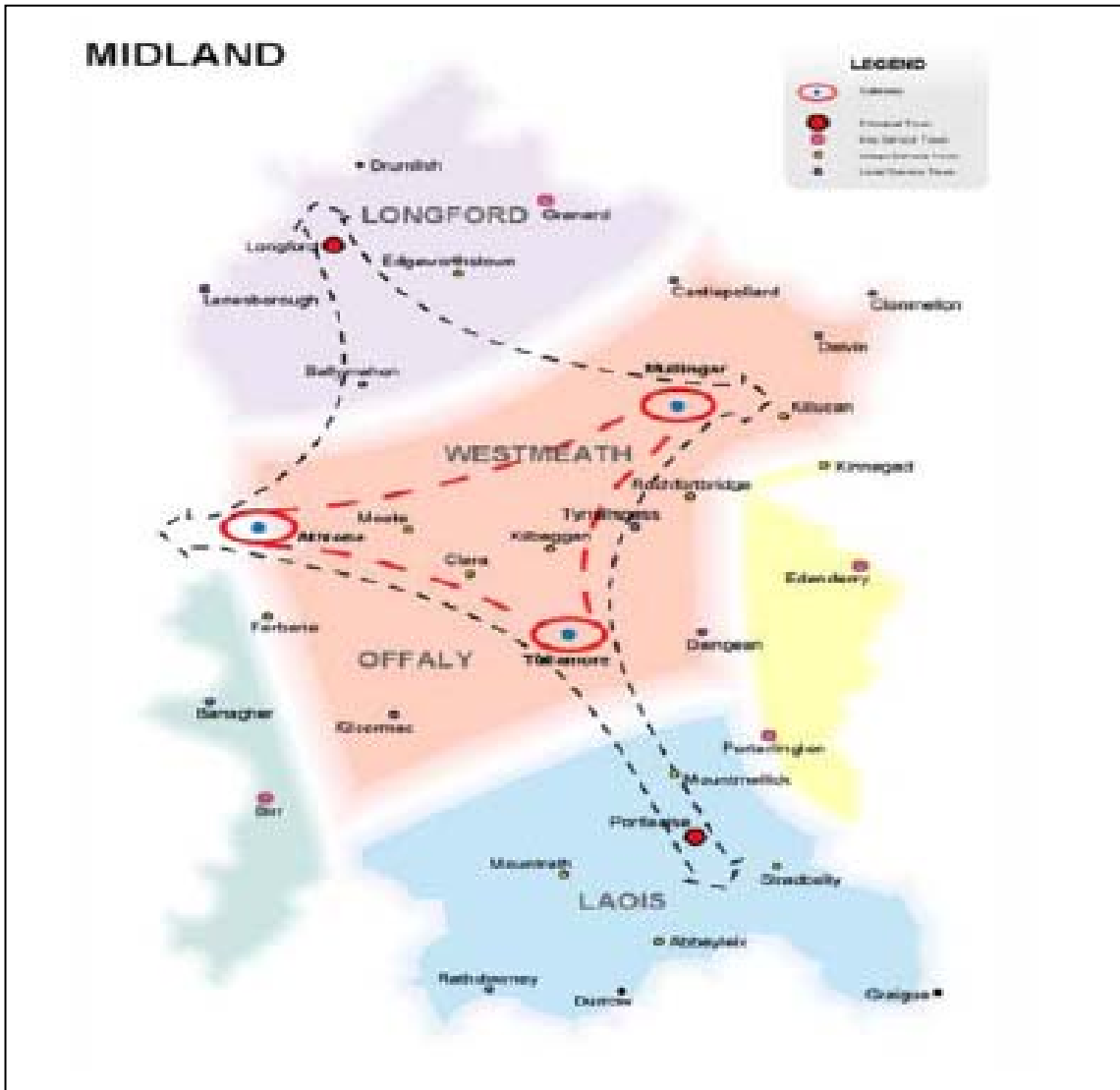
In the context of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, Longford Town is described as a 'principal town', which forms part of a broader polycentric network with the gateway at the heart of the region, and with the town as a driver of the northern part of the region.

Longford Town occupies a strategic position on national road and rail infrastructure, with a significant intra and inter regional role. This role is to be promoted through policy implemented at a local level.

The promotion, enhancement and improvement of the high quality of life that exists in the Town is a strong theme throughout the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines. Improvement of available amenities, enhancement of the public realm and facilitation of projects that will enhance

the tourism potential of the town are important policy provisions for consideration as part of the plan.

Fig. 1.2: The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines Strategic Development Framework (Source: Regional Planning Guidelines, Midland Regional Authority, 2004 (Original Source: National Spatial Strategy))



National Planning Guidelines

Planning Authorities are required to have regard to any guidelines issued by the Minister. Accordingly, this plan has considered the following guidelines;

- Architectural Heritage Protection
- Architectural Heritage Protection for Places of Worship
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (Dec 08) Parts 1 & 2
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines
- Design Standards for New Apartments
- Development Management Guidelines
- Development Plan Guidelines
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines – Best Practice Guidance
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment (Draft)
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities
- Residential Density Guidelines
- Retail Planning Guidelines
- Sustainable Rural Housing
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures
- Wind Energy Development
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (Consultation Draft)
- Provision of Schools and the Planning System.

1.2.2 Local Planning Policy Context

Longford County Development Plan, 2009 – 2015

The current County Development Plan was adopted by Longford County Council in March 2009. This plan was drafted having regard to the wider planning policy framework including the National Spatial Strategy and Government Guidelines. It sets out the context for future development in the County, development objectives, settlement hierarchy, development control standards and policies for the protection of the built and natural environment of County Longford.

The settlement strategy of the Longford County Development Plan 2009 – 2015, in accordance with the provisions of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, identifies Longford as a settlement of regional importance with a high level of existing services and commercial activity where the majority of industrial, commercial, business and retail development in the County will be channelled.

Existing zonings in the County Plan relates to the environs of the town and have significant implications for the development of the town area. These include industrial, residential and commercial zonings on either side of the Bypass (much of which is to be incorporated into the Northern Environs Local Area Plan – See below) and a substantial area out the Athlone and Strokestown Roads. A consolidated map, illustrating existing and proposed zonings in both administrative jurisdictions, is outlined below. It is essential that development in the area of the Town considers both development plans in tandem with the associated Local Area plans in order to appreciate and reflect an holistic approach to the sustainable development of Longford Town into the future.

Longford Northern Environs Local Area Plan

This is a plan, adopted in 2008, to address a strategic landbank in the north of the town, straddling the area of both Longford Local Authorities. This predominantly residentially zoned landbank has remained undeveloped over several Town and County Development Plan periods.

It is hoped that this plan will provide a sound framework for the sustainable development of the area into the future, incorporating commercial, residential, amenity and community uses in an integrated manner and in tandem with the development of the town core area.

It is anticipated that this will then act as a catalyst for the development of these lands over the lifetime of the Plan, increasing the attractiveness of the Town as a place to live and a destination

in itself, helping to retain population and provide opportunities for the enhancement of the pedestrian environment of the town and for the development of sustainable travel options.

Longford Southern Environs Local Area Plan

This Local Area Plan is currently in preparation for the area to the south of the town which is currently zoned agricultural due to severe topographical and infrastructural constraints.

The purpose of the plan is to investigate the potential of the lands for further development over the lifetime of the plan and beyond, while maximising the benefit from potential future infrastructural provision.

This area includes parts of the townlands of Knockahaw, Ferefad, Ballymakeegan and Farnagh to the south of the town incorporating both Longford Local Authority Administrative areas. The plan is being prepared in tandem with infrastructural investigation and analysis in terms of access, wastewater services, surface water drainage and water supply.

The anticipated outcome is a robust framework for the development of the area with advance, plan-led physical and social infrastructure provision, providing a sound and sustainable basis for future growth.

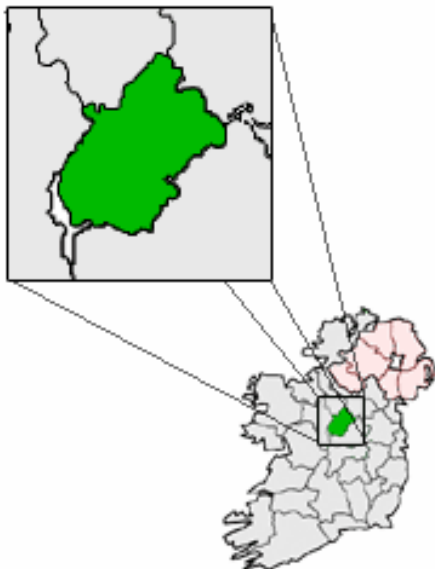
County Development Board Strategy

The Strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of County Longford entitled *The Way Forward 2002-2011*, prepared by the Longford County Development Board, is a ten year strategy for the social, economic and cultural development of the County. It is envisaged that the County Development Plan will be reflective of the central themes of this strategy. Key aims of the strategy focused on the following;

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| ▪ Enterprise and job creation | Development | ▪ Employment and Training |
| ▪ Tourism | ▪ Education | ▪ Promoting Equality |
| ▪ Infrastructure | ▪ Health | ▪ Culture and the Arts |
| ▪ Agricultural and Rural | ▪ Crime and Drugs | ▪ Sports and Leisure |

1.3 Town Profile

1.3.1 Location and Topography



Longford town is centrally located within the Country, forming a strategic junction at the intersection of the Dublin – Sligo Road (N4) with the Dublin – Castlebar/Westport road (N5). The Sligo-Dublin rail line also runs through the centre of the town, providing a secondary profile for the town, important in terms of national consciousness and identity.

Located on the banks of the Camlin River, the land within the town boundary is predominantly flat, with a pronounced rise towards the southeast. The area within the legally defined town boundary comprises approximately 898 hectares, however, much of this is undeveloped and the actual urbanised area is a fraction of this figure. This abundance of agricultural and amenity land in close proximity to the town centre significantly contributes to the character of the settlement, creating a series of distinct districts, each with their own unique identity and sense of place.

A spur of the Royal Canal also enters the town at the south western corner, travelling as far as the railway line and continuing the theme of transportation and industry embedded in the town origins and its ongoing development.



Longford town is the second largest town on the N4 National primary route between Dublin and Sligo. It is also the axis for the convergence of the N4 and the N5 National primary routes, which means that traffic travelling between Dublin and Counties Mayo and Roscommon pass through the town. All motorists travelling on the N5 must pass through the town en-route to their destinations. The N4 Sligo road has a bypass around the town. In addition the N63, the national secondary route to Roscommon, and several regional routes also serve the Town.

Longford is approximately 91 km from Sligo and 122 km from Dublin. An improved road network has resulted in reduced travel times to Longford, in particular from the Dublin direction. The provision of the N5 bypass of the Town and the upgrading works due to be carried out on the N4 Dublin – Sligo road and upgrading of the N5 Longford – Westport road will further increase the accessibility of the Town to the west of Ireland. Longford lies on the Dublin-Sligo route of the Irish railway network, and is served by Sligo-Dublin intercity services. Despite its distance from Dublin, the town also has a regular, well-utilised commuter service to Dublin. Journeys to the capital by rail generally take about an hour and three quarters. There are a large number of bus services to Dublin and inside the county locally provided by the state and private bus companies.

Longford Town is assigned the role of Northern Driver of development in the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines. It functions as the County Administrative headquarters of Longford Local Authorities and the commercial, retail, service and industrial centre of the County.

1.3.2 Historical Settlement Context

Longford Town was named by a chieftain called Farrell, who traveled westwards after the battle of Clontarf in 1014. Farrell constructed a ramp or a fortification in the vicinity of Longford Town. Having established his army headquarters, the place became known as Longford Uí Fearraill. The O'Farrell's also founded a Dominican priory in 1400, of which no trace remains today. There are fragmentary remains of a castle erected by the first Earl of Longford in 1647, which was located at the site of where the tower of McNamara's development currently stands.

During the course of the 17th and 18th centuries and beginning in 1619 the Aungiers secured several royal grants of markets and fairs and duly built beside the castle a large and spacious market house. This building, which in 1774 was sold with the castle to the Royal Commissioners of Barracks, is the oldest surviving in Longford town.

1.3.3 Population and Demography

1.3.3.1 Current Trends

The most recent population statistics available for the town are from the Census of Population (2006, CSO). This puts the population of Longford town at 7,622, a population increase of 11.6% from 2002. This is significantly higher than the growth of the county, which grew at a 10.7% over the four year period.

Table 1.1 Population Change in Longford Town 2002 – 2006

Year	2002	2006
Population	6,831	7,622

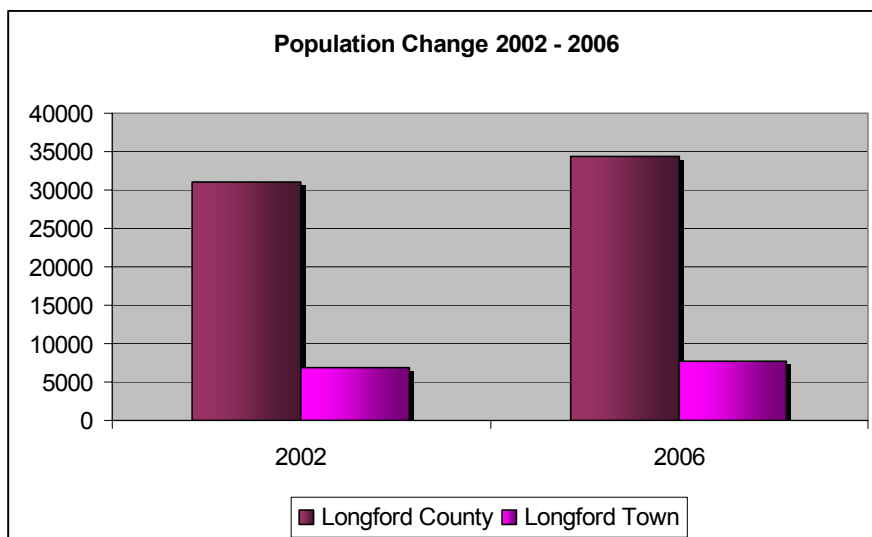


Figure 1.3 Population Change 2002 – 2006 Longford Town and County

1.3.3.2 Future Trends

The housing strategy, which was drawn up by Keith Simpson and Associates and covers the entire county of Longford for the period 2007 – 2016, indicates a growth of approximately 1,961 persons in Longford Town, a growth of 26% over the plan period. A growth of 5,535 persons (16%) is projected for the entire County area (which includes the Town) over the same period.

The population projections for the period up to 2020 are in line with the figures set out in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2004, which set out the population projections for the Northern Area (which equates to Longford County) over the plan period. In particular, this

pattern of growth increases the Town's share of the County population from 22% in 2006 to a projected 24% in 2015, in line with Regional Planning Policy which aims to prioritise settlement in the principal Towns.

The figures outlined in the housing strategy have been modified to reflect the requirements of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines which have set a target population of 43,000 for Longford County up to 2020. Longford Town remains the primary settlement within the County with a population allocation of 9,583 (as per housing strategy projections) up to 2016 in support of its defined regional role as the northern driver in the regional polycentric urban model.

The table below sets out the population distribution for the county over the lifetime of the plan, taking into account policy provisions for the promotion of Longford Town as a settlement centre and driver of economic development in the North Midlands and the population targets for the Midlands Region. It is clear from the table below that Longford town and environs are the main focus for development over the plan period, in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines.

Table 1.2 Population distribution

	POP 2006	2006 %OF COUNTY	2015	POP 2015
Longford Town	7,622	22.1%	24%	9,583 ²
Longford Environs	1,214	3.53%	6%	2,395
Granard	933	2.71%	5%	1,996
Edgeworthstown	1,221	3.55%	4.5%	1,797
Ballymahon	963	2.8%	3%	1,218
Lanesboro	604	1.76%	2%	778
Villages 1	21,834	63.5%	14.5%	5,789
Villages 2			12%	4,789
Villages 3			16%	6,388
Remainder of County			13%	5,192
	34,391			39,926 ³

² Figure obtained from housing strategy projections

³ Figure derived from Midland Regional Population projection, Longford County allocation

1.3.4 Demography

Longford Town area has experienced significant changes in its age profile since 2002. In 2006, the town had a younger age profile than the County, with 47% of its population aged between 15-44 years. The corresponding figure for the County is 42%. In 2002, 34.9% of the town's population were outside the working age cohort. This figure dropped to 32.6% by 2006. This is a strong indication of the economic improvements in the Town, with a significant increase in the working age population.

Population classified by age group for Longford town – the figures below relate to Longford Town and Environs population

Age Group	Total	0-14 years	15-24 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65 years and over
2002	7,557	1,715	1,172	2,166	1,57	926
2006	8,836	1,897	1,383	2,771	1,803	982

Table 1.2 Longford Town Demographic Composition 2002 – 2006

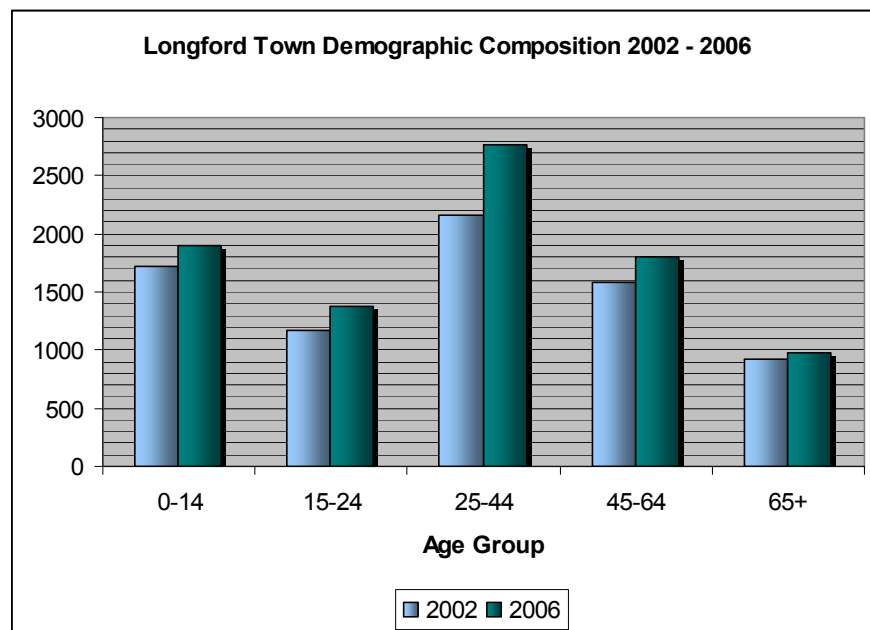


Figure 1.4 Longford Town Demographic Composition 2002 – 2006

The most marked change in the intercensal period is 25-44 age group, as indicated on the graph

above. As this is the most economically active age-group, this is an indication that the economy is strong within the town. This increase in population also poses an issue for the review of the development plan as increases in the population in this cohort must be addressed.

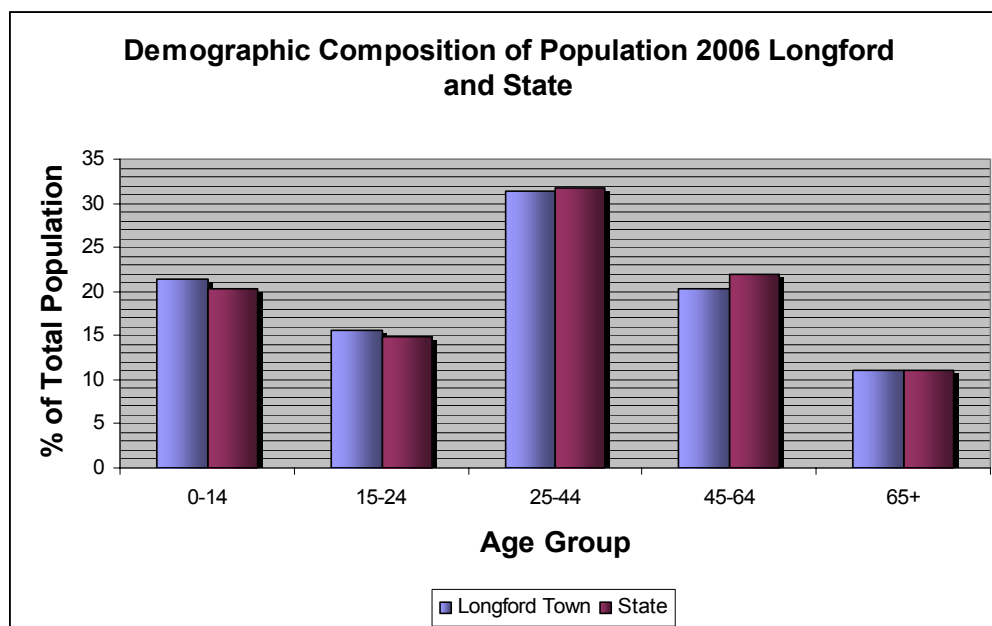


Figure 1.5 Demographic Composition of Population 2006 Longford and State

It is believed that the increase in this cohort is as a result of a strong inward migration trend that has developed over the intercensal period. As inward migration is likely to include a high percentage of work seeking persons in the younger and child-bearing cohorts, it is natural to assume that this upward population trend is likely to continue in the medium to long-term, even if net-migration figures begin to decline.

1.3.5 Housing

A housing strategy has been prepared on behalf of the Council to cover the period 2007 – 2016 for Longford Town and County area and this should be read in conjunction with the current County Development Plan. Based on the assessment of social and affordable housing need, the housing strategy indicates that Longford County Council and Longford Town Council will be justified in reserving 20% of all eligible housing developments in order to cater for social and affordable housing need.

Significant private residential developments have also occurred in the area of the town over the plan period. The largest banks of residential land are located at Abbeycarton/Aghadegnán.

The latest housing land availability returns prepared for Longford Town Council area indicates that there is 76.5 hectares of land available for development at June 2008.

1.3.6 Education

Census figures indicated that Longford Town and County fall below the state average in terms of educational achievement. This situation can be attributed to the fact that the Town remains without a third level education institution and that graduates have not tended to settle in Longford having achieved their qualifications.

Recent industrial, commercial and amenity developments, combined with policy provision aimed at enhancing the appearance and vitality of the central area included in the retail strategy will develop a modern and vibrant Town Core, with the amenities and facilities to attract and retain the graduate population.

The town is currently served by 7 primary schools, including the Gaelscoil, St. Josephs, St. Emers, Scoil Naomh Micheál, Longford N.S., Stonepark, and Scoil Naisunta Cnoc an Mharcaigh. In addition, there are schools offering specialist education to children and adults located in the town, such as including St. Christopher's School and St. Mel's Training Centre, both of which are located along Battery Road to the North of the Town Centre. There are 4 post primary schools serving the population of the Town and its environs.

The Local Area Plan for the Northern Environs will provide for the development of a further primary school to serve the area with the potential for the development of an additional post-primary school in the vicinity. A site will be identified for the expansion of the existing Gaelscoil in the Southern Environs Local Area Plan.

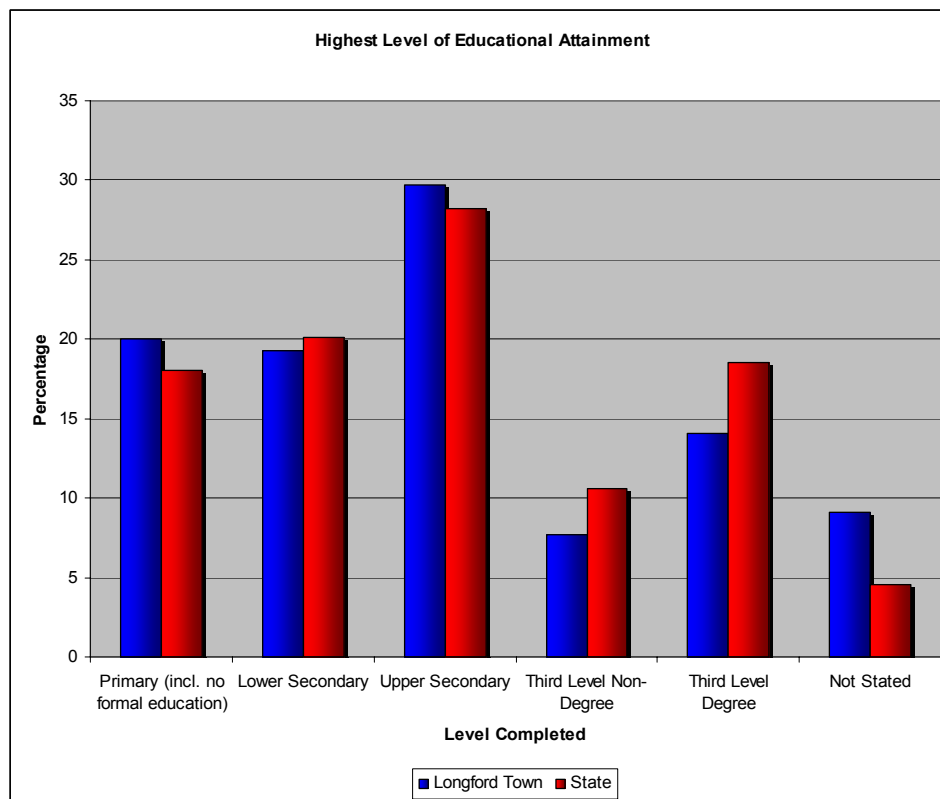


Figure 1.6 Highest Level of Educational Attainment Longford Town and State

1.3.7 Socio-Economic Context and Employment

Longford town plays an important role in providing commercial and industrial employment in the County and the Region. There have been significant advances in the industrial, commercial and business environment of the town over the last four years. Longford Town was included in the Upper Shannon Rural Renewal Scheme which offered tax incentives for residential and commercial developments that obtained planning permission between 1998 and 2004. As such, the Town and County, which was also included, witnessed an accelerated growth in property development over recent years.

The Department of Social Welfare is based in Longford Town, with the Irish Prison Service recently decentralised to the environs of the Town.

The major industrial employers in the town and environs include Magna Donnelly (Electronics System products), Activant/Triad Systems (CD-based inventory management systems for the automotive industry), Wessel Cable (telecommunications data cables) and Cameron Ireland (valves for oil wells).

One of the newest industry based employers in the area is Abbott Ireland's Diagnostic Division, which is expected to provide employment for up to 600 persons. There are also significant local employers in the area, including Fenelon Engineering. The IDA Business Park along the Ballinalee Road has experienced significant development over recent years. While many of these employers are located in the environs area which is in the administrative area of the County Council, these provide important employment opportunities to the residents and important spin-off benefits to the economy of Longford Town.

Mastertech Business Park, located on the Athlone Road, straddles both Longford Local Authority areas and has already experienced significant development over the plan period. The Athlone road area in general, located in the environs to the southwest of the Town has experienced significant development of a warehouse/commercial nature and provides important commercial services and employment opportunities for the residents of the town.

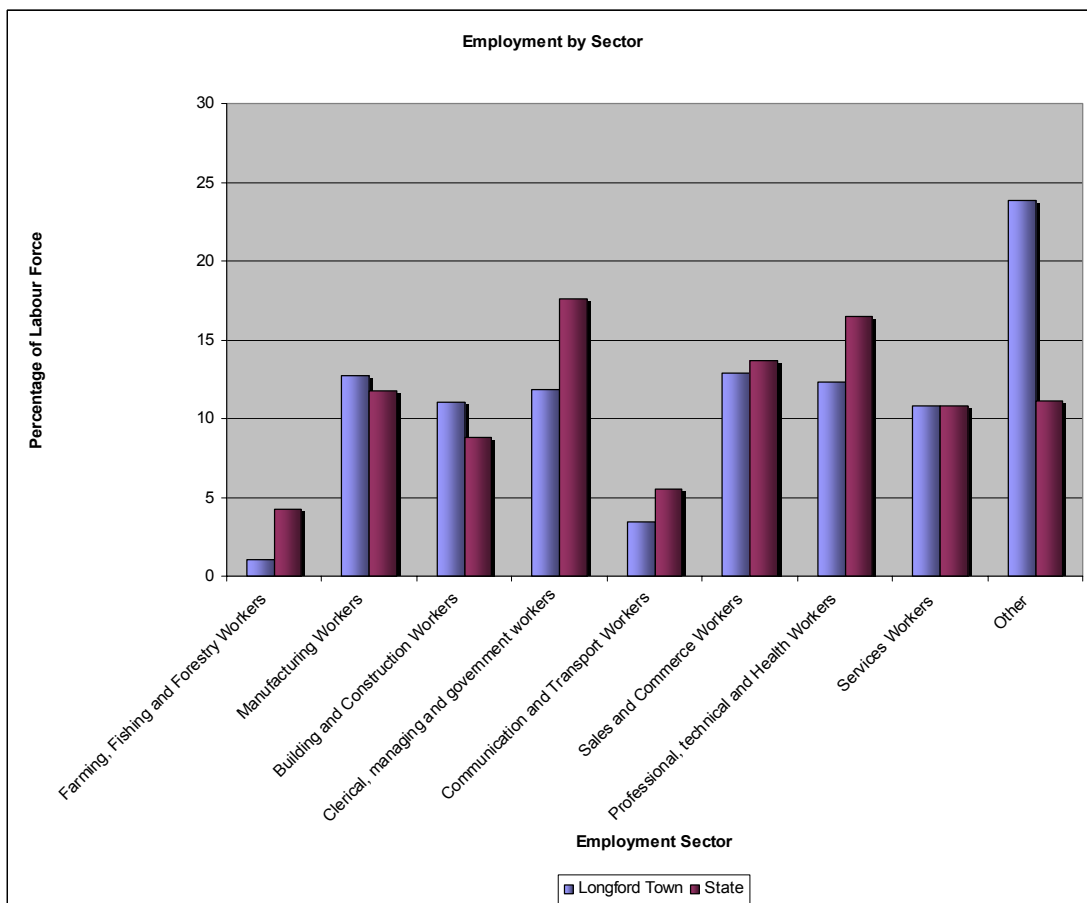


Figure 1.7 Employment by Sector, Longford Town and State

Figure 1.7 above indicates that service industry employment in Longford Town is comparable with the state figure. Longford town has a higher proportion of manufacturing and building than the state average, a reflection of the earlier chart relating to educational attainment, but also an indicator of the impact of the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme on the town. It is further noted that the number of people working in the manufacturing and building and construction industries has increased since 2002, with significant drops in the number of people working in the clerical, managing and government departments and the professional, technical and health sections, as indicated on the chart below. This again could be attributed to the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme.

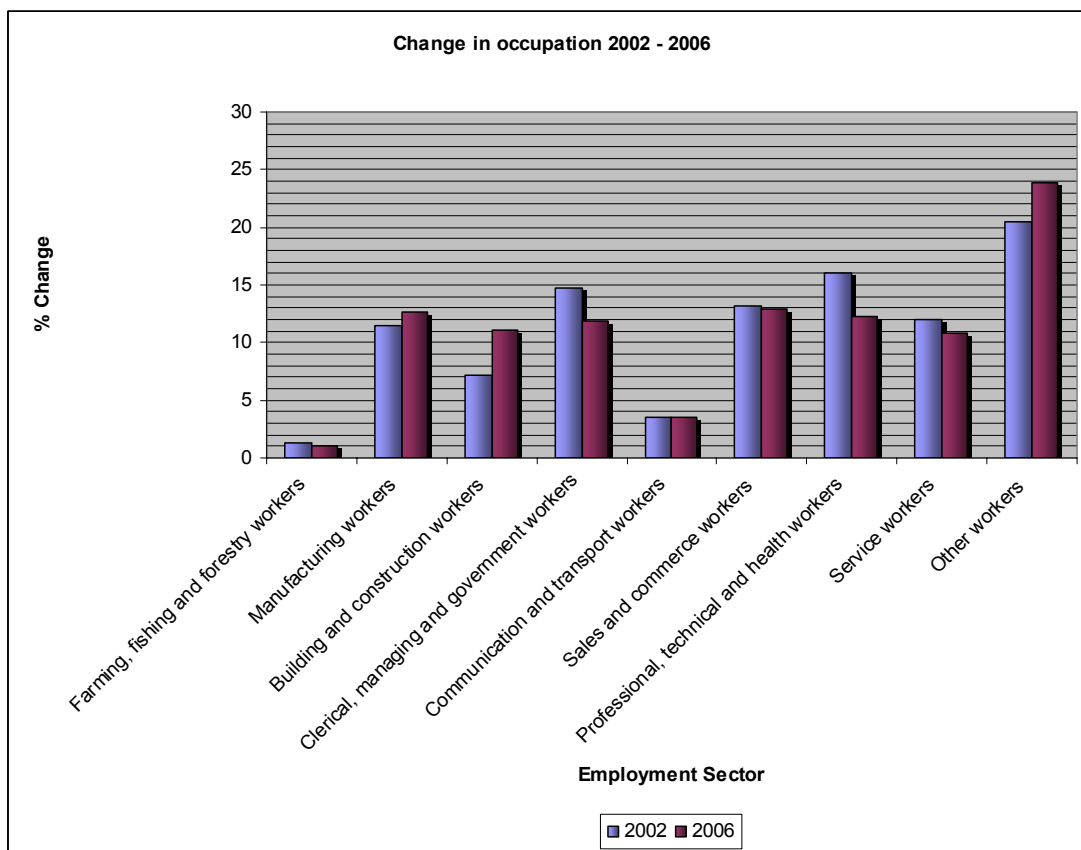


Figure 1.8 Change in Occupation 2002 – 2006, Longford Town

The chart below indicates that Longford Town is behind the State in terms of employment in the professional and management sectors and has a higher proportion of population in the manual skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

The traditional manufacturing and construction sectors are particularly vulnerable to macro-economic downturns and, as such, while plan policy will focus on the strengthening and

enhancement of these sectors, the development of a broad range of less susceptible employment opportunities will be priorities.

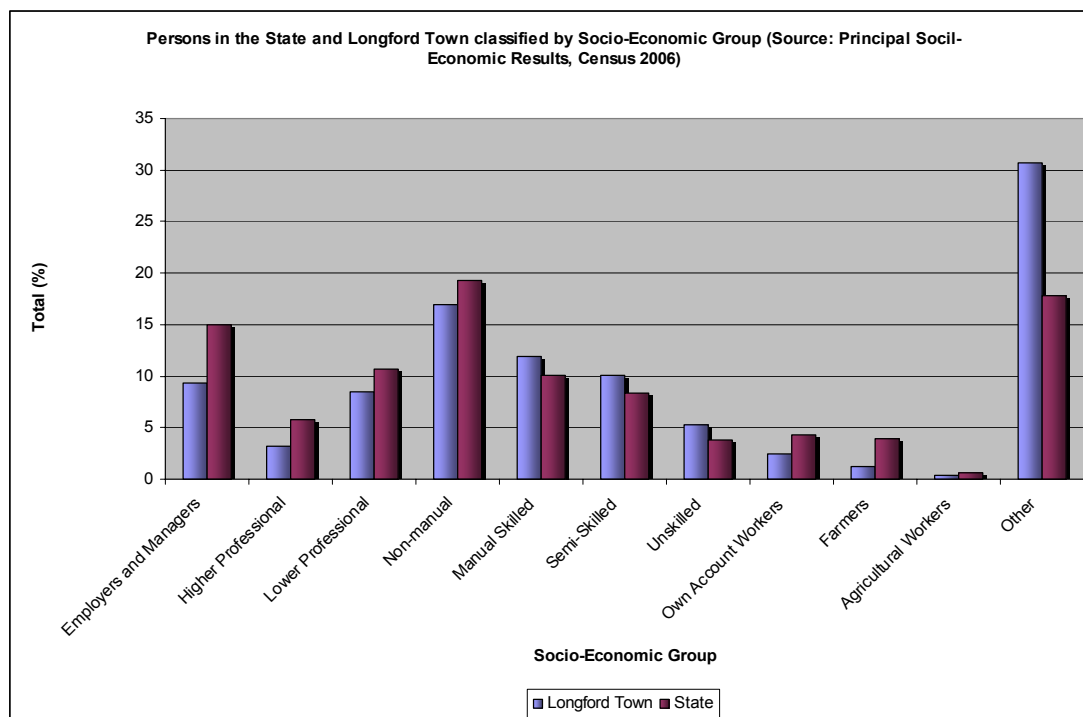


Figure 1.9 Persons in the State and Longford Town classified by Socio-Economic Group

1.3.8 Retail

A review and update of the County's retail strategy took place in 2007, based on information gathered and collated in a study carried out by Cunnane-Stratton-Reynolds in association with, and commissioned by, Longford Local Authorities.

The development of a vibrant retailing environment in Longford Town Centre is essential to attract and retain a critical mass of population, to facilitate the provision of a transport and other physical and social infrastructure at a level commensurate with Longford's role as a modern Town with Regionally important functions. An enhanced higher order retailing environment will be important in the attraction and retention of a critical mass of population. This is particularly important in the retention of a labour force to facilitate the development of the employment sectors outlined in the above section where the Town lags behind the state average and which are less vulnerable to external economic shocks.

The strategy aims to strengthen Longford's regional and inter-regional links by providing modern retailing facilities of the highest standard. The implementation of this strategy is well underway and will be incorporated in this development plan.

The retail sector in Longford Town has also shown strong growth over the plan period, with the recent completion of the new Dunnes outlet along the Dublin Road, the expansion of SuperValu in the new Hazelwood retail area and the completion of the shopping centre at the corner of Bridge Street and Church Street, straddling the Camlin River. This signature development will significantly add to the visual and retailing environment of Longford Town, with the landmark tower already creating a distinctive vista from Main Street.

There are also two discount convenience stores in Longford; Aldi, which is located in the Townspark Retail Park and Lidl, along the Dublin Road. These are complementary elements that add another dimension to the convenience retail environment of the Town.

The main hub of the town's retail and commercial activity is located within the area of Main Street, Ballymahon Street, Market Square, Dublin Street, Earl Street, New Street, and Richmond Street. An adopted variation to the previous Development Plan, and reflected in the zonings of the current plan, aims to regenerate the core shopping area in the town, with a strong emphasis on the provision of an enhanced public realm and pedestrian environment. A strong urban design theme will be required to link the existing historical built fabric and successful retailing area with the proposed enhanced commercial core, outlying civic uses, residential areas and amenity facilities to create a coherent, legible Town Centre that retains its own distinct identity.

1.3.9 Development Trends

There has been significant residential development in the town area, over the plan period, supported by industrial and commercial expansion, providing employment opportunities and facilitating the unprecedented population increases that occurred over the 2002 – 2006 intercensal period. This is reflected in the planning applications received by Longford Town Council, as illustrated below.

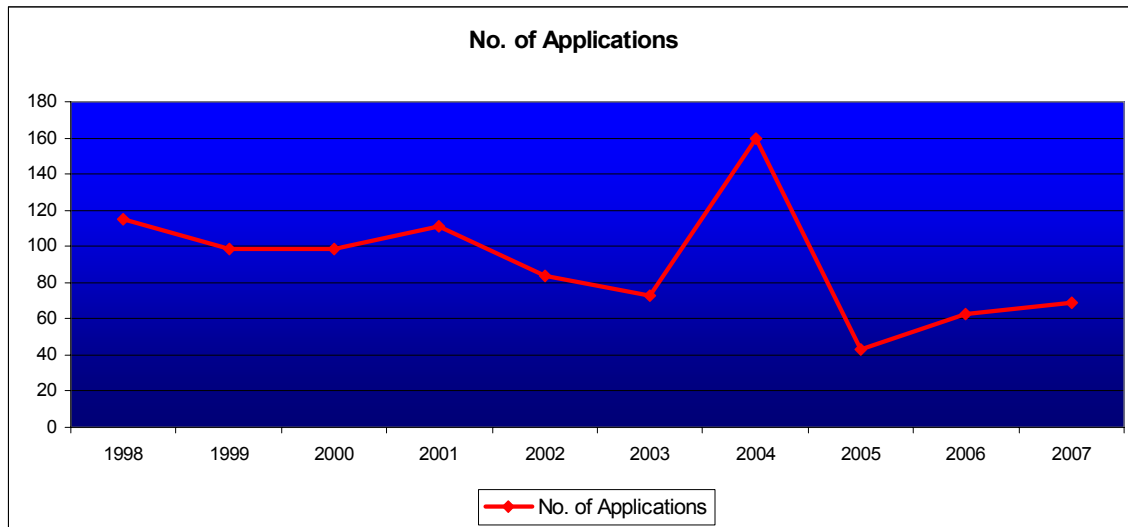


Figure 1.10 Number of applications received

Fig 1.10 above illustrates the number of planning applications received by Longford Town Council over the period of the last ten years. The impacts of the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme are evident in the number of applications received, which commenced in 1998 and continued up to December, 2004. It can further be noted that following the end of the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme, there has been a steady increase in the number of applications received by Longford Town Council.

There has been a significant level of retail and mixed use type development throughout the town over the period of the current plan, which is reflected in Figure 1.11 below, illustrating the percentage of applications by type over the current plan period. The Retail Strategy, referred to above, reinforces the information in Figure 1.11 below. The effects of the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme are also evident in relation to the level of applications received in 2004 for residential developments, which is reflected in the population increases experienced in the town up to 2006, as discussed above.

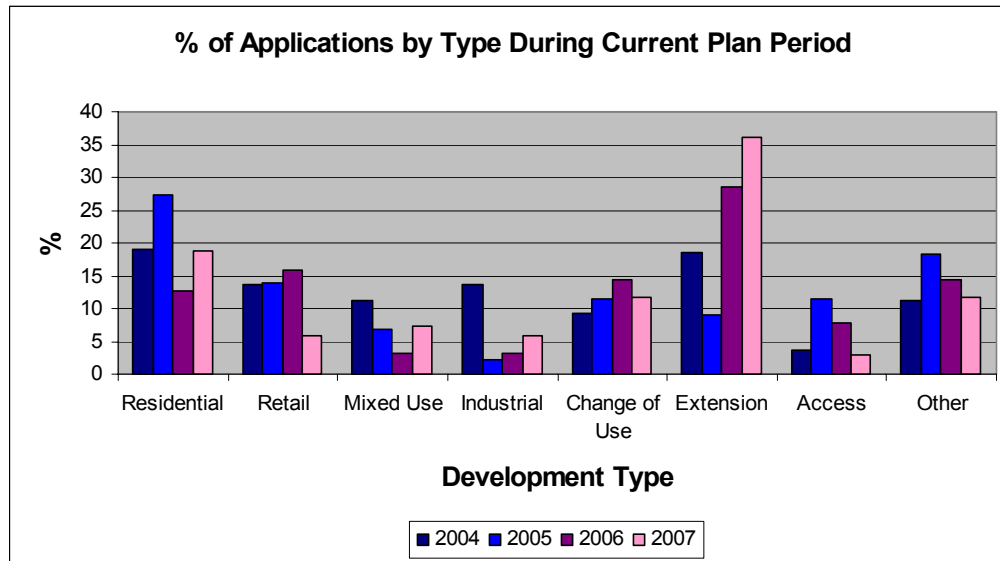


Figure 1.11 Applications received by Type

There has been a decrease in employment in the services sector and needs to be addressed as part of this plan. This may be a reflection of the weak tourism infrastructure within the town, which remains underdeveloped in the town and which needs to be improved, to tap the resources available.

It is evident from the development trends and employment details that there is a heavy reliance within Longford town on the construction and manufacturing industries. Although there have been a number of large mixed use developments permitted within the town, planning applications indicate that the largest percentage of applications received relate to residential developments, which is reflected in the employment figures.

The most significant change in population is the increase in the 25-44 cohort, largely resulting from in-migration, reflecting the improvement in the economic conditions of the town. The most important issue that will arise as part of this plan is to address the increase in this particular cohort. Considering the large number of people employed in the construction and manufacturing issues, policies must be put in place to address the slow down in this sector and identify alternatives for the people working in these sectors.

A properly maintained and managed high quality environment is a major requirement for investors and people in making decisions where to locate. The correct approach as contained in this plan will ensure the sustained development and growth of the town.

CHAPTER TWO

Development Plan Strategy



2.1 Introduction, Core Aim and Development Plan Goals

2.1.1 Core Aims

This section of the plan aims to set out the overall strategy for the future development of Longford Town. The overall strategy is made up of Core Aims underpinned by Development Plan Goals, which ultimately inform policy and objectives. The Core Aims of the Development Plan are as follows:

To provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town over the plan period.

To build on the unprecedented growth which has occurred over recent years and maximise the economic and social benefits that can be achieved from this in a manner which is compatible with the principles of sustainable development.

To secure the future vitality and viability of Longford Town through optimising the Town's economic, social and physical development.

2.1.2 Development Plan Goals

Following on from the Core Aims, a set of Development Plan Goals have been identified, which will inform the policies and objectives throughout the plan. The Development Plan Goals are as follows:

- 1. To formulate a framework for the future sustainable development of Longford Town in a co-ordinated manner, while simultaneously conserving the Town's unique character, form, heritage and amenity.**
- 2. To encourage and promote the use of alternative transport modes to the private car, in particular, through the enhancement of the pedestrian environment throughout the town and its environs.**
- 3. To ensure that the policies, aims and objectives of the Town Plan which compliment and work in tandem with the current Longford County Development Plan.**
- 4. To promote and enhance the role of Longford Town as the commercial, retail, service and industrial centre of the County and to protect the Town from any proposals which may detract from its position as a County/Regional Centre.**
- 5. To promote the development of Longford Town as a balanced settlement with residential areas existing in harmony with commercial and industrial activities and retaining its role as the main service centre for the Upper Midland region.**
- 6. To direct and encourage economic growth towards Longford Town, facilitating its development and consolidating its position as one of the main service centres of the upper midland region.**

- 7. To increase the rate of employment creation and enlarging the employment base of the Town.**
- 8. To concentrate future development within the Town and on zoned land so as to consolidate development and to aid in the provision of public transport.**
- 9. To support the regeneration and redevelopment of run down and derelict areas within the Town and environs.**
- 10. To facilitate the development of an attractive and vibrant Town Centre that provides for current needs and potential future demands in the face of recent unprecedented growth.**
- 11. To create sustainable, high quality residential and commercial environments – attractive, vibrant and safe places which function effectively.**
- 12. To ensure the orderly and balanced use of resources and to provide for sufficient housing, employment and recreational facilities.**
- 13. To identify elements of key importance to the unique identity and character of Longford Town, and enhance, conserve and/or protect these as appropriate.**
- 14. To translate relevant national and regional policy, guidelines, strategies and regulations to a County and local level.**

15. To work with the strategy for the economic, social and cultural development in Longford Town and County.

16. To promote and enhance the role of Longford Town as a centre of regional importance in terms of services, employment, settlement and economic activity.

2.2 Sustainable Development

Central to the achievement of the Development Plan Strategy is the core aim which is *'to provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town.'* Accordingly ensuring that principles of sustainable development practices are promoted within the town is essential.

Sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- The concept of **needs**, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- The idea of **limitations** imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."⁴

Sustainable development policy shall be promoted in accordance with national and regional guidelines. This shall be achieved through the concentration of infrastructural investment in order to facilitate maximum benefit from capital input, the minimisation of greenhouse gas emissions and the preservation of the quality and character of the environment. There is also recognition of the need to diversify and facilitate the provision of increased employment generating uses.

Potential developers are strongly encouraged to arrange pre-planning discussions with the planning authority prior to the lodgement of any application in order to discuss issues that may arise and prevent potential delays in the planning process.

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and promote the conservation and reuse of Longford's traditional building stock and promote design solutions for derelict or obsolete areas and areas in need of regeneration.

⁴ World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). *Our common future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 p. 43.

2.2.1 Broad Principles and Enhancing Quality of Life

Encouraging and maintaining quality of life for the people within the Town is central to achieving overall sustainable development. Underpinning the development strategy of this plan is working towards the facilitation of an environmentally sustainable society and economy, thus maintaining a good quality of life for all the Town's inhabitants.

Quality of Life affects social well being and health. A wide range of issues contribute to ensuring good health and well being including, adequate housing supply and conditions, provision of amenity/recreational facilities, provision of health and education facilities, ensuring the protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage, good environmental quality and a linkage between land use and sustainable transport.

The following broad sustainable development principles outline the macro sustainable development environment that contributes to enhancing quality of life and guides policy throughout this plan.

Settlement Strategy

The planning framework upon which the settlement policy contained within this Plan is based, is in accordance with the national planning hierarchy outlined in the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines and Longford County Development Plan.

One of the primary aims of this policy framework is to direct future settlement in a sustainable manner that promotes the development of critical mass in the principal towns of the region to facilitate the provision of a superior level of infrastructure and services in a manner that maximises the use of available resources.

Infrastructural Provision

The settlement policy framework outlined above, will in turn, prioritise the provision of supporting infrastructure. The availability of adequate water and wastewater services and safe and efficient movement patterns, in tandem with an adequate level of social infrastructure and community services will be a pre-requisite for future multi-unit development.

Climate Change

The potential of climate change to alter the development environment and how the planning system can avoid or prevent negative impacts in this context will be an important consideration in the development policy contained within this plan.

At a macro level, the plan shall consider ways in which the production of greenhouse gases can be minimised, such as the promotion of sustainable transport patterns and environmentally conscious energy production. Promotion of locally sourced building materials, environmentally aware production methods and the use of passive technologies are all sustainable principles that will be promoted as part of this policy document. Protecting and enhancing areas of natural heritage within the town district can help contribute positively towards reducing climate change.

At a micro level, flooding will be a significant consideration in the assessment of individual applications for development. Flooding will be considered not only in the context of the site, but also in terms of potential downstream effects in a more extreme climate. In this context, Longford Local Authorities will liaise with the Office of Public Works (OPW) the implementation of appropriate flood prevention policy and co-operation in any future flood studies (see Policy Provisions FLO 1-11 in particular).

2.2.2 Strategic Implementation Framework

The following Strategic Principles are based on the considerations outlined above. These tenets underlie all policy contained within this Plan and will inform the assessment of future development proposals in the Town Area.

2.2.2.1 Technical Standards

- i. Applications for new development, including residential, shall be assessed against the latest technical standards relating to sustainable building construction and materials, traffic and pedestrian safety, access and service provision, effluent disposal and the protection of public health and the environment. In addition, the applicant shall comply with all relevant Building Regulations. The responsibility for such compliance shall lie with the applicant.
- ii. Applications for all proposed developments shall be assessed in terms of the potential impact on the existing surface water drainage regime of an area. Permission shall not be granted on

the Camlin Flood Plain or where flooding is likely to be a significant hazard, either on the proposed site or external to the development, where this arises as a result of the proposal.

2.2.2.2 Design Standards

- i. It is the policy of the Council to ensure that developments are designed and carried out to a high standard. The Best Practice Urban Design Manual (DoEHLG, 2007) should be consulted and referred to in the design of all new developments, with regard to siting, location, form, orientation, materials, open space and parking provision and the preservation of the existing character of the area and of residential amenities. Where developments relate to the retention and reuse of the historic building stock within the town, the Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Local Authorities (DoEHLG, 2004) and the DoEHLG's Advice Series on the conservation of older buildings shall be consulted.
- ii. The design process shall focus on adjacent land-uses and the compatibility of the proposal with these, or the ability of the proposal to enhance or improve the area as a whole, where possible.
- iii. Proposed developments shall, amongst other considerations, be assessed in terms of their design criteria and their visual impact in terms of the surrounding external environment, including treatment or landscape design of the attendant open spaces, and how these spaces function internally in terms of visual amenity, maintenance and security.
- iv. It is the policy of the Council to promote a sense of identity or distinctiveness in terms of layout, materials, composition and orientation in the design of new developments.

2.2.2.3 Heritage and Tourism

- i. The Council shall promote the preservation and enhancement of quality of life in all areas through the protection and promotion of the awareness of and access to heritage.
- ii. The Council recognises the importance and potential positive impact of Cultural Tourism.
- iii. The Council further recognises the positive impact heritage plays in combating climate change and the promotion of a high-quality streetscape and visual amenity.

2.2.2.4 Natural Resources

The Council shall strive to address the following as part of the development control process:

- i.** Promote the use of renewable energy and sustainable building technology in terms of materials, renewable energy sources, passive technologies, siting and design.
- ii.** Protect the capacity of strategic infrastructure and maintain economic and equitable provision of services and utilities.
- iii.** Promote opportunities to develop sustainable movement patterns and, in particular, alternatives to the private car including walking, cycling and public transport initiatives.
- iv.** Protect existing water supplies through encouraging the use of water conservation measures in new and existing developments.

2.2.3. Sustainable Energy Policy

The Council encourages sustainable development through energy end use efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy, and improved energy performance of all new building developments throughout the Town.

This policy objective will be achieved by:

- 1.** Encouraging responsible environmental management in the construction process, including the use, storage and disposal of materials on and off-site, the use of less carbon intensive and locally sourced materials where possible, the use of finishes that can be maintained rather than replaced and ensuring high standards of insulation.
- 2.** Promoting sustainable approaches to housing developments by spatial planning, layout, design and detailed specification.
- 3.** Ensuring high standards of energy efficiency in all housing developments and encouraging developers, owners and tenants to improve the environmental performance of the building stock, in a manner that is appropriate to the age and construction method of the individual building type, including the deployment of renewable energy.
- 4.** Through the introduction of a performance based CO₂ emissions target for all new building developments greater than 10 dwellings or greater than 1,000m² floor area for non residential and mixed developments.
- 5.** In meeting the CO₂ performance target, the development shall achieve a collective average reducing of at least 40% in energy consumption for space heating, cooling, water heating and lighting within the development, relative to the baseline of existing regulatory and design practice and using the methodology outlined below:
 - The specific approach is to set a target, accompanied by a menu of design and technology options, including renewable energy technologies, as a means of offering flexibility towards meeting that target in the most technically and economically feasible manner on a case by case basis.
 - The CO₂ emissions target shall require a collective reduction of at least 40% in

CO₂ emissions deriving from energy use for space heating, cooling, water heating and lighting within the development, relative to a baseline of prevailing norms. The initial baseline of comparison is the DoEHLG Technical Guidance Document L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy – May 2006 Edition). Furthermore at least 20% of space and water heating shall be from a renewable energy source.

- Before construction starts for new developments greater than 10 dwellings or greater than 1,000m², including apartment blocks, due consideration shall be given to the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of using alternative energy systems. The preferred methodology for assessing the feasibility of such sustainable energy systems shall be the Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) software tool or other acceptable methodology.

2.3 Zoning Strategy

2.3.1 Introduction

Longford Town has a strong regional role as the driver of development in the North Midlands area, a role that is recognised at all levels in the Planning Framework. The settlement strategy for Longford Town is closely aligned to that of County Longford, which is outlined in the current Longford County Development Plan 2009 – 2015. In line with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, the strategy concentrates on the development of existing towns and villages to facilitate the provision of sufficient infrastructure, utilities and services.

The Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines define Longford Town as a County Town of regional importance, which is recognised as a major growth centre with a high level of access and existing services where the majority of industrial, commercial, business and retail development will be channelled. In line with this Regional Role, Longford Town is at the top of the County settlement hierarchy and, as such, policy provisions aim to develop critical mass to enable efficient delivery of the infrastructure that will allow development to proceed in a sustainable manner. This underlies policy provision in the Town and County Plans, and is reflected in the joint housing strategy produced in 2007 in terms of population distribution.

The Housing Land Availability Returns for 2008 indicate that there 76.5 hectares of zoned undeveloped land within the town boundary, with a capacity to cater for approximately 1,912 additional units over the lifetime of the plan, at a density of 25 units per hectare, in line with the settlement strategy outlined in the Longford County Development Plan and the Planning Guidelines for Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, December 2008. Allowing for the projected population increase, the number of additional units that will be required as a result of the national trend toward smaller household sizes and allowing for an element of market choice, the availability of zoned undeveloped land within the Town Council boundary is sufficient to cater for the needs of the urban area over the lifetime of the Plan. In accordance with Department Guidance, this plan identifies phasing of development land within the town over the period of the current plan and future development plans.

The town is serviced by the Longford Central Regional Water Scheme (RWS). The Water Services Investment Programme Assessment Report identified that there is insufficient spare capacity available in the Longford Central RWS to provide for the short-term projected growth in the town. Upgrading of the network, source replacement and augmentation of the storage system were

identified as an objective in the Water Services Investment Programme, 2007 – 2009. This objective was also designated as a top priority for investment. Until certain elements of the scheme are developed, the development of the town will be restricted by a water supply deficit.

Wastewater is treated by the Longford Sewage Treatment Plant. The treatment plant currently has a capacity of 20,000 population equivalent, with the potential for expansion to 40,000. There is currently spare capacity of approximately 3,500 population equivalent.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is sufficient land zoned as set out above, it is considered that zonings must retain a degree of flexibility and headroom in order to allow for a certain amount of choice in the housing market and to provide for the phased development of the settlement. Preference will also be given to developments that will consolidate the structure of the town, in line with a logical and sequential approach, prioritising the development from the core area outwards.

The Environs of Longford Town fall within the remit of Longford County Council and are covered under the Longford County Development Plan. Local Area Plans have also been prepared for the Northern and Southern Environs of the Town, covering both the administrative areas of Longford Town and County Councils.

2.3.2 Longford Environs and Local Area Plans

A Local Area Plan has recently been adopted for the Northern Environs of the Town and there is a local area plan currently in preparation for the Southern Environs of the Town, in recognition of the importance of lands outside the functional area of Longford Town Council but which bound directly onto the town. These plans straddle both Town and County administrative areas and contain land use zoning objectives, infrastructural prioritisation and design standards, forming a detailed planning framework for each area over a six-year period. Both plans will be in accordance with the provisions of their respective overarching Development Plans and any proposals for development within these areas shall have cognisance of the provisions defined in the relevant Local Area Plan, including zonings, once adopted.

Recognising the expansion of the town into the functional area of Longford County Council, the current Longford County Development Plan contains zonings for the lands to the south west, east and north of the town. These zonings have been selected to allow for the natural growth of Longford Town and relate to zonings within the town boundary (see Appendix 3 which outlines

Longford town and environs zonings).

The zonings are intended to be flexible, provided that the basic concepts of proper planning, residential amenity and good design practice are adhered to. Any proposed development should be compatible with the primary zoning use. These zonings objectives should be read in conjunction with the Town Development Plan standards, particularly in relation to design, materials, public open space and parking requirements.

The Longford County Development Plan should also be consulted in relation to adjacent zonings/compatibility, etc. and cognisance should be taken of the Northern and Southern Environs Local Area Plans.

The following zoning objectives (to be read in conjunction with Maps at **Appendix 1**) are indicative of the level and nature of development which is deemed by the Planning Authority to be appropriate to the area.

Commercial/Residential

- *To primarily provide for commercial/retail development with an element of residential development*

Development carried out under this zoning should encourage town centre commercial development and have regard to the dual use of the zoning, and, in particular, shall have regard to the provisions of the current retail strategy. Developers should be cognisant of the high profile locations of this zoning and design, siting and materials should be chosen accordingly. In certain instances, particularly in relation to large scale developments in the Town Centre, masterplans may be required to facilitate a coherent urban design approach.

This zone also contains significant areas of residential accommodation in housing areas or commercial streets over commercial premises. This mix of commercial and residential use is recognised and encouraged within this zoning.

Residential

- *To primarily provide for residential development; to preserve and enhance residential amenity, dwellings and compatible uses including social and community facilities, open spaces and local shopping facilities.*

The principles of sustainable development shall be taken into account when considering applications for residential development in the area, including the use of natural, locally sourced materials, energy efficient construction and operation and the application of housing densities in accordance with DoEHLG Guidelines. Consideration will be given to the potential transport implications of a proposed development, particularly in relation to the promotion of walking and cycling, the development of a public transport system for the Town and the encouragement of multi-trip journeys for private transport users. The potential impact of the proposed development on the existing ecology and compatibility with local environmental conditions should be addressed.

The provision of neighbourhood facilities may be required as part of any proposed residential development, such as a neighbourhood shop, post office, school, crèche, etc. These facilities will be encouraged in the residential area identified as part of the Longford Town Zoning Strategy Map contained in Appendix 1.

Employment/Mixed Use

- *To primarily provide for employment generating uses (office/light industrial/commercial/retail associated with town centre development), to include hi-tech/business/office use and residential where appropriate, in association with the delivery of necessary strategic road infrastructure.*

In accordance with the Longford Retail Strategy, convenience retail will only be considered at strategic sites under this zoning, where it can be clearly demonstrated that a substantial and appropriate redevelopment of the town core area can occur, that provides significant tangible benefits for the town including improved access circulation and car parking thus ensuring the continued vitality and vibrancy of the central area into the future.

Industrial

- *To primarily provide for industrial/workshop and commercial/office development.*

Zonings of industrial nature are indicative and are adaptable to the nature, size and requirements of future employment/industrial development. The creation of enhanced employment opportunities is the primary aim of this zoning. Hi-tech business/office and light industrial developments will be considered within this zoning. Lower order commercial/repair activities shall generally not be considered appropriate in high quality industrial zones of the Ballinalee Road, e.g. the Enterprise Centre and Prison Services Offices industrial estates.

Urban Regeneration

- *To primarily provide for mixed use development appropriate to high profile town centre location with an emphasis on the provision of public spaces, civic offices, retail, commercial and amenity uses that maximise pedestrian interaction at street level.*

This zoning provides for the comprehensive redevelopment of this sector of the town, allowing for a broad range of compatible and complimentary uses which will be encouraged to locate in

this area and contribute to a dynamic, vibrant and pedestrian focused town core. A strong urban design approach will be required in all aspects of development in this area.

A palette of compatible uses that span daytime into the evening and beyond will be promoted to develop the area as one which retains a secure and inviting environment at all times. In addition to more traditional town core activities such as retail and commercial establishments, institutional, social/community and civic facilities will be prioritised where of a nature and scale appropriate to the location. Innovative approaches will be welcomed in the area, particularly with regard to residential development.

Development under this zoning, including commercial development, will also be considered in the context of any master plan setting out an urban regeneration framework for the area.

Recreational/Open Space

- *To primarily provide for recreational open space and ancillary structures.*

The proposed utilisation of the River Camlin and Royal Canal as walks and linear parks would provide a recreational backbone to the town, providing a wildlife corridor and a potential link to other amenity and recreational uses. The development of a Town View Park at Farnagh Hill would further enhance the recreational facilities within the Town. This would facilitate the establishment of a linked network of public spaces, connected by clearly defined pedestrian and cycle routes, to include existing areas of amenity and recreational use such as the Mall park and various other sports grounds, pitches, tracks and facilities (see walking/cycle routes map at Appendix 7).

Rejuvenation Area

- *To primarily provide for the rejuvenation of significant backland areas within the town and to unlock their commercial potential.*

The purpose of this zoning is to promote development in this area in accordance with the provisions outlined at Section 7.5. The continued re-use and regeneration of derelict/obsolete land and buildings is an important objective in this plan, which will help achieve the preservation of the character and quality of the town, particularly in terms of vernacular/historical architecture, scale, height, density and massing. Re-development of under-used/vacant or derelict sites must be of an appropriate nature and scale.

Any redevelopment shall be designed to the highest architectural standards to provide an attractive uniform urban environment with unique character and identity.

Social/Community

- *To primarily provide for social and community facilities.*

This zoning provides for facilities that serve the community as a whole such as schools, community centres, community medical facilities, crèches, nursing homes, etc. These uses may also be considered under other zonings where it can be demonstrated that they will not adversely affect the residential amenity of the area.

Car Parking

- *To provide car parking facilities and structures ancillary to car parking.*

Public Utility

- *To primarily allow for the expansion and development of public utilities.*

Agricultural

- *To primarily provide for agricultural uses and structures ancillary to agricultural practices.*

This zoning provides for the use of lands for agricultural purposes subject to the provisions of Good Agricultural Practice Regulations 2006 and Best Practice Guidelines, particularly in terms of landspreading and related activities in proximity to dwellings and other structures. As this plan relates to a predominantly urban area, significant emphasis will be placed on the preservation of residential and community amenity in consideration of Planning applications under this zoning.

2.3.3 Land Use and Transportation Study (LUTS) Longford Town and Environs

Rapid population growth and increased economic activity over the timeframe of the previous Longford Town Development Plan 2004 – 2010 have lead to significant pressures on existing infrastructure. This threatens the continued prosperity, quality of life and overall vitality and viability of Longford Town and its environs.

A land use and transportation study was commissioned by Longford Local Authorities to investigate how a balance could be achieved between traffic movement and future development scenarios. This study considers existing and committed development in the town and environs, future potential zonings, the planned N5 and potential future N4 by passes of the town, the need to improve pedestrian permeability and the further enhancement of the public realm of the core area in particular.

The primary aim of the study is to create a transportation strategy for Longford Town and its environs over a twenty year period, intended to advise and guide current and future plans at County, Town and Local level.

The strategy will be based on three development scenarios, expected, high growth and an intermediate scenario up to 2016. The period up to 2028 will be addressed in an iterative manner with future potential development issues, opportunities and problems that may arise going forward, taking into account potential road lines to the south of the town and accessibility to strategic landbanks that may be required in the timeframe.

The study, once complete shall contain the following broad elements:

- The potential future growth pattern of the town and its environs, particularly in light of the review of the retail strategy.
- The need to provide enhanced retail offer in the town core area and the development of appropriately zoned areas to offer a greater range of employment opportunities in line with growth in the residential sector.
- The need to provide alternatives to private vehicular transportation modes through recommendations based on integrated spatial analysis of existing and potential land use provision in critical sectors will be identified throughout the

study area.

- The creation of a broad three-stage service provision and multi-modal transportation framework, providing for an enhanced pedestrian environment and opportunities to promote cycling as a realistic alternative transport mode.
- The identification of opportunities at a fundamental and low cost level, such as the potential to rationalise the existing traffic network through the development of appropriate directional signage.
- The identification of improvements in the public realm in visual and physical sense – development of signage, paving and street furniture themes, accessibility audits, etc.
- Physical constraints such as rivers, natural features, flood plains, existing and proposed infrastructural projects ranging from water supply to communications will be considered.

Accordingly, where appropriate, any proposals for development within this area will have cognisance of the future recommendations of the LUTs study.

CHAPTER THREE

Housing



3.1 Housing Strategy

Longford Town experienced significant residential development over the previous plan period. This is substantially due to the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme which spurred on demand for housing units within the Town, and is represented in the increased population growth that has occurred (See Section 1.3.4 of this Plan). A core aim of this development plan is to capitalise on this development in the residential sector while maintaining and enhancing the residential amenity of existing housing areas.

Longford Town Council have been proactive in the provision of Social and Affordable Housing in the town. This chapter sets out the policy for the future residential development of Longford Town, taking into account the Housing Strategy, and the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines which indicate that the majority of new development within the County over the plan period will be focused on Longford Town.

Standards for residential development are set out to ensure that a high standard of design is incorporated into all proposed new developments and to promote energy efficiency and opportunities for the use of renewable energy technologies.

The Council is statutorily obliged to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for a range of housing types to meet projected housing requirements over the Plan period. One of the basic aims of any Local Authority is to promote balanced social, physical and economic development. The Longford County Housing Strategy 2007 – 2016 was commissioned by Longford Local Authorities to cover

the functional areas of Longford Town and County, and is included in Annex 3.

The aim of this plan is to ensure that there is adequate land zoned in appropriate locations for residential development and develop clear policies and standards on the location, design and materials, including the technical criteria to which proposals for new development must adhere, whether individual units or schemes.

The availability of housing for a diverse range of housing needs is important for sustaining communities and for enhancing quality of life.

New housing developments should be sympathetic to their surroundings and reflect the character of the area. It is important that the residents of the development enjoy satisfactory standards of privacy and outdoor amenity and that the overall layout provides a safe and attractive living environment. It is also important to avoid excessive suburbanisation and promote higher densities in appropriate locations, particularly in areas close to the town centre and existing and potential public transport nodes and maximise non-vehicular transport options.

The previous development plan has had significant success in achieving the aims and objectives set out in relation to residential development, which aimed to ensure that adequate land was available for residential development in appropriate areas. The success of this policy is reflected in the substantial new residential developments that have taken place over the plan period and facilitated population growth in the Town Council Area over the 2002 – 2006 intercensal period.

The Plan identified the need to prepare a local area plan for the area to the south of the Town, which is currently at an advanced stage of preparation. A Local Area Plan has been prepared for the Northern Environs of the Town and includes substantial areas of residentially zoned land.

It was also the policy of the current plan to promote the provision of social and affordable housing and to encourage and assist voluntary housing organisations in the provision of housing. Since 2003, a total of 29 new social housing units have been provided, with 57 second-hand family units having been purchased into stock for the Town Council area. An additional 72 social housing units currently at development stage within the town, including 45 houses devoted entirely to Old Persons Dwellings (OPDs) and will include 10 St. Vincent de Paul units and 6 houses devoted to Disabled People of Longford (DPOL). In the same period, 64 affordable units have been allocated within Longford Town, with a further 12 units in the process of being allocated.

The type of residential development existing in the town is typical of other similar sized Irish towns. It varies from high density/apartments at the town centre, to housing estates of varying design, densities and tenures to houses on larger sites with mature gardens on the outskirts of the town.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of houses built in recent years.

There are approximately 293 housing units committed or under construction within housing developments, as of June 2008. The housing strategy indicates that there is sufficient land capacity in the Town area to cater for the projected housing needs for County Longford from 2007 – 2016 when using the existing undeveloped residentially zoned land, as such, it is not intended to allocate further substantial tracts of land for residential development as part of this plan.

The protection and promotion of residential uses within the town centre is crucial to creating and maintaining a vibrant and secure town centre. Additional accommodation in the town centre close to all facilities reduces the need to travel by car and thereby supports a sustainable land use pattern. In this regard, residential development will generally be permitted under all compatible land-use zoning objectives, (with the exception of industrial, recreational and amenity zonings) subject to nature, scale and measures put in place to ensure that appropriate levels of residential amenity are maintained.

3.1.1 Housing Strategy Synopsis

A review of the housing strategy was commissioned by Longford Local Authorities in June 2007 and carried out by Keith Simpson and Associates. The resulting Strategy is summarised below and forms the basis of Social and Affordable Housing policy (the full Housing Strategy document is contained at Annex 3 of this plan).

The Housing Strategy is for the period of 2009 – 2015 which is the lifetime of this Development Plan. It covers the entire County area including the functional area of Longford Town Council. Under the remit of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and the Guidelines issued under Part VIII, it specifies that a Housing Strategy will take into account the following:

- The existing and likely future need for housing.

- The need to ensure that housing is available to people with different levels of income.
- The need to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is provided to match the requirements of different categories of households.
- The need to counteract undue segregation between persons of different social backgrounds.
- Provide as a general policy that a percentage (being not more than 20%) of land zoned for residential or for a mixture of residential and other uses is reserved for the provision of social and affordable housing.

3.1.2 Residential Zoning

In general, Longford Local Authorities have two specific types of zonings in terms of residential development. These zonings are defined as follows:

- Residential

To primarily provide for residential development; to preserve and enhance residential amenity, dwellings and compatible uses including social and community facilities, open spaces and local shopping facilities.

- Commercial/Residential

To primarily provide for commercial/retail development with an element of residential development.

However, it should be noted that residential development of a suitable nature and scale may be permitted under other compatible land-use zoning objectives where it conforms to appropriate scale, design and residential amenity provisions.

Based on the Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin 2006 (2007), the survey of Housing Zoned Serviced Land Availability states that Longford County has 140 hectares available within the settlements of Longford Town, Ballymahon and Granard. Of this, 57.9 hectares are available within Longford Town, which has the capacity to cater for 1,437 housing units, when a density of 25 units per hectare is applied. However, it should be noted that these estimates for the capacity of the zoned lands do not take into account factors including lands that may not be released for development during the period of the housing strategy or lands within settlements that are dependent on servicing prior to any development occurring.

Based on the provision of the undeveloped residentially zoned land, it is considered that there is sufficient capacity to cater for the projected housing needs for County Longford from 2007 – 2016 as set out within the housing strategy. The provision of land has taken account of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. This includes those factors outlined in the document *Housing Supply, Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, (DoEHLG), 2000) such as existing or proposed shopping and community facilities, public transport routes, utility services, adjoining uses including amenities, land demand for other uses and land availability.

Development within certain areas of Longford Town is currently restricted as there is no immediate availability of services and therefore the short-term likelihood of these lands being developed is compromised. This is an important factor to consider in ensuring that there is adequate land available for housing provision within the town to support its role of 'principal town' in the functional hierarchy of the settlement strategy and ensure its sustainability. However, it is expected that additional serviced land will come on stream in the latter half of the lifespan of the housing strategy.

Accordingly, in considering the above factors, land availability, immediate availability of services and the need to ensure a choice of location even at the end of the housing strategy period, have become dominant in shaping the pattern of residential zonings within the Town.

As the above mentioned issues have come to the forefront in determining the level of zoning provision, it is also necessary to ensure that wasteful over provision of zoned land is avoided. The issues have been faced through ensuring the provision of an appropriate level of residentially zoned land in accordance with the functional hierarchy of the Town area, as defined in the settlement strategy of the County Development Plan and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, i.e. ensuring that the majority of housing units are provided in the key settlements through the provision of residentially zoned lands accordingly. This has been further strengthened through ensuring that cognisance has also been taken of the short, medium and long term programme of works for infrastructure provision. This in turn, has aided the formation of the functional hierarchy of the settlement strategy, thus limiting the possibility of wasteful over provision of zoned land.

The following objectives are set out in order to facilitate the implementation of the Housing Strategy for the Town:

HS 1: The Council will promote and encourage the provision of a broad mix of housing types in appropriately zoned areas in order to cater for the housing needs of the Town over the lifetime of the Plan. This will include the provision of housing for the elderly, persons with disability, lone parents and travelling families (in accordance with the Traveller Accommodation Plan).

HS 2: The Council will take the following DoEHLG documents into account in the discharging of their duties under this section:

"Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities – Policy Statement" (2007)

"Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities – Design Guidelines" (2007).

"Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (DRAFT – and any subsequent update)" and accompanying Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2008)

In addition to the general housing objectives which are outlined above, the following social and affordable housing policy shall be applied:

HS 3: It is the policy of the Planning Authority to facilitate the provision of housing units to sufficiently cater for Social and Affordable Housing need – as established in the Housing Strategy – over the plan period. In this regard, it is the policy of the Council to reserve 20% of all residential development on appropriately zoned land for the purposes of the provision of Social and Affordable Housing. The options for compliance with this requirement (i.e. provision of houses, serviced sites, land and/or monetary contributions) shall be agreed on a case-by-case basis.

HS 4: Percentage division between social and affordable housing shall be decided on the basis of each individual site. Criteria to be taken into account will include the following:

- a. The type and location of the housing units required by the Planning Authority at a given time, as defined by the priority housing list by the Housing Section;
- b. The existing mix of housing classes in the area – as a general rule, in areas with an existing high level of social housing present, a lower reservation of lands will be required for social housing purposes.

HS 5: Provision of Social and Affordable Housing shall be progressed through the ongoing purchase programme of turnkey developments, co-operation with voluntary housing organisations and the Health Service Executive, and consultation, discussion and agreement with private developers in conjunction with the ongoing Local Authority house building programme.

HS 6: Measures will be taken to provide a satisfactory mix of housing classes and types in each development in order to avoid undue social segregation. Depending on the existing mix of housing types in the area, a specified percentage of the reservation shall be utilised for Social Housing, and a specified percentage utilised for Affordable Housing provision, the details of which should be discussed at pre-application stage. Developers should have cognisance of the

document *Guidelines for the Implementation of Part V of the Planning and Development Act* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2000) which outlines options for compliance with Part V.

HS 7: Longford Town Council will continue to maximise the potential of the various social housing options, including voluntary housing, affordable housing, shared ownership, improvement of existing housing stock in lieu of Local Authority Housing and extensions to Local Authority Houses.

HS 8: New developments shall be designed and built in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations Amendment, 2000 (Access for People with Disabilities). Where time constraints permit, in the case of housing provision for the disabled, direct and on-going consultations will be entered into with the prospective tenants in order to assess individual requirements.

HS 9: Open spaces, entrances, pathways and parking areas in new residential developments shall be designed with reference to "Buildings for Everyone – Inclusion, Access and Use (National Disability Authority, 2002) and any subsequent update. The Planning Authority will have cognisance of the needs of the elderly with regard to accessibility, security and social interaction.

HS 10: Regard shall be had in the assessment of new developments to the social inclusion of all sectors of society, including the needs of the travelling community and ethnic minorities. Traveller accommodation shall be provided in accordance with the current, and any future, traveller accommodation plan.

HS 11: It is the policy of the Planning Authority to continue to assist Voluntary Housing Organisations insofar as is possible in line with government objectives on increasing output from Voluntary Housing Organisations.

HS 12: Any application for planning permission relating to a residential development under this

Strategy which may impact on the integrity and/or setting of any monuments, sites, objects or areas of archaeological, cultural, architectural, historical or heritage importance under the protection of the DoEHLG, shall be referred to the Heritage and Planning Division of the DoEHLG for observations/comment prior to a grant of permission/approval being obtained.

HS 13: Development within the town shall be carried out on a phased basis, based on services provision in the area and as set out below:

Phase 1: Abbeycarton (and other areas of residential zoned land in the NELAP) and other smaller pockets of land which are currently serviced within the town, which is currently serviced and ready for development and is envisaged will come on stream within the lifetime of the plan.

Phase 2: Farnagh, which is not currently available for development due to sewerage problems and are considered to be a future potential landbank within the town.

Phase 3: Any lands identified in the SELAP area, which are dependent on funding from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. This land will contain substantially a strategic land reserve, not envisaged to be developed within the lifetime of the current plan but identifies the future potential development of the town.

This phasing should not preclude sewerage of the area covered by the Southern Environs Local Area Plan as previously proposed by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

3.1.3 Residential Density and Housing Design

The *Draft Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*, 2008 (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) sets out the Government policy of encouraging more sustainable urban development by the avoidance of excessive suburbanisation and the promotion of higher residential densities in appropriate locations.

It is intended that these measures will result in:

- More economic use of existing infrastructure and serviced land;

- A reduced need for the development of 'greenfield' sites, urban sprawl and ribbon development;
- Reduced need for investment in infrastructure;
- Better access to existing services and facilities
- More sustainable commuting patterns.

The Council recognises that higher densities will not be appropriate in every circumstance. In achieving higher densities the protection of the amenities of existing developments and those of the residents of the proposed development will be a primary consideration.

A high quality of architectural design and sensitive consideration in the siting and design of proposed new developments combined with the integration of amenities should result in the provision of quality living environments, essential if increased residential densities are to become not only acceptable but desirable.

In this regard, the *Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide, 2008* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) should be taken into account in the design of any new residential development.

The following policy provisions relating to housing density and design aim to provide high quality sustainable living environments.

HOU DES 1: Proposed housing developments shall be required to cater for a range of housing needs and types, specifically with regard to density of development and in the form, scale and type of dwelling within residential areas.

HOU DES 2: It is the policy of the Town Council to ensure that high design standards are achieved and incorporated into proposed developments, particularly with regard to the layout of estate developments, to facilitate pedestrian safety and restrict vehicular traffic speeds in consultation with the Town Engineer.

HOU DES 3: The Planning Authority shall encourage design solutions that promote energy efficiency and conservation and shall support the use of appropriate renewable energy technologies in residential developments. Such measures shall be consistent with other policies in

the Plan.

HOU DES 4: All new residential accommodation shall comply with the required design standards in terms of access, insulation, fire safety, sanitation and drainage, and shall be carried out in accordance with principles of good design.

HOU DES 5: Proposed new residential developments shall be named to reflect locally important places, personalities, structures, or other feature of cultural historical or heritage value. Proposed names shall be in Irish or Irish and English and shall be submitted in advance to the Planning Authority for approval by the Longford Placenames Committee, established by the Heritage Forum.

HOU DES 6: Existing horizontal and vertical building lines on the main thoroughfares shall be protected to preserve continuity of the built fabric and the integrity of the town structure. Divergence from established building lines shall only be permitted where it can be illustrated that this positively enhances the streetline and facilitates increased pedestrian interaction with buildings at street level, e.g. the creation of public plazas, exhibition spaces and/or suitable shared use facilities.

HOU DES 7: To encourage infill housing developments on appropriate sites where the proposals fulfil required technical standards, consider the residential amenity of existing and proposed occupants and respect the existing scale and character of the area.

HOU DES 8: Design Standards

a) Residential development should be designed to a high standard, yet simple, with a minimum of different materials, finishes and detailing.

b) Design solutions should be employed that minimise overlooking/overshadowing and preserve and enhance the residential amenity of the entire development and its setting.

c) A variety of house types, sizes and designs (compatible with an overall scheme) will be encouraged in new developments. Developers should refer to *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* (2007 or subsequent update, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) and the *Draft Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* (or subsequent update), DoEHLG, 2008.

d) Developers will be required to provide bus stops at identified locations throughout the town or otherwise facilitate the establishment of public transport initiatives in the Town.

e) Generally, private open space to the rear of houses shall be provided at a minimum of 11metres in length, extending for at least the width of the dwelling unit. In the case of detached and semi-detached dwellings, this space should be accessible by pedestrians other than through the house. This private open space requirement may, in exceptional circumstances, be reduced in the town centre and areas of higher residential densities where a satisfactory public open space/recreational, congregational area is provided or in the particular cases such as the provision of dwellings for the elderly (OPDs).

f) Where appropriate, where traditional hedgerows are present, they shall be retained and enhanced as part of the boundary treatment of any development. In all other cases, all boundary walls shall be capped and plastered, except in the case of fencing or stone walling. Some layouts may be required to omit front boundaries in order to preserve the character of the area. Generally the following standards apply:

Front Walls: 0.5-1.2m high

Side/Rear Walls: 1.8-2m high

Estate Boundary/Dividing Walls between houses: 2m

Alternatives including fencing with backplanting of shrubs and/or trees may be considered where privacy and/or security is preserved or where the character of the development requires it.

HOU DES 9: Energy Efficiency

- a)** Proposed new housing developments should be energy efficient in their siting and design, and utilise local materials where present and practicable. The use of suitably designed alternative/renewable energy installations will be encouraged.

- b)** Dwellings shall be designed and constructed so as to limit the amount of energy required for the operation of the dwelling and the amount of CO₂ emissions associated with this energy use insofar as is reasonably practicable. In this regard, a reasonable proportion of the energy consumption to meet the energy performance of a dwelling shall be provided by renewable energy sources. Heat loss should be limited and, where appropriate, heat gain should be promoted through the fabric of the building.

Therefore, regard shall be had to the following menu of design and specification options:

- Site layout and associated bio-climatic/passive solar design measures
- Enhanced levels of insulation in walls, floors, glazing and doors
- Reduced uncontrolled air infiltration losses
- Use of healthy and controllable ventilation systems
- Heat recovery systems
- Use of daylight
- Water conservation measures
- More sustainable building materials
- Improved heat generation appliance efficiency, e.g. condensing boilers
- Intelligent heating system configuration and time/temperature/zone/function controls
- Efficient provision of domestic hot water
- Fuel switching to low or zero CO₂ emitting fuels
- Energy efficient lighting systems
- Incorporation of renewable energy systems, e.g. active solar, heat pumps, biomass
- Provision of appropriate group or district heating systems.

Other measures that can contribute to the energy efficiency and renewable energy targets can also be considered.

HOU DES 10: Layout and Density

- a)** Road layout in housing areas shall be designed in accordance with *Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas* (DoEHLG, 1998) or any subsequent update, and parking shall be provided in accordance with Development Plan standards.

b) Density should be informed through a combination of an analysis of the existing character of the area including the residential amenity and how this can be retained and/or enhanced, the potential densities required in line with Departmental Guidelines and the promotion of sustainable movement patterns. Density of proposed schemes should reflect existing developments in the immediate area.

In line with the *Draft Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2008* (DoEHLG) or any subsequent update, higher densities shall be permitted in the town centre, on 'brownfield' or infill sites or close to existing/potential modes of public transport. In this regard, pre-planning discussions are actively encouraged. Apartment developments will be discouraged and only be considered in exceptional circumstances in the town centre area. Higher density schemes shall only be considered where these exhibit a high architectural design standard.

c) Layouts should reflect the existing town character, e.g. in the case of proposed developments that have a street frontage, the developer may be required to build houses in accordance with the existing building line in order to retain the built fabric of the settlement and reinforce its physical structure. Similarly, where the structure of the settlement requires it, courtyard developments may be appropriate.

d) In the design of proposed developments, consideration shall be given to the provision of access to adjacent lands and the overall traffic layout of the area. Developers shall be required to bring all services, including roads, footpaths, drainage and utility ducting up to agreed locations at the boundary of the site, particularly where adjacent lands are zoned, and/or provide wayleaves for public services as appropriate. "Ransom strips" (where gaps in services and infrastructure are used to increase land values) shall be avoided.

e) Developers will normally be required to install cycle lanes in conjunction with footpaths throughout the proposed development and developments should be designed to facilitate any future bus service for the area.

f) A traffic projections form shall be submitted as part of the application for development, and where the development falls within the defined thresholds, a Transport Impact Assessment, Traffic and Transport Statement and/or a Road Safety Audit shall be submitted (or any subsequent update).

HOU DES 11: Public Open Space

- a)** The developer will normally be required to reserve 15% public open space in association with new developments and/or may be required to contribute (either financially or with land) towards the assembly of a larger public park for the benefit of the area as a whole.
- b)** In exceptional cases in smaller developments (eight houses or less), hard or soft landscaped play lots of a minimum size of 0.1ha may be provided in lieu of public open space.
- c)** On sites that abut important recreational areas such as playing pitches, riverbanks, old country lanes, walking routes etc., the developer may be required to provide pedestrian links and/or wildlife corridors to connect the proposed development with its surroundings. They may also be required to extend/enhance existing recreational facilities within the area and pedestrian routes toward the town centre. Pedestrian links should be secure, overlooked and well lit, or alternatively, be able to be locked at night.
- d)** Incidental open space, such as grass margins, left over spaces or unusable areas shall **not** be calculated as part of the open space provision for a development.
- e)** Public open space should be provided in an area where it is useable, accessible and secure. It shall be provided as an area of positive recreation and/or children's informal play area. This generally excludes areas to the rear or sides of houses which are not overlooked, poorly lit and encourage anti-social behaviour and the accumulation of litter. Larger developments should include a specific open space plan, illustrating a clear network of open spaces with a defined hierarchy ranging from public to semi-private and private spaces which are clearly defined and defensible.
- f)** Where open space is provided adjacent to a main public road, this shall be fenced with an appropriate boundary material.
- g)** The above requirements may be relaxed in certain instances, for example in developments consisting of Sheltered Housing or OPDs.

HOU DES 12: Landscaping

- a)** Landscaping plans will be required in conjunction with all new residential developments and should include hard as well as soft landscaping elements.
- b)** Street furniture should be provided in accordance with a pre-determined design theme where this contributes to the enjoyment of the public realm.
- c)** Soft landscaping should be carried out utilising native species, particularly in areas adjacent to riverbanks and wildlife areas creating wildlife networks and corridors to preserve and enhance biodiversity.
- d)** Public open space areas should be suitably landscaped, including mounding, informal play areas/kick about areas, provision of street furniture including benches etc. Landscaping should be provided in a manner which suits potential users, e.g. where OPDs are provided, children's play areas may not be appropriate.
- e)** Surfacing should be of high quality and designed to support the level of traffic which it is proposed to carry. Where several paving types are to be used, they should be utilised to emphasise congregation areas, crossings and pinch points, or to emphasise and enhance children's play areas or promote sensory experience/access for those with disabilities.
- f)** Lighting standards, litter bins, signage, seating, bollards etc. should be provided in accordance with an overall scheme. Public lighting shall be installed above all footways within the development to the requirements of the Department of Environment publication *Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas* (1998) and ESB standards. For the roads network in and around an immediate housing area or along a public walkway, public lighting shall be provided to ESB standards.
- g)** Generally, developers shall be required to retain hedgerows and protect mature trees on-site, particularly during site development works. If this is not possible, the developer will be required in most instances to replace trees removed and/or strengthen existing hedgerows, to be comprised primarily of site-appropriate native plant species and elements conducive to biodiversity.

HOU DES 13: Phasing and Completion

- a)** Pre-application consultation is recommended to address the standards required for taking in charge of residential developments. Applications for residential development should delineate the area that would potentially fall to be taken in charge on the site layout map.
- b)** The developer will be required to submit a bond ensuring the completion of the development to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority. This extent of the bond shall be representative of the size and extent of the development and shall be conditioned as part of any permission granted for relevant developments. This bond shall be submitted to the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development.
- c)** A phasing programme shall be submitted as part of an application for planning permission and shall clearly indicate each phase on the drawings. Roads, footpaths, drainage, public lighting and boundaries shall be completed prior to the first occupation of any house in each phase of the development.
- d)** Housing estates shall be named and numbered in accordance with a scheme to be agreed with the planning authority prior to the commencement of the development.

HOU DES 14: Infill Residential Development

While infill developments and reconstruction within the Town will be required to integrate with the surrounding developments and shall be sympathetic in terms of design, scale, building line and materials used, innovation and design statements shall be encouraged. Drawings submitted shall illustrate the proposed new development in context and demonstrate a clear design relationship between the proposal and its setting.

Development proposals will be required to adhere to established building lines except where the building line alteration will result in positive visual, operational or physical benefits to the public realm, e.g. the creation of additional public congregational space and/or pedestrian interaction with the built environment at street level.

Developments that are visually incompatible with the streetscape or that lack pedestrian scale will not be permitted. Longford Town Council promote modern, architecturally innovative designs and interventions where proposed by suitably qualified persons.

Important streetscape elements shall be preserved, such as street corners, Dublin Street and Ballymahon Street. Longford Town Council will encourage infill development where such developments eliminate a derelict structure or vacant site. The development control standards set out for new residential developments may be relaxed in the case of infill developments, however this will be considered by the Planning Authority on a site by site basis and subject to the highest quality design, layout and material finish.

Therefore, the policy of the Council is as follows:

- a)** Infill residential development will be promoted in order to retain continuity of the built fabric and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- b)** Design, height and materials should be compatible with adjacent properties.
- c)** The existing building line should be maintained or, where changed, should be carried out in a manner which enhances the built fabric of the settlement.
- d)** Design should incorporate measures to reduce or eliminate overlooking of adjacent properties, including additional screening measures, if necessary.
- e)** Private open space should be provided to the extent that storage of bins, fuel and clothes lines may be facilitated out of public view.
- f)** Car parking should be provided to Development Plan standards or a contribution may be accepted by the Planning Authority in lieu of such parking provision.

HOU DES 15: Multiple Occupancy Developments

- a)** It is the policy of the Council to promote sustainable urban development in accordance with

the Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (DoEHLG). The Planning Authority shall seek to achieve a good mix of housing type and tenure, coupled to high standards of design quality. Any applications for such developments shall have regard to existing available/vacant dwellings in the town. Developers should submit evidence of the sustainability of such proposals when lodging applications for multiple occupancy developments. Apartment developments shall be substantially restricted in the town and town core, especially where there is an over concentration of this type of development already. Developments shall be restricted to a height limitation of 3 storeys and/or shall not exceed the existing heights of adjoining buildings.

b) The sub-division of existing dwellings into multiple dwelling units will not normally be permitted in estates where single unit dwellings predominate.

c) Public open space shall be provided at the rate of 60m² per unit or suitable alternative to be agreed with the Planning Authority.

d) A high standard of architectural design and material finish will be required in all proposed multiple occupancy developments.

e) Proposals for the on-going management of the development shall be submitted at application stage.

f) The design and layout of any new apartment development shall provide satisfactory accommodation for a variety of household types and sizes, including families with children, over the medium to long term.

CHAPTER FOUR

Economic Development



4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to promote sustainable economic development in Longford Town over the plan period and to consolidate and expand the recent economic growth that Longford Town has experienced. Longford Town Council will continue to facilitate new development within the town, through proactive measures including the maintenance of a vibrant, sustainable and attractive living and working environment.

Sustainable economic development seeks to achieve a balance, optimising the return from available resources to achieve current objectives in a way that enables future generations meet their own needs and objectives in due course.

Modern day development objectives focus on building strong inclusive communities supported by adequate employment, housing, education, transportation and sanitary infrastructure, health services, community support services, security, amenities and leisure facilities. The quality of life within a community can be measured by the availability of these services, and their delivery is inextricably linked to economic development.

Changes in the national planning framework, infrastructural provision and increased economic activity have had a positive influence on the economy of Longford Town. Of particular importance is the recognition of the central location of the Town within a national context and the role that Longford plays in the delivery of balanced spatial development. Infrastructural advances, most notably in roads, rail and telecommunications have significantly enhanced accessibility, drawing labour forces and markets ever closer.

The economic profile of Longford Town has changed significantly over the period of the current plan. The Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme has had a significant impact on the employment profile in the town and county over the plan period, with an increase in the number of people working in the manufacturing and construction industries. This period has also seen the arrival of a diverse range of quality employers to the area operating across a number of sectors, providing a broad range of employment opportunities. These include Abbott Ireland, Panelto Foods and extensions to existing established industries such as Fenelon Engineering.

4.1.1 Environmental and Urban Improvements

Longford Town Council continues to actively promote development within the Town area. The establishment of a metropolitan area network (MAN) by Longford Town Council is a significant selling point for the town as it has enabled high speed broadband services and increases the attractiveness of Longford for inward investment.

Environmental improvements in the urban area have increased the attractiveness of the pedestrian realm with benefits for the core commercial environment. Such improvements include the redevelopment of Market Square, a pivotal element in the town, closing the vista into the centre on the approach from Dublin. Other urban improvements over the plan period have significantly enhanced prominent locations in areas of prime footfall. Paving and streetscape improvements at Main Street, Dublin Street, Centenary Square and Ballymahon Street have helped to provide emphasis to natural congregation areas, complement important structures and reinforce the existing strong urban structure, enhancing legibility at critical points such as the Post Office.

The improvements to the Mall area of the town have significantly extended amenity facilities in the urban area, adding to an already well utilised and important cultural, heritage and amenity asset, unique in its layout, extent and proximity to the Town Core. The relocation of the swimming pool from the Market Square has not only consolidated amenity facilities at the Mall but has provided opportunities for the redevelopment of an important site in the town centre, formerly the Canal Harbour.

These improvements, when taken as a whole, represent a significant addition to the atmosphere and vitality of the urban area, essential in the overall attractiveness of the town at all levels.

4.2 Industry, Commercial and Business Development

There has been significant commercial and industrial development in Longford Town over the period of the previous plan, with a large number of industrial units and retail warehousing units permitted and constructed.

Longford Town Council will in conjunction with the IDA, continue to encourage and promote employment-generating industries and commercial facilities in appropriate locations throughout the Town.

The main areas of industrially zoned lands in the Town are located along the Athlone Road and the Ballinalee Road and have experienced significant development over recent years. Further expansion of industrial and commercial developments should be carried out in such a manner as to ensure a high quality environment, in tandem with the provision of hard and soft infrastructural facilities in order to attract and sustain inward investment, enhancing employment opportunities and creating an attractive living and working environment for the labour force, encouraging them to locate within the Town.

Substantial recent economic development in the town includes the establishment of the Abbott Ireland Diagnostics manufacturing facility, the further development of the IDA business park along the Ballinalee Road, Longford Town Centre shopping mall, the Dunnes shopping centre along the Dublin Road, the expansion of the Supervalu into Hazelwood and Ganleys hardware adjacent and further developments along the Athlone Road.

Longford Town Council recognises the importance of industrial development to the Town and sufficient land has been zoned for such purposes, in tandem with the provisions of the County Development Plan and associated Local Area Plans in the environs areas. As such, the zoning provision for industrial land should be read in conjunction with the zonings identified in the Longford County Development Plan which zones further industrial land, in particular along the Athlone Road, within the environs of Longford Town.

Taking into account the above, the policies of the Council are set out hereunder.

ECON 1 The Planning Authority will encourage the development of industrial, commercial and business developments at appropriate scales in appropriate locations as identified on the Zoning Map at Appendix 1.

ECON 2 It is the policy of the Council to assist, insofar as it is empowered, anyone who wishes to establish or expand industrial, commercial or other undertakings providing increased employment opportunities in the town, subject to normal development management requirements and technical criteria.

ECON 3 Longford Town Council shall zone sufficient land in appropriate locations for the facilitation of business, commercial and industrial purposes that stimulate the economic growth of the town, without compromising the environmental, residential or amenity potential of the area or the viability and vibrancy of the Town core. Zoning provisions form part of this Development Plan in Appendix 1, and should be read in conjunction with the Longford County Development Plan and associated Local Area Plans, particularly regarding zoning provisions in the Town Environs area.

ECON 4 Where a need is established, land may be zoned for industrial and commercial purposes to facilitate appropriate development in the medium to long term. It is further the policy that, should the need arise, and where resources permit, the Council will acquire and develop suitable sites and actively encourage industry to locate at such selected centres through the provision of serviced land banks for the development of industrial/business parks.

ECON 5 Where an area of land is zoned for agricultural purposes or is not otherwise zoned, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agricultural. This provides for agricultural and ancillary uses, including residential. Other uses may be permitted subject to assessment on a site-by-site basis against relevant development management standards and technical criteria, including the other policies and objectives contained within this plan.

ECON 6 Sites to be developed for industrial and commercial purposes shall be designed to the highest architectural standards to provide quality environments with adequate provision for landscaping, car and truck parking and circulation and the safe disposal of foul and surface water following appropriate treatment and without flooding implications.

ECON 7 To ensure the protection of the environment in the installation of new developments through promoting the application of the Best Available Technology (BAT) principle in terms of control of emissions/potential pollutants.

ECON 8 To ensure that industrial locations and processes do not materially interfere with or detract from the amenity of Longford Town or any residential area within the town.

ECON 9 Generally small scale business in residential areas shall be discouraged. Such development may only be considered where the use of the house for business purposes is secondary to its use as a dwelling and the floor area of the business reflects this, the business serves a local need, adequate parking requirements are met, traffic flow is not impinged or restricted and there is no loss of residential amenity to adjoining residences in terms of disturbance, noise, odour, etc.

ECON 10 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

- 1.** The following information should be submitted as part of any application for industrial/commercial/business development:
 - a)** Details of the nature and scale of the proposed operation, to include opening hours and anticipated traffic levels
 - b)** Availability of adequate services to serve the development or the ability of the applicant to provide these services in a manner which does not adversely impact on surrounding properties or the broader environment
 - c)** Proposals for the safe storage and disposal of waste in a manner which is visually and environmentally acceptable.
 - d)** Storage should generally be confined to the rear of the premises – height should be such

that the materials stored are adequately screened either by the building unit or alternative screening method.

- e)** Compatibility of existing adjacent land uses with the proposed development and mitigation measures to preserve and protect the amenity of the adjacent uses, should this be necessary.
- f)** Availability of adequate sight lines (or ability of applicant to provide same) as per the relevant NRA Standards and safe road access for anticipated levels of traffic to be generated by the proposed development. Generally, only one vehicular access point will be permitted.
- g)** Adequate parking (as per Table 5.2) and circulation areas should be provided by the applicant within the curtilage of the proposed development unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority.
- h)** Advertising signage shall be detailed at planning application stage and shall be sympathetic in size, scale, design, materials and colour with the surrounding landscape/streetscape. Refer to Section 4.4 for further detail on advertising. Lighting should be unobtrusive and should not adversely affect traffic safety on adjacent roads.

2. Building layout and design

- a)** Building design should be compatible with its surroundings. Buildings in existing industrial estates/commercial areas may be required to conform to an overall architectural and landscaping theme. Screening may be required in order to break up a large expanse of façade and additional landscaping required to large expanses of hard surface such as parking provision.
- b)** Building finishes should be of the highest quality and exterior colours should be chosen to incorporate or blend the building into its surrounds. In the case of large industrial/commercial structures, colour should be carefully chosen to visually break up large expanses of similar materials and create the appearance of a more human scale.
- c)** Building heights should be restricted to that required for the normal operation of the premises. Buildings of excessive height will not be permitted.
- d)** Detailed landscaping proposals will be required as part of any application, with particular attention to landscaping and screening on greenfield sites proposed for development.
- e)** Where a development forms part of an industrial estate, the proposal may be required to co-locate signage in association with the remainder of the buildings within the estate, e.g. locational signage restricted to one sign at estate entrance.
- f)** Lighting shall be unobtrusive and shall not adversely affect traffic safety on adjacent

roads. Specific lighting standards may be required in particular instances.

g) The following design considerations should be used (in association with those outlined at HOU DES 9(b)) to improve energy efficiency of industrial/commercial buildings where possible:

- Energy efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems
- Monitoring of and promotion of renewables/alternative electrical energy sources including motive power
- Use of efficient lighting systems and controls
- Establishment of building Energy Management Systems
- Occupancy Controls
- Monitoring and Targeting Systems
- Combined Heat and Power (CHP)

4.3 Retail Development

The retail offer of Longford Town expanded considerably over the period of the previous plan, with the provision of a broad range of scales, types and formats, including supermarkets, malls, ethnic goods, comparison, bulky goods and hardware. Environmental improvements carried out at strategic locations in the town core have improved the retail environment of the town for prospective investors and shoppers alike.

Longford town is located at the junction of the N4 and N5 and as such all traffic travelling along the N5 must pass through the town, via the difficult geometry of Richmond Street. This results in significant congestion in the town, often with poor surface conditions as a result of heavy goods vehicles utilising this route. The N5 bypass of the Town is eminent and this will provide enhanced opportunities in terms of improvements to the public realm, traffic management and circulation and the pedestrian environment in general. This section of the Plan should be read in consultation with the section on Urban renewal and regeneration.

The retail strategy for the Town was originally prepared in 2004 to cover the period 2004 – 2009. Due to the economic climate and the need to ensure a high quality retail environment that encourages both investors and those who have become accustomed to a superior shopping environment to remain in, or move to, the Town, a review and update of the retail strategy commissioned by Longford Local Authorities that took place in 2007, based on information gathered and collated in a study carried out by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

The underlying framework for the updated retail strategy was based on the 2004 County Longford Retail Strategy. The update and review builds upon this framework in a manner which informs the methods for meeting, rather than replacing, these objectives. The key considerations that provide the foundations of the County Retail Strategy are outlined below in the step by step framework which has guided this update and review. This strategy has been tailored to reflect its relevance to the Town plan.

4.3.1 Key Objectives of the Retail Strategy

The retail strategy is a joint strategy covering the jurisdiction of Longford Town Council and Longford County Council (Longford Local Authorities). The key objectives of the retail strategy were informed by the Retail Planning Guidelines. These key objectives are as follows:

1. Confirmation of the retail hierarchy, the role of centres and the size of the main town centres;
2. Definition of the boundaries of the core shopping area of town centres;
3. A broad based assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace;
4. Strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development;
5. Preparation of policies and initiatives to encourage the improvement of the town centre;
6. Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail development.

4.3.2 Strategic Guidance

Both the quantitative assessment (capacity assessment) of additional retail floorspace requirements for the county and the qualitative review (health checks) of the various retail centres in the county outline how the principal towns within Longford are performing at present.

One of the functions of the strategy update is to review advice on the broad quantum of additional retail floorspace that is required for the county over the period so as to maintain and enhance the positive economic performance of Longford Town and County. This role also entails the provision of broad updated recommendations on where this new floorspace should be located. In this context, the location and extent of new retail development must have regard to the planning framework for the county, particularly the Retail Planning Guidelines, the Town Development Plan, and the current Longford County Development Plan. Central to the provision of additional retail floorspace is the need to reinforce the retail hierarchy of the county, in the existing town and village centres. Therefore, it is vital that Longford Town, as the county's principal urban centre, continues to develop its retail function to meet expanding shopping needs and to ensure a healthy and competitive retail environment.

To achieve the key objectives of the strategy due cognisance must be taken of the strategic policy framework that underpins the updated specific policies and proposals in the document.

This framework is set by:

- (i) The position of Longford Town in a regional policy context as the major driver of development in the Northern area
- (ii) Longford Town's position in the national retail hierarchy,
- (iii) Identifying the County Retail Hierarchy,
- (iv) The spatial distribution of new retail development with the County Retail Hierarchy,
- (v) The core retail areas,
- (vi) The sequential approach and
- (vii) A consideration of need.

4.3.3 Longford Town and the National and County Retail Hierarchy

The update and review of the Retail Strategy concluded that the limited size of the majority of the county's centres does not facilitate the quantum and quality of floorspace required by major national and international retailers. The review has also identified a requirement to upgrade the existing floorspace in the county's retail offer as well as providing new space in Longford Town. The national retail hierarchy as set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines (RPGs) locates Longford within the level three retail centres.

A county retail hierarchy has been established in the County Development Plan, of which Longford Town remains at the top, where the majority of retail growth over the plan period will be accommodated.

This is reflected in the Table outlined below.

Table 4.1 County Retail Hierarchy		
Strategy Retail Hierarchy	Settlement Type	Identified County Centre
Level I	Principal/County Town	Longford Town
Level II	Key Service Towns	Granard Edgeworthstown Ballymahon
Level III	Local Service Centres	Lanesboro Drumlish Newtownforbes

4.3.4 Core Retail Area

The assessment of the county's retail centres identified that the phenomenon of a 'core shopping area' relates only to Longford Town centre, with the remaining centres being too small to merit such a designation.

The growth of Longford Town, demographically, economically, in terms of its retail offer and as a strategically located inter-regional link which serves as a vital urban anchor in an otherwise predominantly rural county, necessitates the expansion of the core shopping area from that currently defined as "centre" in the previous County Longford Retail Strategy 2004 – 2009. This redefinition includes the changing of much of the area designated as "centre" to "town core", the area designated as "edge-of-centre" to "centre" and some of the area previously designated as

“out-of-centre” to “edge-of-centre”. These new definitions are shown on the map in Appendix 5. This provides a better reflection of the town’s retail morphology, while encouraging the continued vitality and viability of the existing core area in an economically sustainable manner.

Longford has a vibrant retail core but has a notable deficiency in high-end, modern comparison retail floor plates. The lack of high value comparison anchors in the town core has undoubtedly contributed to the growth of expenditure leakage from the town’s catchment area as the retail profiles of competing centres have developed at a faster pace. In order for Longford Town to compete effectively with other urban centres of a similar scale, it is imperative that sufficient high-end comparison shopping is in place in the town core area. The Retail Strategy Review identified the need for a significant growth of comparison retail provision up to 2015 to address this deficiency and enhance the retail profile of the town core. It is essential in terms of the sustainable development of the Town going forward that this high-end comparison shopping provision is retained and substantially enhanced within the Town core area and that leakage to the periphery is prevented.

A proactive approach to urban design will be taken and substantial redevelopment in the core area should utilise opportunities to facilitate attractive and vibrant environments designed at a human scale, with enhanced pedestrian permeability, visually engaging, secure and inviting public realms that promote and encourage passive and active recreation.

Any significant convenience retail development proposed in any area other than the town core or centre will only be considered where this is proposed in tandem with a substantial and appropriate redevelopment of the core area, with significant and tangible benefits, including improved traffic access, circulation and car parking. This will ensure the continued vitality and vibrancy of the central area into the future.

4.3.5 The Sequential Approach

The locations of retail developments will be assessed against the principles of the Sequential Approach outlined in the Retail Planning Guidelines (RPGs). This approach can be described as follows:

- i.** The preferred location for new retail development, where practicable and viable, is within a town centre;
- ii.** Where it is not possible to provide the form and scale of development that is

required on a site within the town centre, then consideration can be given to a site on the edge of the town centre. An edge of centre site, for the purposes of the Retail Planning Guidelines, is taken to be one which is within an easy and convenient walking distance from the primary shopping core of a town centre. The distance considered to be convenient will vary according to local circumstances;

- iii. Having assessed the size, availability, accessibility, and feasibility of developing both sites and premises, firstly within a town centre and secondly on the edge of a town centre, alternative out of centre sites should be considered only where it can be demonstrated that there are no town centre or edge of centre sites which are suitable, viable and available.

In accordance with the recommendations of the RPG's and paragraph 62 in particular, each individual case will be assessed on its merit, and the site's relative performance against the various planning and transportation factors will be evaluated.

In order to protect, encourage and enhance the vitality and viability of both the retail offer and public realm of the town, any future large scale retail units which would be out of proportion with the absorption capacity of the town centre may require location outside of the core shopping area. This will be in the best interest of the vitality and viability of the core area.

4.3.6 Consideration of Need

Developing the retail offer of the Town, especially in respect of high end high street comparison shopping, is vital if Longford is to remain competitive and arrest the levels of both convenience and comparison expenditure leakage to centres outside of the county.

This is particularly important for Longford Town if it is to enhance its strategic role, as outlined in the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines, as an integrated link and a principal town in the broader polycentric model for the Region including the linked gateway. It is also critical given the town's position as a crucial urban anchor providing essential services in an otherwise predominantly rural county.

In order to reduce expenditure leakage to other areas, then the strategic priority must be to focus on enhancing the retailing environment of Longford Town.

The reviewed and updated broad capacity assessment of the requirement for additional retail

floorspace reveals that there is sizeable latent expenditure potential to provide for both the quality and quantum of additional retail floorspace requisite for Longford Town.

Table 4.3 Minimum and Maximum Additional Floorspace Requirements for County Longford 2007-2015		
	Convenience	Comparison
	In the range of:	In the range of:
Additional Floorspace Requirements (m²)	3,000 to 7,000	7,000 to 16,000

While it is recognised that the minimum and maximum requirements for additional retail floorspace outlined in Table 4.3 above provide a useful quantifiable platform against which to assess trends in retail development within the Town, it is important to stress that these figures are considered conservative, given recent population growth and continued residential development.

Future additional retail provision within Longford Town and its environs should address the insufficiency of the centre's high-end high street comparison retail offer and traffic congestion problems.

4.3.7 Retail Policies and Objectives

The following policies and proposals have been designed to facilitate the realisation of the County Retail Strategy's key objectives and are formulated to ensure that:

- i.** County Longford possesses a clear policy framework which helps guarantee that its strategic and local convenience and comparison retailing needs are achieved,
- ii.** The competitiveness of the county's main centres is protected and enhanced,
- iii.** Existing or emerging issues within the county's retail profile can be adequately addressed by a coherent and easily implementable policy framework and
- iv.** The expenditure capacity potential for additional retail floorspace is harnessed over the life of the strategy and beyond.

The particulars of the policies and proposals are described under the three following policy categories:

Table 4.4

Policy Category	Focus of Policy
Strategic Policies:	Policies related to the spatial distribution of centres, their role in the national and county retail hierarchies and the strategic aims of the County Retail Strategy.
General Policies:	Policies that establish planning principles which should be applied throughout the County Retail Hierarchy.
Specific Policies	Policies which address specific issues relating to the county's retail profile that need to be resolved.

4.3.7.1 Strategic Policies

The reviewed strategic policy of the County Retail Strategy and the actions required for their successful implementation are outlined below.

Strategic Policy 1:

Principal Town/County Town (Longford Town)

It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage major enhancement of town centre activities within Longford to enable it to maintain its strategic role as defined in the Midlands RPGs.

In order to achieve this it will be necessary to build upon the strong services function of the town and encourage an increase in high-end high street comparison retailing in the core shopping area.

4.3.7.2 General Policies

The general policies and the actions required for their successful implementation are outlined below.

General Policy 1:

Enhancement of the town

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate the enhancement and environmental improvement of the county's towns and villages.

To facilitate this Longford Town Council shall;

- Prepare clear design guidelines for retail development in the urban centre, particularly in regeneration areas identified as part of this plan
- Assess the potential of new retail developments with regards to existing traffic congestion problems in consultation with the landuse and transportation study currently underway
- Continue to promote and facilitate improvements in the public realm.

General Policy 2:

Innovation in retail

It is Council policy to promote innovation in the Town's retail offer and attraction and to;

- Exploit the strategic inter-regional position of Longford Town and its role within the midlands region to encourage a wider range of high-end high street comparison retail functions to regenerate and reinvigorate the town core.
- Monitor emerging trends and innovations in the EU and US retail sectors. Seek the transposition of appropriate new retail operating methods and retailing types into the Town.

General Policy 3:

Retailing in tourism and leisure

It is Council policy to build upon, promote and facilitate the expansion of retailing within the

tourism and leisure sectors.

The Council will provide guidance and assistance where possible to appropriate tourist retail developments. The location of such developments will be subject to meeting the tests of the sequential approach and all other relevant planning criteria.

General Policy 4:

It is the policy of the Council to actively encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of appropriately located derelict land and suitable vacant buildings for retail use.

In line with the sequential approach, Longford Town Council will, where possible encourage and facilitate the regeneration and re-use of derelict buildings and/or brownfield sites in appropriate areas. Only when suitable, available and viable brownfield land and/or derelict buildings cannot be found should alternative new build options be considered.

4.3.7.3 Specific Policies

The following specific policies required to address important issues identified are outlined below.

Specific Policy 1:

Improving comparison offer of Longford Town

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the expansion of high-end high street comparison retailing in Longford Town.

The County Council and Town Council, will encourage high-end high street comparison retail operators to locate in Longford Town.

Specific Policy 2:

Resolving congestion in Longford Town

It is the policy of the Council to improve the retailing environment of Longford Town by

facilitating a resolution to the centre's current traffic congestion problems. This shall include the recommendations of the Land Use and Transportation Study of Longford Town and environs once complete.

In line with the provisions of Paragraphs 62 and 63 of the Retail Planning Guidelines and the sequential approach, it is recognised that not all core shopping areas possess sites that are suitable in terms of size, parking, traffic generation or servicing arrangements for large-scale developments in the town centre itself. In order to minimise the potential for adverse impact on the public realm, only new retail development which is of an appropriate size, scale and type to a town centre location will be permitted in Longford Town's core shopping area.

4.3.8 Framework for the Assessment of Future Retail Developments

Longford Town is the commercial, retail and administrative centre of Longford County, and also acts as an inter-regional centre for Counties Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Westmeath. The town itself is a rapidly growing commercial and residential centre, offering a wide range of jobs, services and facilities. All of these activities require modern, easily accessible and appropriately located retail facilities. The retail strategy indicates the criteria under which proposals for new retail developments will be considered. The aim of the strategy is to provide Longford with modern retail facilities of the highest standards recognising its regional position.

It is intended that all proposed new retail developments are assessed against the criteria that are set out in this chapter.

Location and Design

The map contained in Appendix 5 broadly indicates the Town core, edge and out of centre locations based on existing compatible zonings within the Longford Town Development Plan. These designations apply on appropriately zoned land only.

In order to protect the viability and vitality of the town centre, it is proposed that the majority of normal retail activity be retained within or adjoining the commercial core. Where the required scale and design of the proposed development cannot be accommodated within this envelope, and where the proposal incorporates the principles of sustainable development, edge-of-centre

and out-of-centre sites will be considered on appropriately zoned land.

Information obtained over the course of the review of the Development Plan and during pre-planning discussions with potential developers would indicate that there is a lack of suitable sites available for retail development within the town core. For this reason, edge-of-centre sites, on appropriately zoned land, where in compliance with other relevant planning and environmental criteria, will generally be considered favourably for appropriately scaled retail developments.

Out-of-centre sites will be considered on appropriately zoned land, only where it has been demonstrated, through a sequential study carried out as part of the application or planning permission and dealing with issues such as availability, accessibility, feasibility, viability and sustainability, that there are no suitable alternative sites within the commercial core area.

All applications for significant new retail development will be assessed against a range of planning criteria. The following threshold has been established which relates to the size, location and retail profile of the centre and will be used as a guide.

- Developments of or over 1,000m² (gross) convenience and of or over 2,000m² (gross) comparison should be tested by the criteria.

The Retail Planning Guidelines criteria to be considered in the assessment of significant applications have been reviewed and additional criteria added. These criteria should include, but not necessarily be limited by, the following:

- There is demonstrable need for development;
- The size and nature of the development;
- Testing the proposal against the sequential approach;
- The quality of the design and layout;
- The potential effect on the adjacent environment;
- Proposed servicing arrangements;
- The impact on the town centre, including cumulative impact;
- The baseline information and capacity/impact assessment is fit for purpose and transparent;
- The expenditure capacity within the relevant catchment area, taking account of all extant planning permissions and development proposals/opportunities identified in

development plans;

- The relationship of the application to any development plan allocation;
- Its role in improving the competitiveness of the Town;
- Its contribution to site and/or area regeneration;
- The quality of access by all modes of transport and by foot and bicycle;
- Provision for car parking;
- Its role in sustaining rural communities;
- The extent to which it is relevant to consider the imposition of restrictions on the range of goods permitted for sale; and
- Any other relevant development plan policies and allocations.

New retail development shall be designed to the highest standards in terms of architectural quality, materials used and layout. New developments will be required to make a positive contribution to the streetscape and the built fabric of the urban centre and its environs.

Vehicular circulation and pedestrian access, including access for the parents with children, elderly and disabled and the alleviation or avoidance of congestion shall be considered in terms of the location of any proposed new development. This will include layout of parking areas, location of accesses and consideration of existing or proposed public transport routes. Parking areas, service yards and entrances (subject to achievement of minimum required sightlines as per National Roads Authority standards) shall be landscaped to the highest standard, particularly when located on approaches to the commercial core area.

Pre-planning discussions are highly recommended in relation to large retail developments, regardless of location.

The following specific retail policies shall be applied to all applications for retail development within the Town Council Area.

RET 1: Development Types

1) Large Convenience Stores

The RPG's have set a 3000m² upper floorspace limit on food store development outside of the Greater Dublin area. It is the policy of Longford Town Council to uphold this limit on applications for permission for individual developments in Longford Town and its environs, in terms of new development or extensions to existing schemes that will result in an aggregate increase in sales floorspace. Specifically, this limit will apply to:

- Total net retail sales space of superstores
- Convenience goods net retail floorspace of hypermarkets

2) Specialist Development

This section deals with specific retail and leisure development proposals, which may influence the emphasis that is given to each of the criteria outlined in the assessment of the new development.

(a) Regional Shopping Centre

Due to its rapid development in recent years and its location at a strategic point on national infrastructure, Longford has traditionally acted as an inter-regional centre for the surrounding Counties. In order to maintain the role of Longford Town as a driver of development in the North Midlands and to maintain its position within the national retailing hierarchy, the potential for Regional Shopping Facilities will be considered subject to the relevant planning criteria contained within this plan.

(b) District Shopping Centres

District shopping centres will be considered in the context of their location in town centre or edge-of-town locations. Applicants will be required to illustrate the compatibility of their proposal with the Town Development Plan and provide a comprehensive report outlining and addressing these issues, including a demonstration of a deficiency in the provision of particular floorspace types and an indication of the demand for the proposed additional floorspace.

(c) Large Convenience outlets

This description covers supermarkets, superstores, discount food stores and hypermarkets. An accepted component of the retail industry throughout the country, large convenience outlets are generally accompanied by substantial car-parking provisions due to the space requirements because of the weekly nature of many of the shopping trips they generate.

Large convenience outlets will be encouraged to locate within the town centre or edge of centre where this can be demonstrated as recognisably beneficial to the town core area, in order to provide universal accessibility and alleviate traffic congestion. In particular, edge of centre developments will need to be linked with substantial and appropriate redevelopment proposals for the town core area. Vehicular and pedestrian access and circulation provisions shall be dealt with as a matter of priority, in addition to the other criteria contained in the previous section.

(d) Retail Parks and Retail Warehouses

Retail warehouses, due to their large retail floorspace requirements, the bulky nature of their goods and the consequent heavy requirement for car parking are generally located on the edge or outside of the built-up urban area.

Due to the specialist nature of these parks, it is not considered that their location outside of the commercial core will adversely impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre. Consideration will be given to retail parks on appropriately zoned land in the edge and out-of-centre locations as illustrated in Appendix 5, where goods sold are predominantly bulky goods that are difficult to accommodate within the town centre.

Applications will be subject to the criteria as outlined in this section. Grouping of units into retail park situations (up to a maximum total retail floorspace in the region of 8,000m²) to facilitate sustainable transport patterns and reduce congestion in the town centre will be encouraged. However, proposals to increase cumulative retail floorspace in any single park in excess of 8,000m² must be accompanied by a detailed study illustrating the potential impact of the proposal on the town centre in accordance with the criteria as laid down in this section.

Individual retail warehousing units in out-of-centre locations will generally be subject to a minimum gross retail floorspace in the region of 700m². This is to prevent potential adverse impact on the vitality of the town centre. Maximum gross floorspace of individual units in such locations will be in the region of 6,000m² (this includes external display area, for example, ancillary garden centres). These minimum and maximum floorspace criteria apply to proposed new developments and extensions to or subdivisions of existing developments or those previously granted planning permission.

(e) Local Shops

Local shops located in neighbourhood centres are an important element of the retailing industry in the urban area. Primarily convenience outlets, local shops because of their proximity to large residential areas, provide a readily accessible service for basic goods, especially for the less mobile sectors of the community such as the elderly and disabled.

Where appropriate, local shops shall be recognised and provision made for the establishment of neighbourhood shops and services in the zoning of additional land for residential development.

RET 2: Other Development Types

a. Petrol Filling/Service Stations

Some petrol filling/service stations function as the sole retail outlet for a local area. These uses should be secondary to the use as a petrol filling station and they should not take from retail developments in the town centre.

Careful consideration to applications for retail uses not associated with the motor industry accompanying petrol/service stations will be given by the Planning Authority and in some cases their floor area will be limited to 25m² in size. Uses such as vehicle repair and car sales will normally be acceptable.

Applications for petrol filling/service stations will normally be acceptable inside the 60kph speed limit areas. Notwithstanding this, its proposed location relative to junctions and bends, width of road, the likelihood of causing a traffic hazard or interference with traffic flow as well as other

planning criteria will also be taken into account in speed limit areas. They will not be permitted in open countryside.

Applications for planning permission for such development should contain the following elements:

- i.** High quality design and material content. Advertising material should be restricted to a minimum and no lighting shall be installed so as to cause glare or interference to any user of an adjacent public road.
- ii.** Standard petrol station canopies are not acceptable and should be replaced with more sympathetic canopies of light steel and glass or slated roofs with no attached advertising.
- iii.** Detailed proposals for the service station including method of disposal of wastewater from car-wash areas, surface water outlet and oil interceptors, etc. The development shall be designed and operated in such a manner that it does not adversely affect existing road drainage in the area.
- iv.** These should be located within the 60kph speed limit. Those within the edges of the town boundary will be considered. Proposed sites should be a minimum depth of 22 metres.
- v.** Retail uses not associated with the motor industry shall be considered in the context of the existing retail outlets in the vicinity. Only uses which contribute to the vibrancy and service level of the settlement shall be considered.
- vi.** Proposed developments, which have the potential to restrict traffic flow and/or create traffic hazard, will not be permitted. Generally two access points with a minimum width of 7.3metres and a maximum width of 9.1 metres will be required with appropriate turning curve based on rad design speed and the relevant standards.
- vii.** A boundary wall, not exceeding 0.5 metres in height, shall define the frontage of the site. Footpaths and lighting to "Recommendations for Site Development Works", 1998 and ESB standards shall be provided adjacent to the public roadway.
- viii.** No pumps shall be located within 7 metres of the roadside boundary and no other structures other than pumps shall be located within 15 metres of the roadside boundary. In any case, no structure shall be erected, either on a permanent or a temporary basis that interferes with the sightlines of any road users, whether pedestrian or vehicular.
- ix.** Applications for such development should be accompanied by detailed landscaping proposals in order to effectively integrate the proposed development into its surroundings.

b. Take-away premises

All applications for take away premises require planning permission whether it involves a change of use of an existing building or an entirely new building. Many of the planning considerations, which apply to a restaurant development, also apply to take away premises. In addition, controls under other legislation must be adhered to.

Noise, litter and general nuisance are problems often cited by residents in the vicinity of take-away premises – noise both from the equipment used and from patrons. Where take-away premises are permitted, noise from patrons (and their cars) will be controlled by imposing strict closing times on the premises. Car parking and interference with traffic circulation is another serious concern.

The following planning considerations shall apply to any application for take away premises:

- i.** The likely impact of the development upon the amenities of the area, including noise pollution, litter, odour and general disturbance.
- ii.** Car parking is of critical importance and the premises will not be permitted at locations where adequate car-parking is not available.
- iii.** Developments will not be permitted where they have the potential to detrimentally impact on traffic circulation and safety in an area.
- iv.** Details should be supplied at application stage on opening times and traffic generation and flow.
- v.** Applications for such development may be more favourably considered in mixed-use locations such as town centres.
- vi.** Proximity to residential development will be an important planning consideration in assessing applications for take-away premises. Proposals which would be detrimental to the residential amenity of the area will not be permitted.
- vii.** Litterbins shall be provided inside and outside the premises.
- viii.** Where take-away premises are permitted, noise and disturbance levels will be controlled by imposing strict closing times on the premises.
- ix.** The level of odour omitted and the storage and disposal of waste will be essential considerations in accessing planning applications.
- x.** Façade design will be carefully controlled and, in particular, the amount and type of advertising signage and lighting. The design shall respect and enhance the existing street character. Intermittent or neon lighting will not be permitted. Corporate logos will be

permitted, only where they meet Local Authority design criteria.

c. Amusement Arcades/Centres

Longford Town Council shall discourage the development of amusement arcades/centres within its functional area. However when considering applications for amusement arcades, i.e. slot machines/video games/pool/snooker tables, will have regard to the following considerations:

- i.** The likely impact on the residential amenity of the area.
- ii.** The level of noise generated and opening times.
- iii.** The likely impact on traffic generation and flow.
- iv.** Car parking is of critical importance and the premises will not be permitted at locations where adequate car parking is not available.
- v.** Façade design will be carefully controlled and, in particular the amount and type of advertising signage and lighting. The design shall respect and enhance the existing street character. Intermittent or neon lighting will not be permitted. Corporate logos will be permitted, only where they meet Local Authority design criteria.

Where permission is granted for an amusement arcade, conditions will be imposed regarding the type of machines/amusements offered, hours of operation, noise levels, type and scale of advertising signage and lighting used. In some cases a temporary permission may be granted to enable the Planning Authority to assess the impact of the development on the amenities of the area.

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4.3.9 Continued Monitoring and Review

It is essential to ensure that:

- i.** The Retail Strategy and its baseline information are kept as up to date as possible,

- ii. There are mechanisms in place to monitor progress in the implementation of policies and
- iii. There is a mechanism that can facilitate change which is responsive to emerging trends and opportunities.

The above can be achieved by establishing a framework for regular monitoring and review, which will include:

1. Monitoring of expenditure and population forecasts,
2. Keeping floorspace data up to date through planning consent monitoring of both new retail and change of use,
3. A review and update of the current Retail Strategy if necessary, after a period of 3 years, and
4. The review and update of House and Shopper survey data every five years.

4.4 Advertising

Longford Town Council requires all advertising material to be sympathetic in scale, design, materials and colour and to be in keeping with the character of the area. Advertisements should not interfere with traffic safety and they should not obstruct existing traffic signs.

Longford Town Council when considering planning applications and licences for advertising signs shall have regard to the provisions contained in the Longford County Council Policy on Advertising Signs, 2007. The Council will advise potential applicants on acceptable design of advertisements prior to submitting applications.

The following is Longford Town Council's policy in relation to advertising:

AD 1: Longford Town Council will permit advertisements where they are considered essential in the economic development of the area and where they contribute positively to the urban environment. Advertisements that are visually obtrusive, adversely impact on traffic safety or otherwise interfere with the visual and environmental amenity of the area, shall not be permitted.

AD 2: Longford Town Council shall encourage the use of traditional hand painted and wooden signage in appropriate situations. The use of plastic box signs, which are internally illuminated, shall not normally be permitted, however, non-plastic signs with concealed external illumination may be considered where appropriate.

AD 3: It is the policy of Longford Town Council to prohibit the use of advertising structures on the public footpath where they conflict with pedestrian safety and visual amenity and to prohibit advertising on approach road margins in the interests of traffic safety and visual amenity.

AD 4: Longford Town Council shall restrict advertising in areas of the Town designated as high amenity and/or where views and prospects of scenic importance are listed.

AD 5: Only permit advertising on buildings and structures of historic, artistic and architectural interest which relate specifically to the use of the structure and that are in keeping with the character of the building/structure or sympathetic to its architectural heritage.

AD 6: It is the policy of the Town Council to limit the number of signs in a particular location where it is considered that these would result in a cluttered appearance and/or interfere with traffic and/or pedestrian safety.

AD 7: Advance signs for services and premises shall not be permitted, other than finger post signs or advance signs for large tourist attractions and/or temporary signage for local events of historical, social or cultural importance as exempted in the legislation, where considered inappropriate.

Advertising Hoardings are generally out of scale with the townscape and detract from the open countryside with adverse impact on visual amenity. They are commonly used to advertise a single product and are usually leased from the advertising company for a period of time often as little as two weeks.

AD 8: In relation to large advertising hoardings, the Council will:

- Prohibit large advertising hoardings except in industrial areas where their presence by reason of scale and design is not out of character with the existing environment.
- Prohibit such advertisements in the open countryside on approach roads to the Town or on the fringes of the Urban Boundary.
- Consider advertising hoardings on a temporary basis where they screen a derelict building or other eyesore.

4.5 Agriculture

There is an existing large expanse of agriculturally zoned land within the designated boundary of the Town Council area. The approach to agricultural development aims to achieve the following:

- To facilitate the modernisation of the agricultural industry in the Town in accordance with statutory responsibilities and national guidance.
- To encourage best practice in the design and construction of agricultural installations to protect visual amenity and prevent pollution, particularly in sensitive areas.
- To preserve and enhance the residential amenity of the Urban Area.

Some agricultural developments are exempt from planning control. However, no new building or structure on a farm is exempt from planning permission if effluent storage facilities are insufficient, if the proposal interferes with road safety or if it would contravene an objective of the Town Development Plan.

4.5.1 General Policies

AGRI 1: Primarily agricultural zonings within this plan provides for the agricultural use of the land and any ancillary uses, including residential. Other uses may be permitted, subject to assessment on a site-by-site basis and compliance with the development management standards and other policies and objectives contained within this plan.

The Council shall promote the establishment of suitably small-scale industrial/commercial developments on family owned land and developments which would promote rural diversification, subject to relevant planning criteria within this zoning objective.

AGRI 2: It is the policy of the Council to promote the agricultural industry and appropriate rural development while preventing any detrimental impacts on the environment and heritage of the adjacent residential uses and the Town as a whole.

AGRI 3: It is the policy of the Council, through its veterinary section, to inspect abattoirs, dairy

producers and other industrial installations dealing in animal foodstuffs at regular intervals in order to assess and maintain animal health, environmental quality and food safety in such installations.

AGRI 4: To control, through the development management process and the relevant environmental legislation, the spreading of effluent on land in order to protect ground and surface water sources. This will limit spreading to certain times of the year and/or prohibit spreading in certain areas. Best practice guidelines should be adhered to in order to protect residential amenity in the vicinity.

AGRI 5: The Planning Authority will require adequate provision for the collection, storage and disposal of effluent produced from agricultural developments. Developers are required to comply with relevant Department of Agriculture Guidelines and the Nitrates Regulations in this regard.

AGRI 6: Design

The Planning Authority accepts the need for agricultural buildings and associated works (walls, fences, gates, entrances, yards, etc.) to be functional, but they are required to be sympathetic to their surroundings – in scale, materials and finishes. Buildings should relate to the landscape and not the sky-scape. Traditionally this was achieved by having the roof darker than the walls. Appropriate roof colours are dark grey, dark reddish brown or a very dark green. The grouping of agricultural buildings will be encouraged in order to reduce their overall impact in the interests of visually amenity.

A landscaping plan is required as part of applications for agricultural developments. In general, the removal of hedges to accommodate agricultural developments will only be considered as a last resort.

AGRI 7: The Council, in partnership with the Heritage Council, encourages the retention and reuse of traditional farm buildings through supporting conservation works within the curtilage of Protected Structures and conservation schemes to traditional farm buildings, carried out under REPS 4 and subsequent REPS schemes.

4.6 Tourism

The Regional Planning Guidelines emphasise the need to promote and market “the natural, heritage and cultural resources of the area and its high quality of life”. It identifies this as vital for the development of the Region and a valuable contribution to its identity.

Longford Town Council recognises that tourism development can make an important contribution to the economy of the Town and to the County. Longford County is the only county not to have a tourism officer in place and this is recognised as a potential drawback in the furthering of tourism facilities within the town and county.

Longford Town has yet to exploit its tourism potential. Centrally located within the Country, it is ideally located for tourism purposes. The lack of an appropriate tourist accommodation base and substantial conference facilities is a severe limiting factor, not only in terms of the development of the town as a product, but also in terms of its cultural and economic growth. The development of such facilities would be an important step forward for the business and leisure industry and the entire economy of the town and County.

There is great potential for waterways tourism in Longford and this is identified as a key strength. A branch of the Royal Canal previously extended into Longford town and there is potential for the redevelopment of this branch into the town centre to provide an important tourism focus in the town core.

Longford Town Council will continue to engage and consult with Waterways Ireland, with regard to the potential opening of the Royal Canal Spur into Longford Town and other future development in the vicinity of the Canal. The Council shall also have regard to the Heritage Council "*Waterways Corridor studies*" in terms of the promotion of active and passive tourism and the sensitive assessment of new development in the Canal corridor.

There are a number of walking routes identified which may be further enhanced to improve the amenity value of the area and facilitate its enjoyment by the public. Longford Town Council has recently been approved for a grant from the Tourist Capital Investment Programme of the National Development Plan for the provision of a looped pedestrian walkway and cyclepath. This will be along the banks of the Canal, providing a walkway from the Market Square to Farneyhoogan Bridge. Work on this project is ongoing and expected to be completed within the near future.

In line with the recently published “Tourism Product Development Strategy 2007 – 2013” (Failte Ireland), the Council recognises the need to strengthen tourism infrastructure in Longford. This includes promoting the distribution of tourism products and improving the readiness of the Town for the tourism market. Accordingly, encouraging the development of tourism products that are consumer-focused, having the potential to attract visitors, while at the same time are environmentally sustainable is a key objective of this plan.

To this end, the Planning Authority will encourage the establishment of appropriate tourism facilities, including hotel and conferencing facilities, in suitable locations in the town. It will also advance the development of tourism through the provision, and extension, where appropriate, of existing amenities, particularly water based activities and walking routes.

Facilities that encourage visitors to remain in the Town shall be encouraged. In this regard, a holistic and integrated countywide approach to the provision, improvement and/or enhancement of tourist attractions and ancillary facilities will be promoted.

4.6.1 Strategic Tourism Policies

TOU 1: Applications for tourism development will be considered in line with usual planning criteria and will be subject to high standards of design and materials particularly given their sensitive locations.

TOU 2: The Council will seek to facilitate, where appropriate, the provision of high quality tourism products and services within the Town in order to increase the sustainability of the tourism market. In particular the provision of quality hotels and accommodation facilities, and the development of tourism activities, attractions and events and the development of linked tourist trails that showcase the wealth of natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Town and contribute towards its unique identity and quality of life.

TOU 3: The Council shall protect the natural resources upon which tourism is based through the application and enforcement of policies throughout this plan and its associated Local Area Plans.

This is particularly in relation to the protection of the environment, heritage and amenities.

TOU 4: The Council shall promote appropriate innovation and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, subject to other policies of this plan, including those relating to Settlement, Amenities, Environment, Heritage and technical design standards.

TOU 5: The Council shall encourage and support increased co-ordination, cohesion and linkages between its own departments and other agencies, such as Fáilte Ireland (East and Midlands), Waterways Ireland, the Regional Fisheries Board and the Midland Regional Authority, in the promotion and assessment of tourism related developments.

TOU 6: In accordance with specific policies outlined below, the Council shall encourage clustering of tourism related developments in order to:

- Maximise benefit to the local economy through the establishment of synergistic operational links, e.g. links between accommodation providers and outdoor activity pursuits
- Ensure maximum return from infrastructural investment.

4.6.2 Specific Tourism Policies

TOU 7: The Council shall promote and encourage initiatives in the following areas:

- The development of linked tourism and heritage trails across Town and County boundaries that encourage longer stays in the Town and vicinity.
- The establishment of a signage committee to develop an integrated signage theme for tourist attractions, which shall include strict specifications in terms of appearance, materials and location
- Public transport and potential alternatives to the use of private cars to access visitor attractions
- Development of best-practice guidelines on energy efficiency, waste management, and recycling in tourism facilities and enterprises

- Support of rural diversification and eco-tourism

TOU 8: The Council shall continue to engage with Waterways Ireland in relation to the development of the Royal Canal Spur into Longford Town and the upgrading of its associated infrastructure.

TOU 9: The Council shall promote the development of walking routes within the town, particularly along the Canal and River.

TOU 10: The Council shall protect the tourism amenities of the Town from insensitive or inappropriate development.

TOU 11: The Council shall maximise opportunities for the use of the Canal and Camlin River as tourism and recreational amenities. In this regard the Council will work with Waterways Ireland and other appropriate bodies to develop the infrastructure, quality and amenities of these waterways.

TOU 12: The Council shall encourage and facilitate cultural and historical events within the Town.

CHAPTER FIVE

Infrastructure



5.1 Transportation

5.1.1 Background

Improving the standard of transportation infrastructure in Longford is of primary importance. The provision of good quality infrastructure is essential to the economic, social and cultural development of the town. A Land Use and Transportation Study is currently being undertaken on behalf of Longford Local Authorities to improve safety and accessibility and pedestrian amenity within Longford Town.

Longford town is strategically located on the N4 and N5. Traffic on these roads has increased dramatically over the recent years and these links should be strengthened and improved. The town also currently suffers from through traffic, which would be alleviated by the provision of the N5 by-pass of the town. It is estimated that the N5 and N4 bypasses will be introduced in 2011 and 2015 respectively.

There has been limited success in the implementation of the strategies set out in the previous plan in relation to transport. The previous development plan identified the land procurement for the N5 by-pass as an objective. It also identifies the completion of the N5 by-pass for Longford Town and the integration of a link road between Little Water Street and Richmond Street/Strokestown Road as important projects to be carried out during the plan period. The land procurement process for the N5 by-pass has begun and is on-going with an expected completion date of 2011.

The link road between Little Water Street and Richmond Street/Strokestown Road has not materialised to date. However, provision has been made for it in the granting of planning permission for development between these two roads. The timeframe for the carrying out of this development is unclear. In this case it should be included within this plan.

The provision of pedestrian access along the Camlin River has not been completed but should continue to be promoted to improve the facilities of the town for pedestrians and to improve the tourism facilities within the town.

5.1.2 Roads

There are 4.7 km of National Route, 5.7 km of Regional road and 25.5 km of local road within the urban area of Longford Town. Many of the streets in the town constitute sections of National road network such as Main Street, Ballymahon Street, Dublin Street, New Street, Richmond Street, Killashee Street, Market Square and the Ballinalee Road.

Longford County Council in conjunction with the National Roads Authority are responsible for the development and maintenance of the national road network within the town. All developments along the National Road should take account of the National Roads Authority *Policy on Development Management and Access to National Roads* (May 2006).

All the regional routes through the town such as Lower Main Street, the Battery Road, the Dublin Road and the Ardagh Road are the responsibility of the Town Council as well as all other urban routes.

Transport and congestion issues are a major concern for the Council and finding ways to address this will be a significant issue during the preparation of the plan. It is anticipated that the Land Use and Transportation Study, which is currently underway, will significantly address this issue in the future.

A one way system operates on Dublin Street, New Street and Ballymahon Street. However, the town still suffers from poor traffic circulation. This is due to heavy vehicles utilising the N5. Illegal or double parking and the loading/unloading of goods and unnecessary build outs further exacerbate the problem. The bypass of the town with the N5 will result in significant drops in traffic within the town centre.

Longford Town Council will also promote development which encourages maximum transport efficiency with minimal environmental impact. This is to ensure that economic growth and development does not generate an unsustainable demand for car based transport with consequential adverse environmental effects.

5.1.2.1 General Road Policy and Objectives

ROADS 1: To provide the highest quality road access and capacity on routes of economic importance to the Town, thereby capitalising on the central location of Longford in a national context, increasing its attractiveness as a destination in itself and a location for settlement, industrial, commercial and business development.

ROADS 2: To provide a road network which is safe and efficient for all road users while being cognisant of the requirements of all traffic, including motorised vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

ROADS 3: Promote sustainability in road use and the reduction of carbon emissions where possible through good design practice.

ROADS 4: To maintain and improve the capacity of existing arterial routes of national importance within the Town, in the context of the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines, including the relief of bottlenecks.

ROADS 5: To provide, where possible, for the establishment of an integrated transport node.

ROADS 6: To ensure that infrastructural policies and investments assist and enhance the economic and social development of Longford Town and preserve and improve the physical attractiveness of the town and its physical environment.

ROADS 7: To seek the development of the urban road network through the planned development of the town and in accordance with the recommendations of the Longford Traffic and Transportation Study 2004 and Longford Land Use and Transportation Study, currently in preparation.

ROADS 8: It is the policy of the Council to require a licence prior to each proposed instance of road opening. Works shall only be carried out in accordance with the terms of the licence granted.

ROADS 9: It is the policy of the Council to require a road construction license in each proposed instance where development requires any form of road construction on a public road in accordance with the 1993 Roads Act and amendments thereafter.

ROADS 10: It is the policy of the Council to request the provision of specific information on the potential impact of proposed developments on the roads network of the Town. All applications will be required to submit the required roads form as outlined within the Longford Town Council Planning Pack, or any subsequent update. For specific roads requirements in relation to individual development types, please refer to the design standards section associated with that type. All Transport and Traffic Assessment and Road Safety Audits should be carried out in accordance with the *Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines, 2007*, prepared by the National Roads Authority, and any subsequent update.

ROADS 11: All planning applications within the zone of influence of existing national roads or of planned new national roads, where the proximity of the proposed development to the national road, would result in the breach of the National Roads Authority's design goal for sensitive receptors exposed to road traffic noise, shall identify and implement noise mitigation measures.

5.1.2.2 Specific Road Policy

ROADS 12: It is the policy of the Council to reserve lands in appropriate areas for the improvement, maintenance and management of road traffic systems throughout the town.

Where appropriate to the Town area, lands shall be reserved on proposed route corridors for the following schemes:

- N5 by-pass to the West of Longford town
- N4 – N63 – N5 By-Pass to the South of Longford Town
- N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) scheme

Where these corridors have been identified they will be protected from further development prior to the establishment of a final route. Where corridors have not been identified, the Council shall pursue the development of these corridors and shall protect corridors from development once established. Where route selection corridors exist, it is the policy of Longford Town Council, in consultation with the NRA, to ensure that the final route is identified within a reasonable timeframe. Applications for planning permission for developments proposed within any NRA study areas shall be forwarded to the NRA for evaluation and comment. These comments will then be taken into consideration in the assessment of the application.

ROADS 13: It is the policy of the Council to implement the proposed re-development of the Cathedral Junction in order to improve traffic management and safety in the town.

ROADS 14: The Council shall continue the development of Gateway schemes on the approach roads to the town in the interest of traffic management and safety.

ROADS 15: The Town Council shall investigate, in consultation with Irish Rail and Longford County Council, the potential upgrading of the rail bridge on the N63, and the reservation of lands for potential schemes in this regard.

ROADS 16: To investigate the provision of link roads, and reserve lands for their provision on establishment of routes, at the following locations:

- Richmond St to Little Water St
- Abbeycartron to Ballinalee Road
- Abbeycartron to St. Mels Road
- N4 – N63 – N5 Southern Relief Road

ROADS 17: To investigate in conjunction with Longford County Council, the upgrading of Richmond Street (N5), and the Richmond Street/Main Street junction.

ROADS 18: To continue the programme of Road Improvements, Traffic Calming and Low Cost Safety Measures on the National Roads in the Town (N5, N63) in line with National Roads Authority/Department of Transport/Road Safety Authority policies.

ROADS 19: To restrict ribbon development along the approach roads to the Town and urban generated one off rural housing on the fringes of the Town Council boundary.

5.1.2.3 Roadside Sale of Goods, Products and/or Services

Unauthorised parking of vehicles and trailers on National, Regional and Local roads for the purpose of commercial activity is considered to constitute a hazard to road users. It also does not comply with Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Regulations. Accordingly the Council adopt the following approach to such development:

ROADS 20: It is the policy of the Council to refuse permission for the parking of vehicles, trailers, etc. along the road network within the Town for commercial purposes, whether for provision of services, advertising of or the sale of individual vehicles. Such development is considered to constitute a traffic hazard to road users and therefore will not be considered

favourably.

5.1.2.4 Advertising on Roads

ROADS 21: It is the policy of the Council to restrict the use of National, Regional and local roads for advertising purposes in line with the Planning and Development Act.

ROADS 22: It is the policy of the Council to restrict the erection of signage on National, Regional and Local Roads and in this regard to implement the provisions of the NRA policy document "Policy on the provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads" and Longford County Council policy on advertising signs.

5.1.3 Parking

Longford Town Council has been proactive in the provision of car parking facilities within the town, with the creation of three new car parks. They are the Ballymahon Street Car park, Fitzgerald car park and Main Street car park, close to Annaly Park. There are also current proposals for the provision of a car park at Little Water Street and at St. Patrick's Terrace which the Council will endeavour to provide. Parking facilities shall continue to be provided to the Town Development Plan standards as part of new development (including facilities for the disabled). The Council's approach to parking is therefore framed by the following aims:

- To improve and enhance parking facilities in the Town, in order to relieve and prevent traffic congestion and generally enhance the amenity of the area.
- To pursue a policy of access for those with limited mobility in terms of parking provision.

5.1.3.1 Parking Policies and Objectives

PKG 1: The provision of adequate parking facilities shall form part of the assessment of any application for development. Where it is not possible to provide parking for the proposed development within the site, charges will be levied for parking provided on street or by the Local

Authority in accordance with an approved schedule of charges. Parking requirements may be relaxed in specific areas designated for rejuvenation as outlined in Section 7.

PKG 2: In the cases of certain activities where it can be demonstrated to the Planning Authority that there is a clear time demarcation between uses, dual use of parking spaces may be permitted. Such assessments shall be determined on a site by site basis and according to their merits.

PKG 3: The Town character, including established horizontal building lines, footpath widths, paving types and materials shall also be considered in terms of proposed road widening or traffic calming.

PKG 4: It is the policy of Longford Town Council to investigate the possibility of the provision of an edge of centre free car park for employees working within the town centre. All applications for same must take into account the carrying capacity, safety and efficiency of the road network and be supported by an appropriate Traffic and Transport Assessment.

PKG 5: Adequate space shall be made for the servicing of the proposed developments, including loading and unloading of vehicles, which should be provided for within the site curtilage and should not interfere with the operation of adjacent public thoroughfares.

PKG 6: Parking for people with disabilities shall normally be required at the following rates in conjunction with proposed new developments:

- Buildings not normally visited by the public: Minimum of one space of appropriate dimensions in every 25 standard spaces, up to the first 100 spaces, thereafter, one space per 100 standard space or part thereof.
- Shops and buildings with public access: Minimum one space of appropriate dimensions in the first 25 standard spaces, minimum 3 in 25-50 standard spaces, five in 50-100 standard spaces and additional three per every 100 standard spaces in excess thereof.

- Spaces shall be a minimum of 3m wide and clearly marked with a highly visible symbol. Spaces should be located at the nearest point possible to the entrance to the facility served.

PKG 7: Cycle parking will normally be required in development schemes and the Council shall promote and encourage the provision of cycle spaces in public car-parks and appropriate locations throughout the town.

PKG 8: Coach and bus parking in the town shall be restricted to designated areas. The provision of further designated spaces shall be investigated in appropriate areas of the town.

PKG 9: The provision of multi-storey car parking shall be investigated. In the case of multi-storey car parks active uses shall be provided at ground floor level to maintain active street frontages, provide security and maintain visual amenity.

PKG 10: It is the policy of the Council to discourage unauthorised parking of commercial vehicles on public roads. The Council shall, over the lifetime of this plan, in consultation with Longford County Council, investigate the provision of a commercial vehicle park. The purpose of this will be to allow drivers of commercial vehicles park for rest periods without adversely impacting on traffic safety and/or visual and residential amenity.

PKG 11: Parking provision shall normally be provided in accordance with the standards outlined in table 5.2 'Parking Standards'. Where a development involves refurbishment/extension, parking requirements will only be applied to the additional floor space. This does not apply in the case of a major change of use of a building, which will require full application of car parking standards.

PKG 12: In general, parking/loading facilities shall be provided to the following required dimensions (or any future update that may be issued);

Table 5.1

Car Parking Bay	5m x 2.5m (end on)	6m x 2.5m (parallel to kerb)
Loading Bays	15m x 3m (HGV)	6m x 3m (Small Van)
Circulation Aisle	6m in width	

5.1.3.2 Parking Standards:

The Council shall normally require parking provision to the following standards in conjunction with new development and alterations to existing premises. Within designated central town locations a lower standard of car parking provision shall apply, as detailed in column three below.

Table 5.2 Car Parking Standards

Land Use	Parking Space Requirements	Designated Area
Houses	2 per dwelling	n/a
Apartment/Flats	1.25 – 2 per unit	n/a
Visitor Parking	1 per 2 apartments	
Retail	1 per 25m ² gross floor space	1 per 50m ² gross floor space
Ground Floor Offices	1 per 25m ² gross floor space	1 per 50m ² gross floor area
Above Ground Floor Offices	1 per 33.3m ² gross floor space	1 per 66.6m ² gross floor space
Bank/Financial Institutions	1 per 20m ² gross floor space	1 per 40m ² gross floor space
Retail Warehousing	1 per 35m ² gross floor space	1 per 35m ² gross floor space
Cash and Carry Outlets	2 per 90m ² plus adequate loading/unloading and circulation facilities (minimum 90m ² per 2000m ²)	1 per 90m ² gross floor space
Industry	1 per 30m ² gross floor space or 1 per 4 no. employees, whichever is greater	1 per 60m ² gross floor space or 1 per 8 no. employees, whichever is greater.
Warehousing	1.5 per 100m ² gross floor space or 1 per 4 no. employees, whichever is greater	1 per 100m ² gross floor space or 1 per 6 no. employees, whichever is greater
Hotels, B&B's, Guesthouses*	1 per bedroom	0.5 per bedroom

Bars and Lounges*	1 per 25m ² gross floor space	1 per 50m ² gross floor space
Dance Areas, Dance halls and Function Rooms	1 per 25m ² gross floor space	1 per 8m ² gross floor space
Sit down Restaurants – primarily operating before 6.00pm	1 per 25m ² net public space	1 per 50m ² net public space
Sit down Restaurant – primarily operating after 6.00pm	1 per 40m ² net public space	1 per 80m ² net public space
Take away	1 per 5m ² gross floor space	1 per 5m ² gross floor space
Library	1 per 20m ² gross floor space	1 per 40m ² gross floor space
Commercial Garage	1 per 30m ²	1 per 30m ²
Service Station	1 per 300m ² gross floor space + shop requirements	
Showrooms	1 per 100m ² gross floor space + shop requirements	
Marina	1 per berth	
Hospitals	1 per bed	0.5 per bed
Nursing Homes	1 per 3 bedrooms	n/a
Surgeries/Clinics	3 per consulting room	1.5 per consulting room
Funeral Home	1 per 10m ² gross floor space	
Childcare/crèche/Montessori	1 per employee + 1 per 5 children	0.5 per employee + 1 per 5 children
Schools	Primary - 2 per classroom plus sufficient bus circulation and off-loading facilities to cater for school-going population Secondary – 3 per classroom plus sufficient bus circulation and off-loading facilities to cater for school-going population	1 per classroom plus sufficient bus circulation and off-loading facilities to cater for school-going population 1.5 per classroom plus sufficient bus circulation and off-loading facilities to cater for school-going population
Community Centre/Sports Club	1 per 50m ² gross floor space plus 2 per each court	1 per 66m ² gross floor space plus 1.5 per

		each court
Golf and Pitch and Putt Courses	3 per hole	3 per hole
Golf Driving Range	1 per bay	n/a
Bowling Alley*	4 per lane	4 per lane
Playing Pitches	25 per pitch	25 per pitch
Theatre/Cinema/Stadia/ Churches*	1 per 5 seats	1 per 10 seats
Non-retail Service Outlet, e.g. Hairdressers, Bookmakers, etc.	3 per 100m ² gross floor area	6 per 100m ² gross floor area

- *Note: Bars and lounges, Dancing areas, accommodation and function rooms to be calculated separately. Any development type not listed above shall be determined by the Planning Authority.*
- *The 'Designated Area' parking standards will apply in the area outlined in the map contained in Appendix 4.*
- *In addition for small development in the town centre (e.g. small extensions) the Planning Authority will exercise discretion in relation to car parking requirements. In some circumstances no parking requirement will apply, in the interests of encouraging town centre development.*

5.1.4 Pedestrian and Cyclists



In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, this plan aims, through its land use and transportation policies and objectives, to promote walking and cycling as effective modes of transport within the urban area, while providing realistic alternatives to the private car. This strategy includes broad principles such as the enhancement of the potential for live-work opportunities down to specific objectives to improve pedestrian/cyclist access and permeability.

The centre of Longford Town is within reasonable walking distance from most of the major

residential areas in the Town. By facilitating and promoting walking and cycling as a viable means of transport, the demand for car parking and vehicular access to and within the Town Centre will be greatly reduced. This in turn will result in a more pleasant and accessible Town Centre and will greatly aid the retail and commercial viability of the Towns commercial core.

Existing walking and cycling routes are identified in Appendix 7, and will be further enhanced and promoted into the future. The plan aims to create pedestrian and cyclist permeability throughout the town, particularly between outlying residential areas, backlands and the town commercial centre/core. The attractiveness, security and usability of these routes are important considerations in promoting them as a viable alternative means of transport.

Archways may be installed for added pedestrian permeability in larger apartment/courtyard type blocks, however, it is important to ensure that a clear demarcation exists between private, semi-private and public spaces and that such demarcation is retained in order to preserve a reasonable level of residential amenity. Secure, communal storage areas are usually required to facilitate cyclists in these developments.

The following policies are designed to further the development of pedestrian and cyclist routes throughout the Town.

PED 1: The Planning Authority aims to improve the attractiveness and usability of the pedestrian environment of the Town, particularly in residential areas and in areas of high amenity. In this regard, developments shall be required to indicate secure, well lit and defensible open spaces and walking/cycling routes at planning application stage.

PED 2: The Council shall promote the use of alternative transport to the private car through encouraging enhanced pedestrian and cycling facilities in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. This principle shall be promoted in both private and public developments.

PED 3: The Council shall insist on the provision of cycleways and footpaths, particularly in conjunction with new housing developments. New developments will be assessed with regard to the principles contained in *"Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas"* (Draft, 2008, DoEHLG and any subsequent update).

PED 4: The Council shall promote the organisation of traffic in order to separate motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrian traffic. This is to be carried out in accordance with the *National Manual for the provision of Cycle Facilities in Urban Areas*, DoEHLG, 2000 or subsequent update. Where conflict arises other than on National Routes of identified strategic importance, an emphasis shall be placed on pedestrian priority in the built-up urban area.

PED 5: To provide sufficient pedestrian facilities in appropriate locations, which have measures in place to assist visually and mobility-impaired persons in crossing roads and to ensure that roads and footpaths are designed and constructed to cater for the needs of the physically disabled.

PED 6: To encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities in the town centre, at public facilities such as schools, libraries, public transport facilities and in all new developments.

PED 7: To improve existing public lighting and seek the provision of additional and enhanced public lighting facilities in Longford, in particular along existing and proposed walk and cycleways.

PED 8: To investigate the possibility of a pedestrian link from the Abbeycartron residential area to the Mall Park complex and the possibility of a new footbridge over the Camlin linking the Mall/Battery Road with Great Water Street.

PED 9: To maintain and enhance pedestrian and cycle access from the Market Square under the

railway line to new residential developments across the Canal and to ensure that the existing walkways/towpaths on both sides of the Royal Canal are upgraded and maintained and to improve the sense of security and pedestrian access along the Canal walk.

PED 10: To ensure that all developments proposed in the vicinity of the Camlin River create appropriate relationships with the water feature in terms of walkways, cycleways, street furniture, setbacks and appropriate landscaping. This shall be completed to a sufficient standard in order to be taken in charge by Longford Town Council.

PED 11: To investigate the potential for pedestrianisation of a number of areas within the town, including Grafton Court, St. Michael's Road, and the northern side of Market Square.

PED 12: To continue the programme of footpath improvements in line with an overall theme for general environmental improvements throughout the Town.

PED 13: The potential provision of a pedestrian crossing at Ballymahon Street/Market Square, including its format and most appropriate location in terms of accessibility and traffic movement shall be considered in conjunction with the findings of the LUTs.

The bicycle parking standards set out in the table below shall apply to proposed new developments. The Planning Authority will also encourage the provision of bicycle parking facilities where possible, at existing transport nodes, public buildings, retail centres and leisure facilities.

Table 5.3 Bicycle Parking Standards

Type of Development	Relevant Cycle Parking Standard
Houses and Apartments	One unit per dwelling
Shops	1 stand for every 100 sq.m. of gross floorspace
Supermarkets and large stores	1 stand for every 100 sq.m. of gross floorspace
Offices	1 stand for every 100 sq.m. of gross floorspace
Industry	1 stand for every 100 sq.m of gross floorspace
Warehousing	1 stand for every 150 sq.m of gross floorspace
Theatre, Cinema, Church, Ctadium	1 stand for every 20 seats
Hotels, Guest houses	1 stand per 4 bedrooms
Lounge bars	1 stand for every 30 sq.m. of public floorspace
Restaurants	1 stand for every 30 sq.m. of public floorspace
Function-room, Dance Halls, Clubs	1 stand for every 30 sq.m.
Playing fields	10 stands per pitch
Schools	1 stand per 5 pupils
Nursing Homes	1 stand per 8 members of staff

Note: One stand = 5 units

Note: Large complex developments may be assessed separately with regard to the circumstances.

5.1.5 Public Transport

In common with many towns of a similar size throughout the Country, Longford Town has no specifically dedicated public transport system, however, several national and regional services currently address some of the needs of the Town and its hinterland.

The Land Use and Transportation study, which is at an advanced stage, will identify the potential for the development of public transport for the urban area as part of a broader mobility strategy for the town and its environs.

There is an ever increasing need to develop public transport facilities in the face of climate change and potential fossil fuel shortage into the future. The development of a sustainable mobility system is a core aim for Longford Town Council, reflected in the general policies outlined below.

PT GEN 1: It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision and/or improvement of public transport by statutory and private operators, both within the urban area and serving its hinterland.

PT GEN 2: To promote opportunities to develop a dedicated local public transport facility within Longford Town in accordance with the recommendations of the LUTs for Longford Town and Environs and to liaise and co-operate with public transport operators and authorities and other relevant public and private operators in this regard.

PT GEN 3: To ensure the provision of adequate pedestrian facilities and bicycle parking facilities at public transport nodes in the town, particularly the bus/rail station, facilitating the implementation of an overall sustainable mobility strategy. Additional actions in this regard, such as the promotion of car-pooling and appropriate signage and traffic management shall be promoted in line with the recommendations of the Land Use and Transportation Study for Longford Town and Environs.

PT GEN 4: Ensure that development proposals make provision for potential public transport development in the future in terms of their layout and density.

5.1.5.2 Rail

Longford is served by both bus and rail public transport. The rail service in the town is the Sligo – Dublin line, with ten trains from Longford to and from Dublin daily. This is an essential transportation link for the Town, with many people commuting to and from the capital daily.

An investigation on how the potential of the rail system in Longford may be maximised, both in terms of passengers and freight, may prove beneficial, due to the central location of Longford within the Country and the potential for the development of a transport hub/freight depot in this location. The role of the rail network as set out in a regional context in the Midland Regional Guidelines also requires investigation.

The Council shall promote the further development of the rail network, both in terms of passengers and freight, through the following policies:

PT RL 5: To facilitate and promote the provision of a fast, efficient and user-friendly rail service which maximises the economic and social potential of Longford Town and recognises its strategic location within the Country.

PT RL 6: To facilitate the expansion and development of existing and any future proposed rail facilities and supporting infrastructure within the Town. In this regard, the Council shall support the provision of a dedicated, multi-modal public transport hub in Longford Town.

PT RL 7: To support the development of inter and intra-regional rail linkages in accordance with Regional policy.

PT RL 8: To utilise the existing rail service and promote its use as an alternative mode of transport in line with the principles of sustainable development through the implementation of recommendations as set out in the Land Use and Transportation Study for Longford Town.

PT RL 9: To concentrate development which may be aimed at those commuting to and from Dublin within close proximity of existing rail links and to facilitate, where practical, improved access for pedestrians and cyclists and to promote greater integration of public and private transport modes.

PT RL 10: To promote the use of the rail system in relation to the industrial and commercial development of the County and investigate the potential expansion of the freight facility in this regard.

5.1.5.3 Bus

At present Longford Town is serviced by Bus Eireann services, in addition to several private operators, with a number of services daily from Longford. The following are the main Bus Eireann services:

- The Longford/Athlone route has one service per day. In addition, the Belfast – Athlone services, via Longford Town, which is run in conjunction with Ulsterbus, has two services per day.
- The Dublin-Sligo services, servicing Longford Town has four services per day.
- The Dublin-Ballina services servicing Longford has four services per day.
- A new service, covering Longford to Tullamore via Mullingar is proposed for the future.

Accordingly, the Council's policy is as follows:

PT BUS 11: To facilitate and promote the provision of an efficient and user-friendly bus service which maximises the economic and social potential of Longford Town and recognises its strategic location within the Country.

PT BUS 12: To promote the improvement of bus services to further the principles of social inclusion and sustainable development, including the national rural transport initiative and potential medical transport initiatives connecting local, regional and national facilities.

PT BUS 13: To facilitate the provision of an integrated transport system for the Town, its environs and the County as a whole, with specific investigation into the potential provision of a dedicated bus terminus at Longford and an Urban shuttle services.

PT BUS 14: Encourage the provision of additional/alternative bus drop off points in the Town and bus parking areas.

PT BUS 15: To encourage the potential of a shuttle bus servicing Longford Town and outlying areas, including provision of bus stops at appropriate locations.

5.2 Water Supply and Waste Water Services

The provision of adequate water supply and sewage facilities is an integral part of the proper planning and sustainable development of any area. There have been significant changes in the operating environment in which these services are provided in recent years. The many drivers of change include new EU and national legislation, including the Water Framework Directive, the Government's framework for water pricing, project management and service procurement approaches together with regional strategic planning and integration of services.

A deficit currently exists in the provision of water services infrastructure in the town, a situation that has been fuelled by the rapid growth in population and development pressure over the last plan period.

Longford County Council provides water supply and waste water services to Longford Town Council, hence the references to the County Council infrastructure throughout this section.

5.2.1 Water Supply

The Longford Central Regional Scheme serves Longford Town and outlying districts including Edgeworthstown, Drumlish and Newtownforbes. The main source is Lough Forbes on the River Shannon with a second source augmenting supply from Currygrange Lough (at Corbeagh).

Longford County Council commissioned a strategic review of Longford Regional Water Supply Scheme in 2005. The review concluded that the existing supply is not capable of supplying the current demand with significant water shortages experienced during the summer months. Obviously as demand grows so too may the situation become critical.

There are also issues of water quality with the existing supply. The Lough Forbes Treatment Plant currently provides water for Longford Town. It is currently operating above design capacity. Longford County Council have recently received DoEHLG approval to proceed with preparation of contract documents to augment the water supply from Wellfield development in Cloonanny Glebe, to upgrade the existing treatment plant, to provide a new rising main from Lough Forbes to Prucklish Reservoir and to construct a new 5000cu.m reservoir at Prucklish. It is anticipated that these construction works is expected to be completed by 2011.

A capital scheme which commenced construction in 2008 is the L.C.R.W.S.S. (Longford County

Regional Water Supply Scheme) Stage 6 – Reservoir and Pipelines. This scheme will provide a new 10,000cu.m reservoir at Knockahaw and over 15km of pipelines ranging from 200mm to 500mm diameter. Construction of this scheme is expected be completed in 2010.

A comprehensive Water Conservation and Network Rehabilitation scheme is currently being implemented throughout the town and County. The aims of this scheme include the identification and repair of defective pipelines and leaks in the supply system. This work will prioritise watermains which are susceptible to burst and are in poor condition and will greatly enhance the efficiency of the existing network. The Water Conservation Project was brought into mainstream operation and maintenance of Water Services by the end of 2007 while Phase 1 of the Watermains Rehabilitation Program began construction in early 2008.

5.2.2 Sewerage Services

The existing Wastewater Treatment facility has a treatment capacity for flows up to 140L/sec and loads from a population equivalent of 20,000. The design effluent quality is 14mg/l Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and 20mg/l Suspended Solids. The existing outfall discharges to the Camlin River.

Longford County Council are currently preparing contract documents for the upgrading and expansion of the existing Waste Water Treatment Works to serve a P.E of 30,000. This includes an outfall to the River Shannon and the construction of a new sludge hub centre on the site of the existing Waste Water Treatment Works. It is anticipated that the construction works associated with this scheme will take place between 2010 – 2013.

A wastewater discharge licence application for the existing Wastewater Treatment Works was made to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December 2007 in accordance with the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007. This is currently being processed by the EPA. The Local Area Plan for the Southern Environs currently being prepared will identify future service requirements for this area. It is a priority of the Council to ensure that the scheme to service this area be completed.

The main document relating to the operations of the Water Supply and Waste Water Services Department (collectively termed Water Services Department) is the Assessment of Needs, prepared for a specific timeframe under the requirements of the DoEHLG and inputs into their Water Services Investment programme. A Geographical Information System (GIS) system, which

is a spatial database of water and sewerage networks in the county, has been developed to facilitate works associated with water supply and waste water services and monitor progress.

In relation to Longford town, the following works have been completed over the period of the previous Town Development Plan 2004 – 2010:

- Advance works on reservoir and pipelines Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme.

The current assessment covers the immediate needs for the period 2007 – 09 and contains a strategic assessment of investment requirements up to 2014 and covers the following aspects of infrastructure provision:

- Drinking water treatment and distribution
- Wastewater collection and disposal
- Storm water management, including collection and disposal

The needs assessment is carried out through the identification of deficiencies in existing systems and the identification of areas where schemes are required. Criteria are then developed to prioritise these requirements over the relevant period. The programme of works identified is derived from this needs assessment.

The majority of both foul and surface water sewers in the Town are separated. However, in certain Town Centre areas combined sewers remain. Any new developments in these areas should have separate systems.

Programme of Works relating to Longford Town 2007 – 2009

Table 5.4 Water supply Schemes

No.	Scheme Name	Project Status
1.	Longford Central Regional Water Scheme Stage 6 – Reservoir and Pipelines (Longford Town)	Project Approved to go to Construction in August 2007
2.	Longford Central Regional Water Scheme – Strategic Review Incorporates Groundwater Source Augmentation/Replacement, Network Extension and Rehabilitation	Preliminary Report Completed Approved to Go to Contract Document Stage for Phase 1. First Phase of Groundwater Augmentation to Commence Construction October 2007
3.	Water Conservation Stage 2 and Network Rehabilitation Stage 3	Approved by Department for Water Conservation Report and Network Rehabilitation of Key Defective Distribution Mains in Longford Central and Lanesborough DMA's to Commence in 2007

Table 5.5 Sewerage Schemes

No.	Scheme Name	Project Status
1.	Longford Sewerage Scheme Phase 2 Network Extension to Longford Foul and Storm Drainage Catchments	To be Incorporated into Development Plan
2.	Longford Town Sewerage Scheme – Network and Treatment Plant Project to Incorporate Surface Water Drainage, Network Analysis, Stormwater Separation and Collection Network Rehabilitation	Approved Contract Documentation Stage for Treatment Plant and Preliminary Report Stage for Networks
3.	Longford Sludge Management Plan	Approved Contract Documentation Stage for Development of Sludge Hub Centre and Longford WWFT

As identified in the Water Services Investment Program, Assessment of Needs 2007 – 2014 the following list of Water and Sewerage Schemes relate to Longford Town.

Table 5.6 Medium Term Programme of Works

Scheme	Category	Justification
Water Conservation	Water Supply	Further Network Rehabilitation Programmes to reduce unaccounted for water on a county wide basis to national UFW target levels.
Drinking Water Regulations – Water Quality Improvement Requirements	Water Supply	To ensure compliance with EU Directives on Drinking Water Quality and prevention of Cryptosporidium etc.
Water Transfer Stations	Water Supply	Required for Security of Supply in terms of Storage Capacity and Network Distribution.

In general, Longford Town Council will have regard for the capacity of the water and sewerage network for the existing and future population in considering any development proposals in Longford Town. In addition, it is an objective of the Council to expand existing services in a planned and prioritised fashion and facilitate development of additional services where economically feasible and where resources permit, thus providing for the development of the Town and County in an orderly and sustainable manner.

The following policy provisions aim to fulfil the requirements of Longford Town in terms of water supply and waste water services and its population over the Plan period in accordance with the needs assessment outlined above.

WS 1: To consolidate the provision of basic environmental services in accordance with the 6 year programme as outlined, providing an integrated infrastructural base for the physical, economic and social development of Longford Town in an environmentally sustainable manner.

WS 2: To investigate the feasibility of establishing additional projects in terms of improving existing water supply, establishing new supplies, sewerage mains provision and improvement of existing treatment plants in the medium and long-term and for their extension to include

adjoining residential dwellings.

WS 3: Extension of existing water supply and wastewater services shall be carried out where required and where resources permit. Where such extensions are required as a result of a new development, the developers shall be required to pay a contribution towards the cost to the Council of this extension or carry the works out.

WS 4: The Council shall pursue the preparation, establishment and implementation of the following documents insofar as they relate to the Water Services Section;

- The Sludge Management Strategy
- The Water Conservation Plan
- The Rural Water Plan

WS 5: It is the policy of the Council to designate and map wayleaves for the installation and maintenance of water services infrastructure. These wayleaves, once identified shall be protected from inappropriate development.

WS 6: It is the policy of the Council to restrict or prohibit the large-scale development of unserved land where served land, of an appropriate size and nature to meet the needs of the proposed development, exists in the vicinity.

WS 7: 'Longford Central' Public Water Supply shall comply with EU standards and shall be upgraded where necessary to comply with same and to ensure that the public drinking water supply of the Town complies with relevant EU drinking water standards and to extend supply, where necessary and where resources permit, to meet demand.

WS 8: To protect existing sources of municipal water supplies through restricting potentially pollutant development within a specified distance from the proposed source. In this regard, buffer areas are identified in Appendix 8. In these areas it must be demonstrated that

development proposals will not have an adverse impact on the proposed water source.

Where additional potential municipal water supplies are identified, it shall be the policy of the Council to restrict potentially pollutant development within a specified distance from the proposed source.

WS 9: To protect, within its powers, valuable groundwater sources and important surface water bodies from pollution through infiltration by domestic, agricultural or other sources of effluent/pollutant material.

WS 10: To finalise the separation of foul and storm water network, at the remaining locations within the town. Developments in locations where there are combined foul and surface water sewerage systems shall be required to provide separate systems.

WS 13: To educate the public in water conservation measures, through public awareness campaigns and other means as appropriate.

WS 14: The Council shall consult the EPA publication "The Provision and Quality of Drinking Water in Ireland" (and any subsequent update) in the establishment and maintenance of water sources in the Town.

WS 15: The Council shall consult the EPA publication (and any subsequent update) 'Urban Waste Water Discharges in Ireland for Population Equivalents Greater than 500 persons – A Report for the Years 2004 – 2005' in the provision, expansion and maintenance of water treatment systems in the Town.

5.3 Surface Water, Drainage and Flooding

5.3.1 Surface Water and Drainage

This is becoming an increasingly important issue in the context of climate change, with higher rainfall levels and increased flood event frequency in major water systems throughout the Country.

New developments should ensure that sufficient surface water capacity exists in an area prior to the submission of an application for development. Development will not be permitted in areas where insufficient surface water capacity, either in terms of storm drains and/or available adjacent watercourses of sufficient size exists.

Even where sufficient capacity exists, the development of newly hard surfaced areas can significantly increase the rate of surface water run-off due to the lack of attenuation provided by the impervious surface. This may be accommodated through natural dissipation into nearby watercourses, streams or ditches, however, the time that this takes may vary and result in ponding or flooding where dissipation rates are slow or inhibited. This situation may be addressed through the installation of artificial attenuation and/or drainage systems that store this accelerated run-off, releasing it slowly and preventing overloading of streams, rivers and other watercourses, thus reducing the likelihood of flooding.

It is essential that adequate surface water measures are put in place in order to prevent pollution, flooding and to recognise that the alteration in natural flow patterns can lead to problems elsewhere within a river catchment.

The following policy provision aim to address flooding issues and shall be augmented by any government guidelines on flood prevention and control once issued:

SW 1: All proposed development shall be required to provide sufficient surface water drainage facilities, including attenuation and evidence of outfall suitability and capacity, and how such water is to be sufficiently treated prior to disposal in order to prevent pollution.

SW 2: Surface water attenuation measures shall be provided where it is considered that the surface water run-off levels exceed permissible discharge rates. Storm water run-off design should be carried out in accordance with Sustainable Drainage Standards (SuDS), and *Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works* incorporating *Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study, Volume 2, New Developments* or any future updates.

SW 3: The discharge of surface water run-off into foul sewage systems shall be strictly prohibited.

5.3.2 Flooding

It is essential that potential flooding issues are properly addressed prior to development, given the increase in developed lands that has occurred over the last plan period and in the context of accelerated global climate change.

Development shall be restricted to works of a type that do not impact on the existing flood regime in areas of known flooding. Development shall not take place in any other area without clear demonstration that the proposed development has appropriately addressed any flooding concerns. Development will not be permitted in areas with a flood interval exceeding 1:100 year interval.

Nicholas O'Dwyer Ltd. were commissioned by Longford County Council in 2002 to carry out a flood study of the River Camlin at Longford Town. A review of this preliminary report was commissioned in February 2007, which raises a number of issues in relation to flooding in Longford Town.

The Camlin River, a tributary of the Shannon River, flows through Longford Town. The river has three major tributaries; the Ballyminion Stream, the Fallen River, and the Corbaun River. The Ballyminion Stream, the largest of the three, joins the River Camlin just downstream of the railway bridge immediately to the west of Longford Town. The River Camlin has a narrow channel with the catchment area to the north and west of Longford Town representing the historic floodplain.

The Camlin river experiences out-of-bank flow for flood magnitudes as low as a two year return

period, an interval which is likely to decrease in the context of ever increasing rainfall levels. Flooding has also frequently occurred at a low point along the railway line where it passes under the Strokestown Road immediately south-west of Longford Town which has led to disruption of the Dublin-Sligo rail link for up to 3 days at a time.

This report determined that the development of the zoned areas in the floodplain will cause an increase in flood levels and that there is a need to mitigate against this increase in order to reduce the frequency of flooding on the railway line as well as the areas of development.

The following general policy provisions aim to mitigate existing flooding problems in the western area of Longford Town and prevent further flooding in the urban area:

FLO 1: Mitigation works in accordance with that outlined in the Nicholas O'Dwyer Preliminary Report Review, June 2008 shall be carried out to alleviate flooding implications of existing development and recommendations contained within applied to future development to prevent exacerbation of flood problems in susceptible areas of the Town.

FLO 2: Flood protection measures required to protect the railway line and other areas in the vicinity shall be carried out in conjunction and consultation with Iarnród Eireann. These works shall not result in an increase in flood levels upstream or down stream of the Railway line and in Longford Town.

FLO 3: The area upstream of the Railway Bridge and north of the Strokestown road, defined as the central floodplain area of the River Camlin shall not be considered for any future development. A minimum channel width of 12m shall be maintained in the section of the river channel between Main Street Bridge and the Western Floodplain.

FLO 4: The drainage line from Townspark/Farranyogan/Ballyminion area shall be realigned to discharge downstream of the railway bridge and a flood eye provided through the railway embankment at or near the railway bridge.

FLO 5: Development will not be permitted in the flood plain or any future area identified as a flood plain. Development will be restricted in areas susceptible to flooding. Developers will be required to submit a Flood Risk/Impact Assessment and proposals for a Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) where a development is in close proximity to the flood plain or an area susceptible to flooding. This shall also apply in areas where it is considered that the proposed development will impact on flooding elsewhere.

FLO 6: The Council in tandem with the OPW, will support the preparation, establishment and implementation of any future Flood Risk Assessment and Management Studies prepared for catchments within the Town Area. In this regard, it is intended to prepare a Flood Risk Assessment within the lifetime of this plan, using existing and published data and adding a predictive element to take account of issues such as the effects of climate change and altering rainfall and climatic patterns.

FLO 7: The Council shall have regard to the provisions of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Consultation Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Environment, Heritage and Local Government – OPW, September 2008) (and any subsequent update).

FLO 8: Developments/structures will not be permitted that restrict or obstruct flow in or across floodplains or river channels. In this regard, developers may be required to demonstrate that a proposal will not adversely impact on the flow regime of the watercourse.

FLO 9: New developments should be located, designed and constructed so as not to impact on a flood event with 100 year return in built areas and 25 year return in rural areas.

FLO 10: A flood impact assessment and proposals for the storage or attenuation of runoff/discharge should accompany all applications for development on sites exceeding 0.4ha in extent.

FLO 11: A certificate from a competent person, bonded with professional indemnity insurance should accompany applications for development of areas of 0.4hectares or less, stating that the proposed development will not contribute to flooding within the relevant catchment.

FLO 12: All new developments should incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. Note attenuation is **NOT** SuDS.

FLO 13: Riparian strips of 10 – 15m shall be left by rivers and streams. These shall not be culverted and shall be to encourage the growth of native flora and fauna to preserve and enhance biodiversity and preserve the natural flood regime of the area.

5.4 Environmental Services

5.4.1 Waste Recovery and Disposal

Since the adoption of the previous Town Development Plan in 2004, Longford Town Council has actively been involved in facilitating the delivery of a more sustainable approach to waste management within the Town. Key to this was the adoption of the current Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region (2005-2010), which was developed from the Midlands Waste Management Study (1999). This set out to replace a system over-reliant on landfill disposal with a new integrated approach to waste management. The plan is based on the EU waste management hierarchy which prioritises prevention, reuse, recycling and energy recovery ahead of landfill. The long term targets for the region by 2013 remain as follows, see Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7 Waste Management Targets

Recycling	46%
Energy Recovery	37%
Landfill Disposal	17%

At present, there are a number of private companies providing a waste collection service to both householders and businesses within the Town. There are no active landfill sites in the Town.

5.4.1.1 Aims for Waste Recovery and Disposal

The Council seek to achieve the following aims over the period of this plan, including:

- Improved collection methods of waste, to include the introduction of a third bin for the kerbside collection of organic household waste.
- Land acquisition, planning and design of new facilities, including the maintenance and upgrading of the bring-bank network, waste recycling centres, and green waste composting facilities. Regional responsibilities include a materials recovery facility, a biological treatment plant and the provision of a new residual landfill.

5.4.1.2 Construction and Demolition Waste

At present there are no large scale Construction and Demolition recycling facilities in the region. There is however one waste permitted facility for Construction and Demolition waste processing within the County. It is hoped that contractors within the construction industry will establish more facilities within the midlands region. The National Construction and Demolition Waste Council have been established and tasked with achieving the national recycling targets. It launched a voluntary initiative in October 2004 which included best practise guidelines prepared by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for the preparation of Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plans for developments above certain stated thresholds.

5.4.1.3 Bring Facilities and Civic Amenity Facilities

There are currently 4 bring banks within the Town for the collection of aluminium cans and glass. There are also 2 textile banks in the Town Area. Two civic amenity sites for the disposal of recyclable materials and waste electrical and electronic equipment are in operation in the County Area. In accordance with the aforementioned aims, the Council will seek to develop such facilities over the life span of this plan.

The following policies aim to improve and enhance the efficiency and sustainability of environmental service provision in the Town Council area:

WAS 1: It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and promote the implementation of the Midlands Waste Management Plan within its functional area.

WAS 2: It is the policy of the Council to continue to facilitate and promote the provision of civic amenity sites, including “bring centres” for the purposes of providing a collection point for the recycling of domestic waste, subject to siting, location, compatibility with adjacent land uses and other relevant development management criteria.

WAS 3: The Council shall have regard to the Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region in the implementation, operation and management of schemes and services for the disposal of

waste within the Town.

WAS 4: To control development within its powers through the planning process in order to prevent and/or limit the impact of potential air, water and soil pollution.

WAS 5: Where considered necessary, the Planning Authority will require Project Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plans as part of applications for development. This is in accordance with “Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects” (DoEHLG, 2006). Such plans should be submitted for developments above the stated thresholds within these guidelines and as required by the Planning Authority.

5.4.2 Litter and Animal Control

Longford Town Council’s Strategy on litter, is to increase public awareness by increased education, and to promote a litter free environment through the implementation of enforcement action through the relevant legislation.

Accordingly the Council’s Policy and Objectives are as follows;

LIT 1: The Council shall continue its education and awareness programmes in local schools and shall promote schemes and initiatives which aim to reduce litter pollution in the Town.

LIT 2: The Council shall enforce the provisions of the 1997 Litter Pollution Act where appropriate and necessary. This states that “no person shall deposit any substance or object so as to create litter in a public place or in any place that is visible to any extent from a public place.”

LIT 3: It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage the preparation, establishment and implementation of a litter management plan for Longford Town.

LIT 4: The Council shall continue to pursue its programme of stray/nuisance dog and horse control within the Town.

5.5 Energy and Communications

5.5.1 Electricity

Adequate electricity supply is essential to ensuring the socio-economic growth of the Town and ensuring adequate opportunity for investment that may be dependent on bulk energy use. Fortunately, Longford is currently served by 110kV lines to Mullingar and a 220kV line which runs through the North of the County from Carrick-on-Shannon to Dundalk. Accordingly the Council's general policy on electricity supply is as follows:

EC 1: To promote the upgrading and augmentation of the supply of electricity to the Town as necessary to facilitate anticipated developments over the plan period, with sufficient capacity available to cater for potential large scale industrial or high tech manufacturing employers.

EC 2: To consider proposals for electricity transmission infrastructure on a case by case basis.

5.5.2 Renewable Energy Sources

All methods of energy production have impacts on the environment, however, the need to adopt a more sustainable approach to energy production is acknowledged by the Planning Authority. Applications for renewable energy developments shall be considered favourably provided they are environmentally sustainable and are in accordance with general planning criteria. The cumulative effect of such developments on their setting will form part of the criteria taken into consideration. The key aim is to:

- Facilitate and promote investigation into the potential of alternative, sustainable energy sources within the Town.

Accordingly, the Council's general policy on renewable energy is as follows:

RE 1: The following criteria shall be used in the assessment of potential sites for the

development of alternative energy sources:

- Significant wind energy potential
- Accessibility to the national grid
- Suitability of the site having regard to land uses
- Measures to minimise impact on other existing adjacent land uses.

RE 2: The Council will consider the promotion of renewable energy and low energy/passive houses to be a high priority in the context of sustainable development and the national climate change strategy. The Council will support initiatives that encourage energy conservation and reduce reliance upon non-renewable sources of energy, including schemes for wind energy, biomass, photovoltaics, solar thermal installations, heat exchange, geothermal, etc.

RE 3: The following documents and guidelines shall inform the assessment process for potential alternative energy developments:

- National Climate Change Strategy, 2007 – 2012 (DoEHLG)
- Strategy for Intensifying Wind Energy Deployment (DCMNR)
- Wind Energy – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG)
- Renewable Energy Strategy
- National Development Plan
- Longford Bacon Report
- BMW (Border Midland Western) Region Development Strategy
- Sustainable Development – a Strategy for Ireland
- Midland Regional Planning Guidelines
- National Spatial Strategy

RE 4: The provision of renewable energy facilities at local level may become necessary in the future and these will be facilitated under all zonings contained at Section 2.3.

5.5.2.1 Wind Energy

The potential for generation of wind energy in the Urban area is likely to be confined to smaller scale domestic and/or local level wind energy production in conjunction with other renewable energy sources as opposed to large scale windfarm development.

Consideration shall be given to *Wind Energy – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, 2006 (DoEHLG) in the determination of applications in this regard. In general, the Council will look favourably on the development of wind farms and the harnessing of wind energy in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the Town. The impact of a wind farm will vary depending on the location of the individual site together with the number of turbines, layout, size, design and colour.

In line with the areas of wind potential identified in the Wind Atlas for Ireland produced by Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) an area within Longford Town has been identified as an area of wind potential where wind farms will be encouraged.

Accordingly, Council policy is as follows:

WD 1: Developments for wind farms will be encouraged to locate in those areas identified as having wind potential within the Town, as defined by SEI and with regard to the residential amenity of adjacent properties.

WD 2: Micro wind turbines producing below 20 kilowatts for domestic purposes shall be considered favourably. The following criteria shall apply:

- They shall not either individually or cumulatively, adversely affect the health or amenity of nearby communities;
- Be visually and environmentally acceptable;
- Require minimum further construction to link readily into existing transmission lines;
- Consider the residential amenity of adjacent properties in terms of height, size, blade dimensions, light flicker, noise and integrity of communications signals.

WD 3: In assessing an application for a wind energy development, the following shall be taken into consideration:

a) Visual impact – both on site and over extensive areas. Applications may be required to include photo or video montages – taken from a variety of locations after discussion with the Planning Authority. Site cross sections showing existing and proposed ground levels in relation to all structures on site are required.

b) Predicted Noise Levels – developments must ensure that noise levels will not be intrusive in relation to background noise at the nearest dwelling. Blades, of single speed must rotate in the same direction. Monitoring noise levels at selected locations generally for the first year of operation of the wind farm will be a condition of planning permission. Manufacturer's certification of noise emissions will be required at application stage.

c) Design – Solid towers are generally preferable, which should be the same height and colour. Advertising material including the manufacturer's name or logo will not be permitted on the wind turbine.

d) Impact of associated site works – including access roads, substations, grid connections, fencing, etc. Details of proposed grid connections are required at application stage. All grid connections should be undergrounded as far as possible. Access roads shall be un-surfaced and follow natural contours of the site. Fencing will not be permitted on any part of the site except normal livestock fencing when the land is part of an operating agricultural holding.

e) Construction – a detailed phased programme for the construction together with estimates of traffic generation is required at application stage. Consideration will be given to the potential damage to roads during the construction phase. In some cases access routes may be restricted by planning condition.

f) Proximity to Dwellings – non-domestic wind turbines should generally not be located within 500m of any dwelling but this may vary from site to site.

g) Interference with navigation, television and communication signals – A communication booster may also be required or some other technical solution. Air and sea navigation authorities

may be consulted for their comments on proposed wind farm developments.

h) Impact on environmental designations – Amenity areas, Sensitive landscapes, views and prospects, Designated Tourist Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Special Protection Areas, Archaeological sites. Wind farm developments should not be located within 100m of ancient monuments. The impact on migratory birds, in particular, will be assessed in consultation with the Irish Wildbird Conservancy.

i) Decommissioning – proposals for restoration of the site after removal of the turbines should be included with an application. Adequate financial security will be required by planning condition.

j) Sensitivity of locations of folklore, mythology and religious significance to these developments. Evidence of consultation with local community groups is an important element of planning for such a project. Developers will also be required to assess their proposals for the impact of shadow flicker on dwellings and this information should accompany the planning application.

k) Location relative to water bodies. Large scale wind farm developments should not be located within 150m of lakes or rivers.

l) Applicants are advised to outline future extension proposals if known. It should be noted that temporary permissions for an anemometer is without prejudice to any subsequent application for a wind farm.

Where appropriate, the Planning Authority may request additional information in determining an application for a wind farm development, including detailed information similar to that required as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

5.5.2.2 Hydro Schemes

Hydro schemes use the kinetic energy of moving water to produce electricity. There are currently no hydro schemes in Longford Town. There will be a presumption in favour of applications for hydro schemes provided certain planning and environmental criteria are satisfied. Cognisance should be taken of the document *Guidelines for Construction and Operation of Small-Scale Hydroelectric Schemes and Fisheries* (Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources).

Accordingly the policy of Longford County Council is as follows:

HS 1: In assessing an application for a hydro scheme the following shall be taken into consideration:

- a)** Impact on environmental designations – Amenity areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Special Protection Areas, Archaeological sites, areas with significant amenity use, etc.
- b)** Visual impact arising from turbine houses, embankments, structures, roads, power lines, poles, etc.
- c)** Projects should incorporate a fish pass to ensure the free and safe passage of fish. The views of the local Regional Fisheries Board may be sought.
- d)** Likely erosion arising from the development.
- e)** Turbines should be sited at sufficient distance from dwelling houses to ensure that noise emissions are not a nuisance.
- f)** Impact of construction stage and associated site works including water retaining structures, access routes, turbine housing, and grid connections, etc. The timing of construction should avoid the breeding season of susceptible wildlife.
- g)** Consultation between the developer and local interest groups such as fishermen, water sport enthusiasts, etc. prior to submitting planning application.
- h)** Water monitoring – the developer may by condition be required to submit water monitoring data to the Planning Authority.
- i)** It should be noted that in the event of permission being granted for a water level recorder, this is not an indicator that permission will be granted for a hydro energy development.

5.5.2.3 Alternative Energy Developments

Projects involving other indigenous sources of energy such as solar, landfill gas, biomass, energy crops, forestry waste, biogas from sewage sludge and farm slurry, will be assessed in a similar manner with the prime policy of the Planning Authority of permitting developments which are environmentally sustainable and in accordance with the proper planning of the area. In relation to natural gas, Longford Town Council will pursue the provision of Natural Gas as an energy resource for the Town with the appropriate authority.

5.5.3 Telecommunications Structures and Broadband

The development of telecommunications infrastructure is essential to attracting investment and facilitating economic development within Longford. In order to promote industrial and commercial development, and enhance social inclusion, a quality telecommunications infrastructure is required for Longford to capitalise on investment opportunities.

The inability of many areas to access broadband, in particular, seriously affects the efficiency and competitiveness of many businesses within the Town. According to Forfas, Broadband access not only facilitates enterprise development, but also creates societal benefits. This includes also acting as an enabler for economic and social inclusion in small, rural and remote communities. Significant work has been done to date by Longford Town Council in relation to the provision of broadband throughout the town. However, a number of areas remain to be serviced and Longford Town Council will endeavour to continue the rollout of broadband within the Town. Longford Town Council's approach to telecommunications infrastructure is underpinned by the following aims:

- To secure the best possible communications infrastructure for Longford in line with the requirements of the National Development Plan and in the interests of social and economic progress, while having regard to the protection of the Town's residential, recreational and visual amenities; and areas of cultural, artistic, historical, architectural and archaeological character.
- Longford Town Council shall support and encourage the provision of an improved communications network in the Town. This is in order to facilitate the industrial, economic and social growth of Longford in a national context.

5.5.3.1 Longford Town Metropolitan Area Network (MAN)

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resource's regional broadband programme in partnership with Longford Local Authorities, has funded the construction of a high-speed, open-access Metropolitan Area Networks (MAN) in Longford Town.

The Longford MAN was completed in 2007. It is over 13.5 kilometres long, services more than 150 potential customers, and has been handed over to an interim Management Services Entity (MSE), who is facilitating early access to the network by service providers. The MSE will be contracted to manage, market, maintain and operate the network.

A MAN is a State owned, open access telecommunications network that is offered to telecommunication service providers on a wholesale basis to allow them to provide services without the need to build their own networks.

The MAN consists of a carrier-neutral duct and fibre rings linking the main commercial and public buildings in the town. Each MAN has at its hub a co-location centre where service providers can house their equipment and access the network on an open access basis.

The MAN offers wholesale duct space, dark fibre (which is dedicated fibre that is leased to a telecommunication service provider who then uses its own equipment to provide services over that fibre), and co-location facilities and managed services to service providers to enable them to deliver high speed broadband services to their retail customers.

Speedy access to information is now one of the key drivers for all sectors of the economy. It is central to the development of a knowledge based economy. The availability of this telecommunications infrastructure in Longford will enable high speed access to information for industry, public and private sector organisations. It will facilitate international e-commerce and is essential for all aspects of business including Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) and multi-nationals. It will also facilitate access to internet centred developments in areas such as banking, education and research.

The provision of the Broadband network has enhanced the potential of Longford for investment and will lead to increased economic development for Longford Town and County.

The following policy provisions aim to create a balance between the need for enhanced

telecommunications and the protection of the existing amenity of the Town area.

TEL 1: Applications for telecommunications and antennae support structures and associated equipment will be considered having regard to the guidelines for *Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures* and any updated documents issued by the DoEHLG or relevant authority. Where there are existing masts in the vicinity, co-location will be the preferred design solution. Where new masts are proposed the applicant will have to indicate investigations carried out in relation to co-location and clearly show there is no appropriate space on existing masts. Information shall be required to be submitted to the Planning Authority as to the need for a new mast.

TEL 2: In this regard, it is the policy of the Council to ascertain details of existing masts and all structures located on them within the town area as part of any relevant planning application.

TEL 3: Applications for telecommunications structures shall be considered having regard to its location; proximity of existing dwellings, childcare and educational facilities in the area; landscape characteristics, including existing screening available and the ability of the landscape to support additional screening measures and the density of existing similar structures in the area.

TEL 4: Regard shall be had to the policy of the National Development Plan with regard to telecommunications structures.

TEL 5: The Council shall continue to promote the development of broadband communication throughout the Urban area and shall facilitate this through the programme of environmental improvements and the development management process by provision of ducting and/or other facilities as appropriate.

TEL 6: Developer's may be required to provide telecommunications structures with environmentally acceptable designs, including camouflaging/disguising techniques to integrate

the structure into the surrounding landscape.

TEL 7: Proposals for telecommunications masts and antennae support structures shall be accompanied by supporting evidence demonstrating compliance with the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) Guidelines or the equivalent European pre-standard 500166-2 conditioned in licensing agreements with the DCMNR.

TEL 8: Longford Town Council shall seek the establishment of an appropriate body at a regional or national level to monitor the installation of mobile communications infrastructure with regard to proliferation, co-location, emissions, and the use of best available technology to prevent negative health and environmental impacts.

TEL 9: It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage the provision of a sufficient level of broad-band communications, internet, cable and broadcasting technologies while protecting the landscape character and amenities of the Town.

TEL 10: The possibility of establishing a regional ring of high-speed broad band communications, connecting Longford, Mullingar and Athlone, shall be investigated and promoted by the Council.

5.6 Major Accidents Directive

The Seveso II Directive (96/082/EEC) is an EU Directive that seeks to prevent major industrial accidents involving dangerous substances and to limit the consequences of such accidents on people and the environment.

There are no major accident hazard sites notified under the EC (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2006 (SI74 of 2006) within County Longford. Accordingly any new developments of this nature, and subsequent developments within the vicinity of this, shall abide by standards prescribed by the Health and Safety Authority.

Accordingly, the Council's policy is as follows:

MA 1: It is the policy of the Council to have regard to the following in assessing applications for new developments (including extensions):

- a. The Major Accidents Directive (Seveso II – 96/082/EEC)
- b. The potential effects on public health and safety.
- c. The need to ensure adequate distances between such developments and residential areas, areas of public use and any areas of sensitivity.

MA 2: Any proposals for developments within the vicinity of major accident hazard sites shall have cognisance of the required minimum separation distances as required by the Major Accidents Directive. In this regard all future proposals of this nature shall be forwarded to the Health and Safety Authority.

CHAPTER SIX

Environment Heritage and Amenities



6.1 Conservation and preservation of the Environment

The natural and man-made physical environment that makes up the character of the Town are key factors determining its sense of place and identity. Promoting growth and development within the Town and maximising socio-economic potential is central to fulfilling the Development Strategy of this plan. However, this must be carried out in manner that affords protection to the vulnerable environmental elements of the Town. Accordingly, this section is underpinned by the following aims:

- To conserve and protect important natural and man-made elements of the Town environment as appropriate
- To promote and encourage the conservation and preservation of the environment through the application of the concepts and principles of sustainability, as contained in, "Towards Sustainability – A Strategy for Ireland" and Local Agenda 21.

6.1.1 Landscape, Views and Prospects

It is the policy of the Council to identify, protect and enhance landscapes and landscape features of special environmental, historic or cultural interest. This includes gardens, parks, demesnes, historic designed landscapes, views and prospects, places and features of natural beauty and/or cultural value. Consideration will also be given to the making of Tree Preservation Orders in respect of trees or groups of trees of particular landscape value.

Therefore, the Council policy is as follows:

LS 1: It is the policy of the Council to protect and enhance the Town's landscape and streetscape, by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the existing local landscape and streetscape. Proposed developments which have a detrimental impact on the landscape will not normally be permitted.

LS 2: It is the policy of the Council to preserve views and prospects as illustrated on the accompanying map as part of Appendix 1. Any development which may impact on same shall be accompanied by an appropriate visual assessment.

LS 3: The Council shall prepare a Landscape Character Assessment for the Plan area, in consultation with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Heritage Council.

6.1.2 Prevention of Pollution

In sustaining the environment of the Town, it is essential to promote measures that prevent the pollution of water, air and soils. The Council seeks to encourage and promote the conservation and protection of all elements of the environment and consider the environmental implications of all new development, in terms of pollution potential and prevention measures, energy efficiency, transport implications and visual considerations. This assessment shall incorporate the principles of sustainable development.

6.1.2.1 Water Quality

Water Framework Directive

The main provision of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) is the protection and/or enhancement of water quality across the EU. Specifically, it provides that all water systems (lakes, rivers, ground and coastal waters) should achieve and/or be maintained at least good status by 2015.

Implementation of the WFD will have significant impacts on the management of the Towns water resources, which, in future will be managed on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBD), which are, in turn, based on the drainage regime of the major rivers of the Town and County. Longford Town is located within the Shannon (International) RBD.

River Water Quality

As identified in the 2005 River Water Quality Report published by the EPA, the River Camlin was in satisfactory condition over most of its course. Longford Town Council aims to maintain and/or enhance the condition of the River Camlin over the period of this plan.

Groundwater Quality

Groundwater quality and quantity is protected in its own right under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EEC). Groundwater is an important natural resource with only a proportion of the available source being used (Towards Setting Guideline Values for the Protection of Groundwater in Ireland, EPA). Given limited suitable surface water resources the demand for groundwater will increase, particularly in meeting the demands for drinking water. Accordingly, it is essential that known sources of groundwater used for drinking supply are protected from pollution. Appendix 8 illustrates the aquifer buffer protection zone for the Moneylagan and Cloonanny glebe boreholes, within which applications for development will be assessed for their potential to adversely impact on the groundwater quality in the vicinity.

6.1.2.2 Air Quality

Longford Town fortunately enjoys quite a high standard of air quality as there are no major or significant contributors that would greatly affect the air quality. Localised problems exist such as at the junction at Richmond Street where increased use of the private car may add to the risk of damaging the quality of the environment. The Council actively encourages any future transport initiatives and the provision of walking and cycling facilities in an attempt to reduce the number of private car trips and promote better air quality.

Accordingly, the policy of the Town Council is as follows:

ENV 1: To encourage and promote environmental awareness and environmentally friendly practices, particularly in transport, industry, agriculture and all other activities.

ENV 2: Any application for planning permission for new development, extension to existing development or intensification or change of use shall be assessed in terms of its potential impact on existing adjacent developments, existing land uses and/or the surrounding landscape. Where such development would have a significant adverse effect on the amenities of the area through pollution by noise, fumes, dust, grit or vibration, or cause pollution of air, water and/or soil, planning permission will not be forthcoming, prior to the proposal and introduction of mitigation measures agreed with the Planning Authority to eliminate negative environmental impacts or reduce them to an acceptable operating level.

ENV 3: The Council will seek to reduce the impacts of existing pollutant activities through the following measures:

- Negotiation of a reduction in the pollutant activity to a non-polluting level or a revision of operating times to reduce the impact of the activity on adjacent land uses
- Relocation to a more appropriate location where adjacent land uses are more compatible
- Imposition of conditions restricting emissions/activity
- Use of enforcement action against unauthorised developments/uses

ENV 4: The Council shall seek to protect ground and surface water resources and associated habitats and species from pollution. To this end, any identified major catchment areas of surface water bodies capable of use as a potable water resource or other beneficial use and areas of aquifer vulnerability, such as those identified at Appendix 8, shall be protected. Development of a potentially pollutant nature in these areas and any future areas identified shall be prohibited.

ENV 5: The Council shall incorporate the recommendations contained within any future River Basin District/River Basin Management Plan for the Shannon International River Basin District, in order to facilitate the Water Framework Directive.

ENV 6: It is the policy of Longford Town Council to encourage and promote compliance with the recommendations contained in the Shannon River Basin Management Plan once complete.

ENV 7: The Council shall pursue the preparation, establishment and implementation of/compliance with the following documents/regulations, and any future updates, through its Sanitary Services Section:

- The Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region
- The National Hazardous Waste Plan
- EU and National legislation on the prevention of Air and Noise pollution

ENV 8: The Council, in tandem with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) will continue the development and implementation of a Groundwater Protection Scheme.

ENV 9: The Council, in tandem with the EPA, will seek to ensure that all developments are operated in a manner that does not contribute to deterioration in air quality.

ENV 10: The Council shall encourage energy efficient design solutions, such as optimising solar gain, in order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and increase environmental quality.

ENV 11: The Council will promote the retention of trees, hedgerows and other vegetation where possible, and encourage afforestation and tree planting as a means of air purification and filtering.

ENV 12: The Council, where appropriate, shall seek to control and manage any potential point or diffuse sources of pollution with a view towards improving and maintaining good water quality. Such activities include but are not restricted to wastewater and industrial discharges, landfills, quarries, mines, contaminated land, agricultural activities, wastewater from un-sewered properties, forestry activities and the use and discharge of dangerous substances.

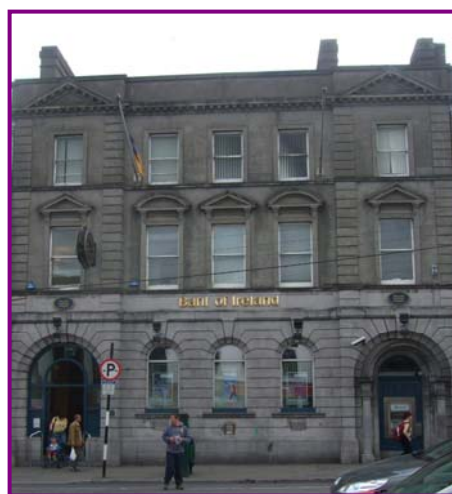
ENV 13: Development proposals that involve the physical modification of water bodies, including abstraction of water, shall be considered having regard to the potential effect on habitats and plant and animal species, with particular consideration given to Natura 2000 sites and specific actions proposed where negative impacts are anticipated.

6.2 Heritage

Heritage is recognised as an important aspect of the environment, fundamentally intertwined with all aspects of living, working and recreating within the Town. Protection and conservation of our heritage protects and conserves our quality of life, education, culture, amenity, economy and identity.

Our Heritage includes many aspects of the world around us. For example, the landscape, the hedgerows and field systems, lakes and rivers, plants and animals are all part of our natural heritage. Castles, historic sites, ringforts, houses and other buildings are part of our archaeological and built heritage. These aspects of our heritage have been defined in the Heritage Act, 1995 and include the following:

- Monuments,
- Archaeological, Architectural and heritage objects,
- Architectural heritage,
- Flora, fauna and wildlife habitats,
- Landscapes, seascapes, inland waterways and wrecks,
- Geology,
- Heritage gardens and parks.



Another important part of our heritage is our history, folklore, language and customs; in other words our cultural heritage. Heritage provides a link with the past and helps us to understand where we, and the landscape around us, have come from. In addition, aspects of our local heritage are regionally, nationally or even internationally important and are therefore protected by national or international legislation. All these elements of heritage add up to give each local area its identity and sense of place, its character and distinctiveness. It also allows us to take pride in our local area.

Heritage is also recognised as an important aspect of the environment, fundamentally intertwined with all aspects of living, working and recreating within the Town. Protection and conservation of our heritage protects and conserves our quality of life, education, culture, amenity, economy and identity. The Council therefore has outlined the following general aims:

- The Council shall aspire towards the integrated and sustainable development of the Town. Bearing in mind the basic needs and requirements of its population, the social, economic and cultural growth of the Town and the recognition of the limited capability of the rural landscape to absorb new physical development without compromising its unique character and heritage.
- The Council recognises that Longford Town has a unique heritage and it is the aim of the Town Development Plan to conserve and protect this heritage, through the process of Development Management and by affording identified monuments, artefacts and areas the relevant statutory protection.
- The following principles guide the Council's heritage objectives and policies set out in the Town Development Plan:
 - Avoid harm to the Town's heritage,
 - Mitigate the effects of harm where it cannot be avoided,
 - Compensate, where feasible and appropriate, for residual effects on the environment that cannot be further reduced,
 - Identify positive benefits that it is possible to provide for heritage.

6.2.1 General Heritage Policies and Objectives

HER 1: The Planning Authority shall promote the protection and conservation of heritage sites, monuments, artefacts and historic structures and the integrity of their setting, as listed and illustrated in the Record of Monuments and Places.

HER 2: The Planning Authority shall endeavour to identify important landscapes, streetscapes and habitats and the importance of local character, identity and distinctiveness, in both the natural and built heritage of the Town. This shall include an investigation of the Heritage Plan for the County into locally important and small scale heritage sites. Where these have been identified as important under the Heritage Plan, they shall be afforded the relevant protection.

HER 3: Applications for housing developments shall include provision for the naming of estates in Irish or Irish and English and in recognition of the cultural heritage of the area in which they are situated.

HER 4: Any proposed development which may impact on the integrity and/or setting of any monuments, sites, objects or areas of archaeological, cultural, architectural, historical or heritage importance under the protection of this Development Plan and/or the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, shall be referred to the relevant section of the DoEHLG for observations/comment prior to a grant of permission/approval being obtained. Developments which materially impinge on the character of the monument will not be permitted.

6.2.2 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological sites and monuments provide important evidence of the people and settlements that made the Town prior to the formation of the modern landscape that we recognise today. Some of the archaeological remains are distinctive and clearly visible, while others are only visible to experts or only survive beneath modern fields and settlements. Each site and monument however, has a unique character and contribution to make to the landscape of the Town and adds meaning to our understanding of the environment.

Appropriate management of archaeological remains is essential to ensure the survival of these non-renewable features. These features also provide an important education and tourism tool and contribute to creating a sense of place.

17 archaeological sites have been recorded in Longford town boundary area in the Record of Monuments and Places, protected under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994. This includes the town area. There are almost certainly a number of unknown sites that have not yet been discovered within the town.

Accordingly, the Council's policy and objectives for the protection of Longford's archaeological heritage is as follows:

ARC 1: It is an objective of the Council to protect known and unknown archaeological areas, sites, structures, monuments and objects in the Town.

ARC 2: It is an objective of the Council to protect the integrity of the setting of archaeological areas, sites, structures, monuments and objects in the Town.

ARC 3: It is an objective of the Council to encourage and promote appropriate management and enhancement of the Town's rich archaeological heritage.

ARC 4: It is an objective of the Council to encourage and promote access to and the understanding of the archaeological heritage of the Town.

ARC 5: It is the policy of the Council to presume in favour of the physical preservation in-situ of archaeological remains and their settings, where appropriate, feasible and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town. The approach will be favoured in these circumstances as the most appropriate means of protecting the heritage of the Town, in accordance with government policy.

ARC 6: It is the policy of the Council to strictly control development proposals on lands which may be detrimental to any area, site, structure, monument or object of archaeological significance, or detract from, its interpretation and setting. Development will only be permitted where the Council, in consultation with the DoEHLG, considers it acceptable, in view of its objectives and policies, and where all necessary mitigation has been carried out. Archaeological monitoring and assessment of works shall be required on or within the Zone of Archaeological Potential of a National or Recorded Monument.

ARC 7: It is the policy of the Council to seek to increase awareness, appreciation and enjoyment

of the archaeological heritage for all, through the provision of information to landowners and the community generally, in co-operation with statutory and other partners.

ARC 8: In securing the preservation of the archaeological heritage, the Planning Authority will have regard to the recommendations of the DoEHLG, both in respect of whether or not to grant Planning Permission and in respect of the condition to which permission would, if granted, be subject.

ARC 9: Where necessary, the Planning Authority may impose, through the Development Management Process, conditions to ensure that adequate measures are taken to identify and mitigate the archaeological impacts of any development, including where required the completion of a licensed excavation.

6.2.3 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity



There is a diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats within the Longford environs; these include woodland, grassland, stream and canal habitats. This diversity, however, is coming under increasing threat as the development pressure intensifies and the demand for land for new development increases. A sustainable approach is needed to protect and conserve this natural heritage.

European and national legislation protects the important and valuable heritage areas within the Town. This is achieved through the designation of sites as Natural Heritage Areas [(p) NHAs], Special Areas of Conservation [(c) SACs] and Special Protection Areas [(c) SPAs]. The responsibility for designating sites lies with the DoEHLG, however the Council also aim to ensure their protection into the future. In addition to the aforementioned designations, there are other measures which may be used to designated sites of importance such as Ramsar sites protected under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

In line with midland regional policy and in accordance with policies outlined throughout this document, the protection and enhancement of the Quality of Life of Longford Town is an underlying theme of the Town Development Plan. A difficult concept to define, one of the primary indicators of a high quality of life is a high quality environment, and an essential indicator of environmental quality is biodiversity. The maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity is a fundamental tenet in the achievement of sustainable development, a principle to which all policy contained in this document is bound by legislation.

The interconnectedness of concepts throughout the plan create complex issues for the developer, yet these are essential to strengthen the policy response to broad areas such as the natural environment and biodiversity. In this regard, this section should not be consulted in isolation but in conjunction with the other sections of the plan and in association with other documents such as the National Biodiversity Plan once complete.

While there are no designated habitats within the town council boundary such as Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas, there is a Natural Heritage Area to the south west of the town, which forms part of the Royal Canal (site code NHA 002103).

The policy of the Council is set out hereunder.

NHB 1: It is an objective of the Council to protect, conserve and enhance the Town's biodiversity and natural heritage. This includes wildlife (flora and fauna), habitats, landscapes and/or landscape features of importance to wildlife or which play a key role in the conservation and management of natural resources such as water.

NHB 2: It is an objective of the Council to encourage and promote the appropriate management and enhancement of the Town's biodiversity and natural heritage.

NHB 3: It is an objective of the Council to encourage and promote access to and understanding of the natural heritage of the Town.

NHB 4: It is the policy of the Council to protect important geological and geomorphological sites in the County, including any sites proposed to be designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).

NHB 5: The Council, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, shall pursue the preparation, establishment and implementation of Habitat Mapping and a Wetland Survey for the Town in tandem with any similar proposals to be carried out in the County area.

NHB 6: It is the policy of the Council to protect sites designated in National and European legislation, and in other relevant International Conventions, Agreements and Processes. This includes sites proposed to be designated or designated as:

- a. Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive 1 (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora)
- b. Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds)

Both the Birds and Habitats Directives have been transposed in Irish law by Ministerial Regulation. The European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 are the most important of these because they provide for the protection measures and management regime that apply to SPAs and SACs.

- c. Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Nature Reserves and Refuges for Flora or Fauna under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000.

NHB 7: The Council shall seek to identify, protect and conserve, in co-operation with the relevant statutory authorities, vulnerable, rare and threatened species of wild fauna and flora and their habitats with particular reference to those species identified in national and European legislation, and in other International Conventions, Agreements and Processes.

It is clear that beyond the boundaries of the designated sites within the Town are areas that are valuable in terms of local habitat and biodiversity and make up a network of linked spaces that contribute to the Town's Natural Heritage. These features include rivers, the canal and their corridors, lakes, ponds, hedgerows, important stands of trees and woodlands.

NHB 8: The Council shall seek to co-operate with statutory and other relevant agencies to identify and protect a representative sample of Town's wildlife habitats, of local or regional importance, not otherwise protected by legislation. In addition, it is Council policy to protect: Ramsar sites under The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (especially as Waterfowl Habitat).

NHB 9: Protect and enhance important landscape features and their setting including rivers, streams, canals, lakes and associated wetlands such as reedbeds and swamps; ponds; springs; bogs; fens; trees; woodlands and scrub; hedgerows and other field boundary types such as stone walls and ditches. These are important because:

a) They form part of a network of habitats, corridors and 'stepping stones' essential for wildlife to flourish, thus providing a high quality natural environment for all, and/or

b) They protect and enhance surface water and groundwater resources and are essential as part of the integrated approach to the management of water resources, necessary to ensure the highest water quality into the future, as set out in the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000.60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy).

NHB 10: The trees identified in the Appendix 9 shall be protected from damage/removal. It is the policy of the Council to carry out a tree survey of the town to identify further trees suitable for Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and to protect the important stands of trees throughout the town.

6.2.3.1 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the measure of the number, variety and variability of living organisms including from microscopic bacteria to more complex plants and animals. Under Section 9 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000, a statutory responsibility is placed on the Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to "promote the conservation of biological diversity." Ireland is committed to promoting the programme "Countdown 2010", which is an alliance of Government,

state agencies, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and private sector interests to achieve biodiversity targets. The primary mechanism for achieving this is the National Biodiversity Plan of which a key concept is that local authorities (and other agencies) will share responsibility for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows:

NHB 11: The Council shall facilitate the provision of any biodiversity plan prepared for County Longford and shall have regard to the provisions outlined within any such plan.

NHB 12: The Council shall facilitate increased awareness of the Town's biodiversity and natural heritage through the provision of information to landowners and the community generally, in co-operation with statutory and other partners.

NHB 13: It is the policy of the Council to encourage investigation into the establishment of wildlife areas and corridors, particularly in the context of educational, recreational and amenity facilities.

NHB 14: The Council will seek to enhance the Town's biodiversity and natural heritage, including its landscape, by promoting appropriate recreational and amenity schemes.

NHB 15: Proposed large-scale developments, particularly on greenfield sites and in environmentally sensitive areas, shall be assessed in terms of their impact on the biodiversity of the area and where appropriate screened for Appropriate Assessment in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

NHB 16: The Planning Authority may require mitigating measures in certain cases where it is evident that biodiversity is likely to be affected. These measures may, in association with other specified requirements, include establishment of wildlife areas/corridors/parks, tree planting, wildflower meadows/marshes and other areas. With regard to residential development, in certain

cases, these measures may be carried out in conjunction with the provision of open space and/or play areas.

NHB 17: The Council is committed to facilitating the updated National Biodiversity Plan during the lifetime of the Development Plan and implementing the policies contained within, where relevant and practicable.

NHB 18: The Council shall facilitate the control and eradication of invasive species in order to protect and enhance the biodiversity and infrastructure of the Town.

NHB 19: The Planning Authority requires that developments shall have regard to biodiversity within their landscaping and planting schemes, utilising site-appropriate native plants and, where feasible, facilitating wildlife corridors and access to the natural heritage of the Town.

NHB 20: The Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the biodiversity value of the public realm within its control, through the adoption of appropriate planting schemes and landscaping and trimming methods.

6.2.3.2 Geological Sites

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) in tandem with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG, established the Irish Geological Heritage Programme in 1998. The programme aims to identify and select sites of geological heritage within Ireland for future designations as NHAs. To date no geological site has been statutorily designated through the DoEHLG as an NHA. However, the GSI has identified County Geological Sites (CSGs) within Longford that may eventually become designated sites. One of these sites is located just outside the functional boundary of Longford town, Ardnacassagh Quarry.

Table 6.1 Geological Sites

Site Name	Easting	Northing	Principal Characteristics	Critical	Townland(s)/District
			feature(s) key works		

Ardnacassagh Quarry	215200	275400	Carboniferous stratigraphy	Ardnacassagh
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Accordingly the policy of the Council is as follows:

GEO 1: It is the policy of the Council to protect sites of geological importance within the Town, from inappropriate development that may result in the deterioration of the geological feature.

6.2.3.3 Inland Waterways

The Camlin River flows through Longford Town to the north of the town centre and the Royal Canal enters the Town to the south west. These waterways are important natural assets and provide a potential tourism resource as well as an essential natural corridor for biodiversity within the Town. Accordingly the Council's policies are as follows:

ILW 1: The Royal Canal and Camlin River are recognised as important amenity and recreational resources and, as such, it is the policy of the Council to preserve, protect and enhance these important resources.

ILW 2: The Council shall encourage and promote the enhancement, management, protection and the promotion of access to and understanding of the inland waterways of the Town. Walkway development will be promoted, particularly in the vicinity of the Canal and the Camlin River.

ILW 3: The Council shall, where possible and where resources permit, provide additional accesses to the river and canal banks, through the acquisition of land for public rights of way and parking and lay-by facilities, where appropriate. In areas adjacent to canals and rivers where planning permission is sought, conditions may be attached to any consequent grant of permission requiring retention or creation of public access to the waterway in order to facilitate the creation or expansion of walking/cycling routes.

ILW 4: It is the policy of the Council to protect, enhance and improve existing public rights of way where appropriate and where resources permit. The Council will also investigate the provision of additional rights of way, where appropriate through agreement with existing landowners and through the development management process.

ILW 5: It is the policy of the Council to require that land adjacent to river and canal banks in the Town be reserved for public access provision.

ILW 6: Development will be strictly controlled in the vicinity of the inland waterways of the Town and will not normally be permitted. Application for such development shall be assessed, in addition to normal planning criteria, in terms of its potential impact on the visual, recreational, ecological and environmental integrity of the area.

ILW 7: The Council shall encourage and promote the investigation and use of the potential of the Canal towpaths for the provision of designated walking and cycle routes and as wildlife corridors for recreational, amenity and educational purposes. They will also promote links with any further designated walking, cycling and wildlife routes existing or proposed throughout the County. This should be carried out in the context of an important resource for the population of the Town and with a view towards the promotion of sustainable tourism projects in Longford Town.

ILW 8: The Council shall also promote and encourage the ongoing works to improve the navigability of the Royal Canal, and in particular the continuation of the Canal into Longford Town and the potential redevelopment of the former canal harbour at the rear of the Market Square.

ILW 9: The Council shall take whatever measures it considers necessary in order to protect, enhance and preserve the built and natural heritage of the Royal Canal and its associated structures. This shall include the natural setting of the Canal and its views and prospects.

ILW 10: On channels managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) a 5m (for minor channels) or 10m (for major channels) wide access strip shall be retained for opening access and maintenance purposes. The access strip should not be landscaped, paved or otherwise developed in a manner that would prevent access by a mechanical plant.

6.2.4 Architectural Heritage

This section should be read in conjunction with Annex 1 and 2.

The architectural heritage of the Town represents a finite resource and irreplaceable asset to the Town and contributes to the quality of our built environment. It is important that these structures are protected as they are illustrative of a period within the historical landscape.

The Record of Protected Structures, contained at Annex 1, and the proposed Battery Road Architectural Conservation Area (contained at Annex 2) are proposed in accordance with the provisions of Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. Notifications to owners/occupiers of proposed protected structures have been carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

The general policy of the Council with regard to architectural heritage is as follows:

ARCH 1: It is an objective of the Council to promote the maintenance, conservation and appropriate re-use of the existing building stock as a sustainable development issue and because of the contribution of older buildings, both individually and collectively, to the unique character, heritage and identity of the Town.

ARCH 2: It is an objective of the Council that all development should be appropriate to its setting in the landscape or townscape, and should respond to and reinforce local character and heritage. This will ensure that high quality environments are either maintained or created by

development.

ARCH 3: It is an objective of the Council that all new development in urban and rural situations shall be guided by sustainable development principles.

ARCH 4: It is the policy of the Council to encourage and promote the enhancement, management, protection and the promotion of access to and understanding of the architectural heritage of the Town.

ARCH 5: It is the policy of the Council that new works to existing buildings and structures of architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness. In particular, original or traditional doors, windows, window/shopfront detailing and original or traditional exterior plaster finishes should be retained and repaired wherever possible. Replacement of existing features, such as windows, shall reflect the character of the existing structure in terms of the materials used and the architectural detailing. For example, timber sliding-sash windows should not be substituted with aluminium or uPVC windows.

ARCH 6: To ensure that a qualified conservation architect or other specialist in this regard is involved in proposals relating to protected structures.

6.2.4.1 Record of Protected Structures

A list of Protected Structures has been prepared and is available at Annex 1 of this Plan. This complements the already existing structures that are protected throughout the town and has been informed through the public consultation process, and the Draft National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The proposed structures chosen are representative of the diversity of architectural heritage within the Town and are of various categories of interest, including architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical and social.

In addition to the statutory protection afforded to these structures, the policy of the Council is as

follows:

RPS 1: It is the policy of the Council to ensure the protection of structures included in the Record of Protected Structures generally and in particular by:

- a)** Controlling development which would alter the character of protected structures and proposed protected structures
- b)** Monitoring the condition of protected structures and proposed protected structures to identify those endangered by neglect, vandalism or unauthorised development and taking appropriate action.
- c)** Preventing the endangerment of protected structures in the Council's ownership.

RPS 2: It is the policy of the Council to issue Declarations as to the type of works that would materially affect the character of a protected structure and therefore require planning permission.

RPS 3: It is the policy of the Council to administer the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Conservation Grants scheme, including the assessment of grant applications, ensuring that the works enhance and do not adversely affect the character of a protected structure and have been carried out in accordance with the conditions of the grant. Furthermore, the Council shall pursue the availability of greater grants for works to be carried out to Protected Structures.

RPS 4: It is the policy of the Council to acquire protected structures, where possible and where economic constraints permit, if this is necessary to protect the structure. On acquiring the structure, its use or sale shall be considered by the Council.

RPS 5: All planning applications for works relating to Protected Structures shall be accompanied by Architectural Heritage Impact Assessments, as set out in the Architectural Heritage Protection

– Guidelines for Local Authorities (DoEHLG, 2004).

6.2.4.2 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights that is of special architectural, historical archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure and whose characters is an objective of a Development Plan to preserve. The legislation associated with ACAs are contained within Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000. ACA legislation can be used to protect groups of structures which have a visual richness or historical importance or designed landscapes.

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights that is of special architectural, historical archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure and whose characters is an objective of a Development Plan to preserve. The legislation associated with ACAs are contained within Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000. ACA legislation can be used to protect groups of structures which have a visual richness, historical importance or designed landscapes.

The Act provides that all development plans must now include objectives for preserving the character of ACAs if there are places, areas groups of structures or townscapes of special interest or which contribute to the appreciation of protected structures situated within a planning authorities functional area.

ACA Architectural Conservation Area Battery Road

Battery Road is unique in Longford. It consists of a mixture of prominent residential homes, churches, schools, public buildings and offices. It is situated to the north of Longford Town within the urban boundary. It has a distinct character due to its sylvan setting and mix of large historic homes, generous plot sizes and historic churches. The junction of Bridge Street and Battery Road once formed part of the historic centre of the town. The ACA also contains important archaeological sites which are recorded as National Monuments, these are listed below:

Religious House - Dominican Friars
Castle remains
Fortification

It is proposed to create an Architectural Conservation Area containing

1. Battery Road
2. Junction of Battery Road and Lisbrack Terrace
3. Junction of Battery Road and Demesne Lane
4. Silchester Terrace
5. Church Street
6. Church Street Junction with Bridge Street

The characteristics which are intrinsic to the uniqueness of Battery Road include the following, details of which are shown in Annex 2:

Plot size	Walls
Architectural Character	Footpaths
Landscaping	

The ACA boundary attempts to establish a meaningful designation in order to protect the unique character of this particular part of Longford Town. The ACA boundary was assessed in accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, *Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, 2004. The boundary is shown in the Annex 2.

The boundary of the ACA is informed with reference to the existing curtilage of the structures along the aforementioned Streets.

This ACA possesses the following categories of special interest:

1. Architectural,
2. Historical,
3. Archaeological,
4. Artistic,
5. Cultural,
6. Scientific,
7. Social.

The policy of Longford Town Council is therefore set out hereunder:

ACA 1: It is the policy of Longford Town Council to protect the special character of places, areas, groups of structures or townscapes within the Town that

- a)** have special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value or
- b)** that contribute to the appreciation of protected structures by the introduction of Architectural Conservation Areas.

It is therefore the policy of Longford Town Council to designate Battery Road as an Architectural Conservation Area, while reserving the right to designate further ACAs in accordance with the provisions of the 2000 Act over the lifetime of the Plan.

ACA 2: Development proposals within the Architectural Conservation Area will only be considered where the following criteria are satisfactorily addressed:

- a)** The development preserves and enhances the character of the area.
- b)** The development is in sympathy with the built form of the area.
- c)** The form, scale, height, materials and detailing of the development respects the characteristics of the area.
- d)** Where appropriate, views of importance, including within, into and out of the area are preserved.
- e)** Landscape features of significance, including important stands of trees and hedgerows that contribute to the character of the area are protected.
- f)** The development shall not result in any environmental problems such as noise or nuisance which would be detrimental to the particular character of the area.

ACA 3: It is the policy of the Council to retain, enhance and augment historic items of street furniture in an ACA to ensure their positive contribution to the streetscape is maintained.

ACA 4: It is the policy of the Council to retain the distinctive sylvanian character of the ACA to ensure this positive contribution to the streetscape is maintained.

ACA 5: It is the policy of the Council to respect the urban grain, plot sizes and density, scale and massing which add to the existing definition of the character associated with the ACA.

ACA 6: It is a policy of the Council to require the preservation and reinstatement of traditional details and materials on existing buildings and the streetscape where improvements or maintenance works are being carried out.

6.2.5 Historic Gardens, Demesnes and Designed Landscapes

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage under the remit of the Office of Public Works has prepared a survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes. As identified by the Survey, demesnes date back to the time of the Anglo-Normans where areas surrounding a manor were retained by the Lord for his own occupation. Many factors have since contributed to the significant changes that have occurred over the years, including the flourishing of garden design in the 18th and 19th centuries and changes in land ownership under the Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 and the Land Acts of the 19th and 20th centuries. Such changes are reflective of the aesthetic, social and cultural circumstances of the time.

The Survey has identified 3 sites in Longford Town that are considered to be important historic gardens, demesnes and landscapes⁵. The identified gardens are located at Ashfield House, Glebe

⁵ DoHHLG, National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, *Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/Surveys/Gardens/> [Accessed 11 April, 2008]

House, Templemichael and Viewmount House. It is an objective of the Council to ensure that development does not adversely affect the character of these areas or result in the deterioration of the features of special historic interest.

Accordingly the policy of the Council is as follows:

HG 1: The Council will support the publication of an Inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes and where possible will protect the intrinsic character of those within the Town.

6.2.6 Quality and Character of Urban Areas

It is essential that the quality and character of the urban area is preserved and enhanced in order to improve the quality of the places where people live. The visual quality of urban areas has an impact on the existing community so it is envisioned that any new developments will respect and enhance the environment for existing residents as well as new ones.

CHAR 1: It is the policy of the Council that areas of vacant, derelict and under-used land within existing built-up areas (brownfield sites) should be brought into productive use, as an alternative to the use of Greenfield sites which inevitably involves some loss of natural resources.

CHAR 2: It is the policy of the Council that all new development in urban and rural situations must be guided by high standards of design. During the lifetime of the Plan, the Council will produce appropriate design guidance in this regard.

CHAR 3: It is the policy of the Council to encourage the re-use of the existing building stock in an appropriate manner in line with standard conservation principles and the Council's policy on sustainable development in order to integrate a proposed development into the existing streetscape and to reduce construction and demolition waste.

6.3 Amenities

Quality recreation and leisure facilities have a fundamental impact on the quality of life in a town and on its social integration and cohesiveness. Amenities within the Town include natural and recreational amenities as well as social and community infrastructure. Longford offers a wide-range of active and passive recreational facilities.

The choice of sporting clubs is diverse, including Golf, Gaelic Football, Hurling, Soccer, Boxing and Swimming. As well as the sporting clubs there are a number of leisure groups, including Youth and Drama groups at the Backstage Theatre, a cinema and Temperance Hall, which houses Attic Youth Café. In addition, there are many pubs and a selection of restaurants, located mainly in the town centre. Longford Town Soccer Club have a modern all seated ground at Mullolagher about 2 miles from the Town, on the Strokestown Road. In addition, a bowling and recreational complex, along with several children's activity centres, are located on the Athlone Road to the south west of the Town.

The main area of public open space located within the town is at the Mall, along the banks of the Camlin River. The protection of existing and provision of new open space in the town is critical in providing an improved quality of life for the residents of Longford. Additional sporting facilities have been developed at the Mall, with the provision of a new swimming pool, a new outdoor all-weather soccer pitch, extension and refurbishment of the gym and indoor playing pitch. It is proposed to further extend these facilities with the provision of a running track and additional facilities at this location.

Longford's position on the River Camlin, coupled with the largely undeveloped Royal Canal, offers an excellent opportunity to develop both water features as public amenities, including the possibility of the extension of the Royal Canal spur into Longford Town. Longford Town Council will ensure that any future development of these areas will incorporate a reasonable set back from the river edge, a riverside walk and a comprehensive programme of landscaping.

The zoning map contained at Appendix One outlines a number of areas designated for recreation and amenity. Included in this is a proposed new area in an elevated position to the south of the town that commands striking views over the urban area and would augment an already well utilised walking route. This proposal for a "Town View Park" is, in addition to the views available, proposed on the basis of its proximity to large areas of medium density housing and its accessibility to the town centre.

There are already a number of walkways within the town, including the Mall walk and the Bypass Route. These walks should be protected and further enhanced. In developing such routes the Town can build on its natural assets of the river and canal whilst providing other links to locations such as sports fields and community facilities. A much enhanced network of walking and cycling routes, including amenity walks along the waterways and heritage trails in and around the town centre can be marketed widely to attract visitors and encourage them to stay longer. It is proposed to augment these walking routes with the addition of a "Green Lane" to the south of the town to enhance the recreational and amenity potential of this area.

During the previous plan period, there has been considerable success in improving the amenity and recreational facilities within the Town, in particular the creation of the all-weather pitches at the Mall, the construction of a new swimming pool, the refurbishment of the Temperance Hall, the improvement of the approach roads to the Town and the upgrading of footpaths throughout the Town.

Accordingly the policies of the Council are as follows:

AM 1: The Planning Authority shall control development in protected areas (designated views, ridge lines, broad zone of the Canal, European sites, etc.) which has the potential to negatively impact on the scenic, heritage and cultural assets of the Town.

AM 2: To protect existing rights of way and investigate further provision particularly in relation to access to the Royal Canal and the Camlin River and areas of historical, archaeological, architectural and cultural importance. To this end, the Council shall investigate the compilation of a register of rights of way within the Town.

AM 3: Developers of residential schemes may be required, as a condition of any grant of planning permission, to locate open spaces in such a way as to provide links to or the consolidation of areas of public open space. This requirement may be over and above the minimum required open space provision as set out in the residential policy section of this document.

AM 4: To promote the provision, improvement and expansion of sports facilities in the Town, subject to normal planning criteria and the proper planning and sustainable development of the Town.

AM 5: To continue the development of walking and cycling routes throughout the town area and beyond, in particular, the development of riverside and canalside walking routes, including in particular the Camlin River amenity walk.

AM 6: To maintain and develop the amenity potential of the canal for recreation and develop a linear park along the Royal Canal.

AM 7: To promote the opening of the Longford branch line of the Royal Canal, and the development of a Canal harbour.

AM 8: To ensure that any future development along the Canal and River provides a right of way and does not disproportionately affect their amenity value.

AM 9: To promote and facilitate the establishment of a County Museum within its powers and subject to available resources.

AM 10: To aid the creation of a pedestrian link from Abbeycartron to the Mall complex.

AM 11: To promote and facilitate the provision of playground facilities at a number of locations within the Town area and to draw up a scheme in this regard.

AM 12: To further develop the recreational facilities at The Mall, including investigating the

provision of a running track.

AM 13: To protect and enhance important vistas/views within the Town and environs including those identified at Appendix 1.

AM 14: To provide and develop walking and cycling routes throughout the Town, particularly ones linking various areas of public open spaces and amenity in accordance with Appendix 7.

AM 15: To ensure through the development management process, that adequate public open space is provided in all residential developments, and that existing open spaces are properly maintained.

AM 16: Longford Town Council will to the extent of its power, resist the loss or reduction in any form of public open space.

AM 17: To promote additional tree planting in specific areas, in particular along the Royal Canal and Camlin river walks and to identify further areas that may benefit from similar landscaping improvements.

6.3.1 Social and Community

Building strong, inclusive communities is a key element in achieving sustainable development objectives. Sustainable communities require not only economic development, but also provision of and access to education, health and community support services, amenities and leisure services and a good quality built environment. Communities also require opportunities to meet, interact and form bonds, essential prerequisites to the development of a sense of place and belonging.

In all communities, despite the provision of these services and opportunities, certain groups and individuals tend to remain isolated and face barriers in accessing the same opportunities as others. These groups and individuals require specific policies that assist in overcoming these barriers and enable them to have the same quality of life as the rest of the community. These specific social inclusion policies are essential, if inclusive equitable communities are to develop.

Under Strand II of the RAPID Programme (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) for provincial towns, Longford was designated as a RAPID town. The aim of the RAPID programme in Longford is to co-ordinate and improve services aimed at the RAPID target groups through strategic and joint planning, targeting of existing and additional investment and community participation. RAPID aims at eliminating poverty and enhancing social inclusion by promoting equality of opportunity and participation. An Area Implementation Team (AIT) for Longford was established on the direction of the Government. The AIT aims to co-ordinate and improve services aimed at the RAPID target groups through strategic and joint planning, targeting of existing and additional investment and community participation.

The population growth experienced in Longford Town in recent years may be a result of in-migration and recent national economic growth and development. This has led to an influx of new residents into the Town. Opportunities for interaction between new residents and established members of the community can often be few with the result that social bonds and a sense of community takes longer to develop. The long-term impact of this can be isolation from the community and consequently from the structures and institutions which provide services to that community.

Pockets of unemployment act as barriers to the workforce. These barriers include a lack of adequate childcare facilities and access to education and training opportunities, which continue to affect certain groups and areas. Access to services remains difficult for some, particularly for

example for people with disabilities or those living in isolated rural areas without adequate public transport services available to them.

The provision of services and facilities can create the environment in which members of the community interact. Essential for health, well-being and social development the provision of community, leisure and cultural facilities and a good quality environment make places attractive to live in. Over the last ten to fifteen years, residential and economic development has facilitated the provision of a range of community and recreational facilities. The level of community, recreational and cultural facilities remains inadequate to serve the needs and expectations of the local community in some areas of the Town. This Development Plan will seek to address such inadequacies.

6.3.1.1 Community Services

Planning for community facilities has become increasingly difficult in the context of dynamic and complex demographic trends. Rapid increases in population over the last two census periods have been accompanied by substantial change in the composition of that population. Immigration has become the dominant feature of population growth, accounting for 75% of the increase in the 2006 census figures, as compared to 25% in 2002.

This shifting demographic base has wide ranging implications for the development of community services, as the needs of the population have changed significantly over the period of the current plan. More importantly, these needs cannot be anticipated over time as with a population growth attributable to natural increase, which provides predictable demographic profiles (this subject is addressed in more detail at the introduction).

These current trends are unstable and extremely susceptible to external economic shocks. It is in this challenging context that planning for community services will occur into the future, requiring a robust and adaptable policy base from which services can be provided promptly and with precision.

SC 1: It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of community services, where appropriate, in order to meet the needs of new and existing communities.

6.3.1.2 Schools and Education Facilities

Responsibility for the provision of National and Post Primary Schools and education in Longford Town lies with the Department of Education and Science. There is considerable pressure within the Town for school spaces. A number of potential school sites have been identified in the Northern Environs and Southern Environs Local Area Plans within the Town area which would service the town. The existing schools within the town are:

Table 6.2 School Facilities

Location	Name	Level/Type
St. Mel's Road	St. Mel's College	Secondary
Longford	Mean Scoil Mhuire	Secondary
Templemichael	Oliver Plunkett Vocational School	Secondary/Vocational
St. Mel's Road	Scoil Naomh Michael	National
Battery Road	St. John's N.S.	National
Longford	St. Joseph's Convent	National
Farranyoogan	Gaelscoil an Longfoirt	National
Templemichael	St. Emer's	National
Battery Road	St. Christopher's S.S.	Special School

The Gaelscoil an Longfoirt is currently located in temporary accommodation just outside the town boundary at Farranyoogan. Information received from the Department of Education indicates that additional land will be required to be reserved to accommodate the expansion of the school. The area in question is located outside the town boundary but is dealt within the Southern Environs Local Area Plan, which is currently in preparation, with appropriate lands being reserved for such development. The Department also indicates that it may be prudent to reserve an additional site for possible new school dependent on population developing. An indicative site has been identified in the Northern Environs for the development of a new school, which will be reserved. The Department has also indicated St. Joseph's Convent NS and Meán Scoil Mhuire Secondary School have applied for major capital expenditure for additional accommodation on their existing sites.

In addition, facilities such as youth reach services, adult education, literacy promotion and further education courses are on offer within the town. Longford VEC, located along Battery Road, offers guidance, support and education and training opportunities for adults and provides an invaluable

resource to adults of Longford Town, responding to the needs of the local population. Accordingly, the Council's policy is as follows:

SC 2: To facilitate and promote the expansion and improvement of education facilities including third level and adult education facilities, where possible, in appropriate locations and in accordance with the new code of practice or subsequent update issued by the DoEHLG.

SC 3: it is the policy of the Council, to ensure that adequate lands are available in appropriate and accessible areas in the town for the provision, expansion and/or improvement of educational facilities through the zoning programme under this town plan and the relevant Local Area Plans.

SC 4: To encourage and support the development of a 3rd level outreach institution within Longford Town.

6.3.1.3 Childcare Facilities

Childcare facilities have become an increasingly important element in the Town's economy. They enable many people to return to the workforce and promote social inclusion. Funding from central government has led to increased provision of facilities within the Town over the last number of years. This is a trend that is likely to continue well into the future given the rapidly changing demographic profile of the population and its associated demands.

The Council recognise the importance of the provision of high quality childcare facilities in order to contribute to the social, emotional and educational development of children and improve access to employment opportunities for parents and guardians.

The provision of childcare facilities within the Town is underpinned by the following aims:

- To encourage and facilitate the provision of a broad range of high quality childcare facilities in appropriate areas. This is in order to promote the social, emotional and educational development of children and increased economic development through the expansion of employment opportunities for parents/guardians.

- To promote the provision and expansion of appropriate childcare facilities in suitable locations in accordance with national guidelines and the Childcare (pre-school services) Regulations, 1996.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows:

SC 5: Areas zoned Residential, Educational, Institutional and/or Commercial will generally be considered suitable for the establishment of childcare facilities subject to usual planning considerations.

SC 6: Areas within a light industrial/business park designation will generally be considered favourably, subject to normal planning criteria, in particular, the availability of safe access and drop-off points to facilitate the development. Areas within or adjacent to sites utilised for heavy and/or extractive industries will not usually be considered for the provision of childcare facilities.

SC 7: The following planning criteria will be used to assess applications for childcare facilities in all cases:

- (a) The suitability of the site for the size and type of facility proposed,
- (b) The availability of appropriate external play areas,
- (c) The accessibility of the proposed development, particularly in relation to public transport nodes, pedestrian access from existing residential areas and/or the workplaces of potential clients and existing educational facilities,
- (d) The ability of the applicant to provide safe access, adequate parking, circulation and drop off facilities for clients and staff,
- (e) The implications of the proposed development on the existing traffic flow and general road safety of the area,
- (f) The availability of suitable sanitary services, or the ability of the applicant to provide such services safely within the site,
- (g) The proposed operating hours of the facility.

SC 8: In the case of proposed developments in areas other than those mentioned above, discussions with the Planning Department at Pre-Planning stage are highly recommended. In this

regard and prior to arranging a pre-planning consultation, the applicant is advised to discuss their proposal with the relevant representatives from the Health Service Executive and Fire Department, and incorporate their respective requirements in order to facilitate useful pre-planning discussions.

SC 9: In addition to the normal documents to be submitted in association with an application for Planning Permission, it is advisable that the following information is submitted as part of an application for permission for a childcare facility:

- A description of the nature of the facility, e.g. full day care, sessional day care, drop-in facility, after-school care etc. to include the numbers and ages of children to be catered for
- Parking provision, vehicle circulation and drop-off areas for customers and staff
- Proposed hours of operation
- Provision, maintenance and security of open space.

SC 10: The Planning Authority shall consider applications for planning permission for childcare facilities in the context of *The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities* (DoEHLG, 2001)

Applicants should have regard to the requirements of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996 in the preparation of any application for planning permission for child care facilities.

6.3.1.4 Health Care Facilities

Responsibility for the provision of Health Care Facilities in Longford lies with the Health Service Executive (HSE). However, it is the policy of the Council to facilitate and encourage the provision of improved health care facilities in appropriate locations, subject to the relevant design criteria.

St. Joseph's Hospital on the Dublin Road provides primary health care facilities for Longford, including a casualty department, an aged-care unit and a Midoc service. There have been recent expansions at the hospital to enlarge the casualty department. There are a number of doctor's

surgeries within the Town, offering alternative treatments. It is the policy of the Council to ensure that adequate lands are available in appropriate and accessible areas for the provision, expansion or improvement of Health Care facilities.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows:

SC 12: To increase existing and promote the provision of additional essential local health services including private Medical Centres.

SC 13: In relation to proposed surgery development, including change of use from residential development, for medical practitioners including doctors, dentists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, chiropodists, etc. the following issues shall be taken into consideration (in addition to normal planning criteria) in the assessment of applications for planning permission:

- The availability of car parking in accordance with Development Plan standards
- The potential impact on the residential amenity of the area
- The size of the proposed practice in relation to the catchment area and the character of its location.

6.3.1.5 Fire Services

Longford County Council is responsible for the provision of the Fire Service in the Town. In this regard, the Council has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of the Longford Fire Station. The Council aims to ensure that the Fire Station is adequate to meet the needs of the Fire Service and to provide an appropriate level of Fire Service cover in the Town.

Longford Town Council has a role to play with regard to ensuring that Fire Service vehicles can access locations where fires or other incidents occur. In this regard the views and requirements of the Fire Service will be taken into account when decisions are being made in relation to proposed developments.

The Council also seeks to ensure that Fire Safety Standards are maintained on an ongoing basis. The Fire Service carries out inspections of many premises on an annual basis and in certain

circumstances the requirement to undertake particular works or other measures may be during periods when their operations are restricted, however the principle responsibility of the Council is to ensure that the safety of persons is prioritised.

Accordingly, the policy of the Council is as follows:

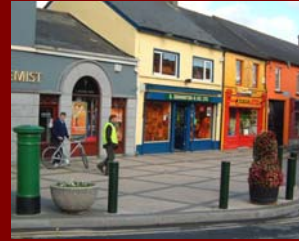
SC 14: To assess and evaluate applications for fire safety certificates through the Chief Fire Officer and pursue its fire prevention programme.

SC 15: To provide advice and guidance with regard to proposed developments in order to ensure that appropriate provision is incorporated in the design of developments that reduce the likelihood of injury or damage to property.

SC 16: To carry out the required inspections of properties in order to ensure that the risk of injury or damage to property is minimised and to ensure that any requirements to undertake works are communicated to the owners or operators of properties.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Town Centre



7.1 Introduction

Longford Town Centre has much to offer in terms of retail potential and an attractive environment for work and leisure purposes, with a strong main street and improved permeability throughout the Town. Longford Town Council has been proactive in the identification of derelict sites which negatively affect the townscape and will continue to address the issue of dereliction within the town centre. All new applications for development within the town centre should also focus on the public realm with pedestrian permeability and urban design important factors for consideration.

A key aim of the Town Centre strategy is to provide a pedestrian friendly town centre at a pedestrian scale, with rationalised traffic movements within the core area.

7.2 Sustainable Urban Design

Longford Town contains the administrative headquarters of Longford Local Authorities and is the commercial, retail, service and industrial centre of the County. It is the policy of the Council to promote and enhance this role, and to protect the Town from any proposals which may detract from its position as a County/Regional centre.

A core principle of the development strategy underlying the Town Plan is to achieve sustainable, high quality urban environments through accepted design principles in new development, and to promote the enhancement of existing streets and spaces that form and shape the public realm.

Good urban design adds value by encouraging pedestrian movement in particular areas through

the provision of attractive, inviting and safe walking environments. Ensuring that development is at a human scale, with a tight urban grain and maximum activity at ground level increases the vibrancy of the urban area, thereby increasing the potential economic viability of development with spin-off social and environmental benefits. High quality urban design can be defined as places for people, places with which people identify and have a sense of belonging where they feel comfortable and safe walking to employment, services, public transport and other destinations.

Improvements in the town centre have taken place over the last number of years. Of particular note is the redevelopment of the Market Square which greatly enhances this area of the town. The town centre will be further enhanced by the provision of the N5 bypass, which will reduce traffic congestion in the town centre and provide an important opportunity to revitalise the public realm in the absence of the traffic from same.

The planned increase in Longford's population will bring additional demand for a new range of day-to-day services, including recreational, amenity, educational and community facilities, local employment and living opportunities. If Longford is to attract and retain this growth and investment it is essential that quality urban environments are provided facilitating a high quality of life reinforced by a high quality of design in new buildings and the spaces around them.

Longford Town Council aims to achieve the following in relation to Urban Design in the Town:

- To promote quality of the public realm; public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including disabled and elderly people.
- To promote ease of movement; accessibility and local permeability, by making places that connect with each other and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport.
- To promote legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks to help people find their way around.
- To promote the development of a network of public spaces, interconnected with views and vistas to draw users through, with active street frontages to create a sense of vitality and security, passive overlooking through the provision of an appropriate mix of uses throughout the day and night.
- To promote continuity and enclosure; the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of space by development which clearly defines private and public areas.
- To promote sustainability and adaptability through flexibly designed developments that

- can quickly respond to changing social, technological, economic, and potentially, climatic conditions.
- To promote diversity and choice in housing developments through an appropriate mix of housing types and sizes with the establishment of other compatible uses that work together to create viable neighbourhoods that respond to local needs and promote a sense of community.
 - To promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, land use and culture.

The Council will ensure that development in established or extended urban areas shall have good urban design characteristics through the application of the principles outlined above in the assessment of potential developments. In certain instances, the submission of an overall masterplan may be required to indicate how these objectives are to be achieved.

7.2.1 Permeability

Pedestrian permeability throughout the Town is of particular importance. Good pedestrian links and permeability are key principles of good urban design. They should form part of the urban structure to create a pleasant and easily accessible environment. Successful places have a well connected, visually engaging and varied network of streets and spaces defined through the arrangement of buildings framing and forming walks, streets, squares and open spaces.

Enhanced pedestrian permeability combined with an appropriately considered public realm facilitates social inclusion through providing safe, secure and reliable access to important services for all sections of society, particularly people from disadvantaged groups or those less mobile. This includes the provision of horizontal surfaces that facilitate the movement of wheelchairs and buggies, the provision of street furniture that allows rest stops for the elderly and infirm and the creation of direct routes to services from residential areas for those that may not have access to a private car. The installation of tactile paving and audible traffic signals in appropriate areas are other measures that can contribute to an inclusive public realm.

Creating pleasant outdoor congregational spaces where people can meet and that encourages people to linger contributes to the vitality of the urban environment. Innovative thinking will be promoted in this regard, particularly in relation to the provision of solutions that specifically address the limitations of the Irish climate in terms of outdoor congregation, such as semi-

covered spaces and measures to provide wind shelter.

The environment of Longford Town Centre will be significantly enhanced by the provision of the N5 bypass to the west of the town, reducing the large volume of heavy goods vehicles currently using the centre on a daily basis.

Parking is an integral element in the function of the Town Centre. Parking policy influences traffic movements, which, in turn, affect the quality of the pedestrian environment. The provision of parking in urban spaces has a strong visual element and can significantly contribute to or distract from the attractiveness of these areas. This is combined with the pedestrian movements and activity that arise from the relationship between a parking area and the main destination. In this regard, it is essential that parking is utilised to achieve maximum footfall and vitality in the desired area. The level of car parking provided, its location, fee structure and enforcement can all have a considerable effect on car use and traffic flow patterns. The availability of convenient and affordable parking in an area can influence people's decision on their mode of travel, and has the potential to be a powerful travel demand management tool.

Longford Town Council has been pro-active in the provision of parking over the previous Development Plans, with the provision of several new and successful parking systems in the central area. These have been carried out in tandem with works proposed and carried out to create and enhance public spaces throughout the town centre, some of which were facilitated in conjunction with the Urban Renewal Scheme.

Underpinning the quality of any urban environment and complimenting the role of design in the achievement of permeability, are the buildings that frame the streets and urban spaces. Longford Town is unique in the quality of historic buildings that frame its Main Streets and lend a classical sense of proportion and balance. The Council will strive to retain this character and balance in proposed new developments, an element which has been lost to the place of economic development in many other towns of a similar size throughout the Country. It is not intended that new development slavishly mimic or create a pastiche of the existing built stock. Modern design proposals will be required to consider the basic concepts and proportions laid down in the existing historic built fabric. Buildings will be expected to integrate sensitively into the surrounding built and natural environment. The Town Council will encourage the use of built forms that enhance the physical environment through the creation of streets and spaces and through positive contributions to existing streetscapes.

A quality built environment provides the basis for an attractive and distinctive town. New development should create a sense of place and add to local distinctiveness and by doing so will aid orientation and reinforce the identity and legibility of the Town.

New development should ensure that building layout, scale and design creates a network of overlooked, connected and supervised spaces. Overlooked streets and open spaces with 'active' frontages can make places feel safer and promote vitality in the public realm. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of an appropriate mix of uses in these areas to ensure that passive security is provided by overlooking or sufficient footfall through the day and into the evening. Generally, proposals that result in blank flank or gable walls fronting areas of public realm will be resisted and building design will be expected to 'turn corners' positively.

A defining aspect of any urban environment is the quality of the built environment and the provision of landmark buildings can enhance the appreciation and attractiveness of an area by drawing pedestrians through the urban area, providing legibility and closing important vistas as appropriate. Tall buildings can improve legibility and townscape character if designed and located appropriately, however, care must be taken to ensure that an appropriate level of activity remains at street level and that important views and vistas are not obstructed.

Inclusive design is concerned with making places everyone can use and aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation. Good urban design should create an inclusive environment, catering for diversity of people who use the urban area providing buildings and environments that are functional and convenient, yet attractive and enjoyable to use.

Providing an appropriate mix of uses in the town centre is a fundamental principle in good urban design and essential in the achievement of sustainable development. A broad range of uses creates attractive urban areas in which to live and by providing sustained activity and use throughout the day, evening and at weekends. Mixed-use development improves the vitality, viability and sustainability of commercial centres by increasing the number of trips that can be accommodated in one journey, reducing the need to travel, by providing for a range of requirements in close proximity.

Creating opportunities to live, work, shop, etc. within urban environments and reducing the need to travel by the private car are basic sustainability objectives for Urban areas. Longford Town

Council will require a mix of uses in town centre development schemes and will encourage the development of residential areas in tandem with the provision of access to facilities and amenities for all expanding residential areas.

New development should prioritise consideration of the re-use of existing buildings, particularly where they make a positive contribution to the streetscape. When new buildings are proposed, these should respect the existing horizontal and vertical building lines and/or utilise opportunities to enhance the public realm through the creation or enclosure of public spaces such as plazas or courtyards. Urban design that provides for adaptability can help ensure that changing requirements are met and can help to avoid obsolescence, dereliction and the need for comprehensive re-development.

7.3 Town Centre Strategy

Longford Town Centre area (see Retail Strategy Map for extent) has undergone significant redevelopment over the period of the previous plan, with the addition of several landmark buildings, significant enhancement of the public realm and general streetscape improvements that have contributed to the commercial environment, ease of use and basic appearance of the Central area. This redevelopment includes the Courthouse, a prominent historical building that has been restored to its former importance while modernised to fulfil the requirements of 21st century Longford. The primary aim of this strategy is to build on this growth and facilitate further appropriate development and economic activity over the coming years.

The Town Centre Strategy is developed in recognition of the requirement to sustain a vibrant and attractive centre and to resist increasing demand for a vehicle dominated layout of streets and spaces.

The strategy seeks to further reduce levels of vacancy in the Town Centre and provide a town centre typified by high quality and inclusive design with a series of connected public spaces and congregation areas that respect and enhance the setting of the architectural heritage of the Town, an important historic resource.

The Town Centre provides a focus for the wider community and should be an attractive, inviting, safe and secure environment for visitors, business, shoppers and importantly, its residents.

The main elements of a successful town centre that the strategy seeks to draw on are considered to be characterised by:

- Accessible and pedestrian friendly layout avoiding vehicular dominated routes and spaces.
- Vibrant retail core supported by a mix of supporting and complementary uses.
- Safe and inclusive building design with maximum active frontage at ground level developed at a pedestrian scale.
- Residential environments where passive security measures are considered and maximised at the design stage.

Successful town centres depend on good access provision and efficient mobility within safe pedestrian environments that encourage high levels of footfall on the main thoroughfares with

associated high levels of economic activity.

A key element of the Town Centre Strategy is to cater for pedestrians and cyclists in an enhanced urban environment, linking commercial areas, administrative functions, employment zones, amenity facilities and residential areas through a network of quality pedestrian and cycling routes in an enhanced public realm within the Town and to the environs.

The primary focus in the management of vehicular traffic in the Town Centre has now shifted from accommodating ever increasing demands from growing car ownership to considering how this demand can be reduced and the needs and safety of other urban users safeguarded. Streets should be living spaces, a functional part of the community and the focus of many activities that link together people's lives. The way in which streets are managed and used promotes or discourages a sense of community and makes them an attractive or unattractive place to live, work, shop etc. The development of the N5 by-pass will remove significant amounts of heavy vehicular traffic from the Main Streets of the town centre and provide greater opportunities in this regard.

A healthy retail environment is an essential pre-requisite for a vital and viable town centre. The Plan policies seek, through its policy based on the retail strategy, to maintain the important regional role of Longford and facilitate its economic growth. The location and extent of new retail floor space will be critical in providing a vibrant commercial and retail core. All applications for retail development will be assessed against the policies outlined in the Retail Strategy at Chapter 4.

It is important to retain a sense of local distinctiveness and character along the Main Street. In this regard, care should be taken to ensure an appropriate balance and range of shops that reflects the traditional role of Longford Town as a market centre serving its surrounding hinterland that provide choice, variety, distinctiveness and local identity, while attracting developments of a nature and scale befitting the regional aspect of the centre's function.

Mixed use developments in town centres are essential to achieve sustainable development objectives, creating opportunities to live, work, shop etc. within urban environments, facilitating walking and cycling which reduce the need to travel by private car.

The evening and night time uses within the town centre are also important contributors to the

town centre economy and Longford Town Council will encourage the provision of complementary evening and night time leisure and entertainment uses within the Town Centre area subject to protection of the residential amenity of nearby residents and standard development management criteria and technical requirements including access and parking.

As outlined in the previous section, the quality of the built environment significantly influences perception of security and safety in an urban area. Buildings should be designed with a positive reference to the street to provide natural surveillance throughout the day and night. Vertical separation of uses should be carried out to retain primary uses on the ground floor to the street frontage. Design should ensure all users are catered for. Particular attention should be given to the needs of people with disabilities, the elderly and people with young children.

Accordingly the policies of the Council are as follows:

TCS 1: All new developments shall create or positively contribute to a connected network of streets and spaces.

TCS 2: To ensure that the Town Centre is accessible to all members of the community, including people with disabilities, the elderly and people with young children, in particular through the upgrading of paving throughout the Town and the provision of additional pedestrian crossing points.

TCS 3: Mixed use developments within the town core will be promoted, as well as the provision of complementary and appropriately located and designed evening and night time leisure and entertainment uses.

TCS 4: To carry out environmental improvements in the Town and to ensure that where a section of the footpath is to be replaced, the entire block of the footpath shall be replaced in high quality materials.

TCS 5: To ensure that proposed development complements the existing streetscape of the area in terms of material, design, siting and function.

TCS 6: To encourage greater usage of backland areas, particularly for car parking, rear servicing and/or additional commercial expansion, in order to strengthen the residential/commercial function of the Town Centre.

TCS 7: To encourage the usage of upper floors of existing buildings and mixed-use developments, particularly in the Town Centre.

TCS 8: All new service cables and ducting such as electrical, telephone, broadband and cable television, etc. shall be run underground and to facilitate, where funds permit and subject to the requirements of the National Roads Authority, the rejuvenation of the streetscape.

TCS 9: Loading/unloading times on the Towns main retail streets shall be restricted to certain hours.

TCS 10: Residential areas that are close to the town centre but that remain predominantly residential will be protected from the undue encroachment of commercial uses, with the exception of local and neighbourhood level facilities.

TCS 11: To ensure that the residential population in the Town Centre is retained and increased in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Development.

TCS 12: To encourage and support measures to eliminate derelict sites in the Town Centre and to exercise Longford Town Councils powers under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990, including if necessary, Compulsory Acquisition of derelict sites.

TCS 13: To seek the removal of all unauthorised signage from within the Town Centre and to rationalise existing signage in accordance with a planned scheme to be developed over the lifetime of the plan.

TCS 14: To restrict unnecessary additional lighting, including intermittent lighting and neon lighting, on external elevations, particularly in or adjacent to residential properties.

TCS 15: To restrict the use of external security grills/shutters on shop fronts.

TCS 16: To provide decorative name plates for the streets and estates of the Town.

TCS 17: To seek the suitable refurbishment and/or development of the Old Garda Station on Dublin Street.

TCS 18: To ensure the retention of shop fronts and other significant elements of the streetscape which enhance the visual amenity and distinctiveness of the Town Centre.

TCS 19: To seek the removal and redesign of inappropriate shop fronts and other elements that detract from the visual amenity and function of the Town Centre.

TCS 20: To investigate the potential of a farmers market at an appropriate location within the Town Centre.

7.4 Shop front Design



Carefully-designed and well-constructed shopfronts are important features of many buildings and streetscapes. Planning permission is required for all new shop fronts and, in some cases, alterations to existing shop fronts, including the installation of grilles and shutters and illuminated fascia displays.

A well-designed shop front can contribute significantly to the attractiveness of the business and to the attractiveness of the Town as a whole. Longford Town Council aims to encourage good shop front design, maintaining traditional shop fronts where appropriate, controlling advertising and generally improving the appearance of the retail frontage of the Town.

There are several good examples of traditional and modern shopfront design throughout the Town Centre. These generally accord with several basic principles that can be outlined as follows:

SFD 1: The Council shall promote the reuse of existing traditional shopfronts within the town. New designs shall be informed by traditional proportions and should utilise good quality natural materials.

SFD 2: Access – Provision should be made at the design stage to ensure a safe, independent access for all persons. Particular cognisance should be taken of the requirements of persons who may have mobility or visual impairments. In this regard, shopfronts should comply with the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations and should be designed with reference to the NDA publication *Buildings for Everyone – Inclusion, Access and Use* (2002). Any development should allow safe, independent and equitable access to all public facilities and areas, regardless of a person's physical abilities. These guidelines may be relaxed in the case of listed buildings and other buildings of particular design merit.

SFD 3: Advertising – Ground floor advertising will be permitted while advertising above this level, i.e. first floor advertising will not be permitted (in certain cases glass etching or discreet lettering may be permitted where this is unobtrusive and does not detract from the character of the building). Advertising should be aimed at the pedestrian rather than the passing motorist and should be in scale with and not dominate nor interfere with features of the shop front. The numbers of projecting signs, in particular brand projecting signs, will be restricted. The use of traditional hand painted signs is preferable, as opposed to uPVC, plastic or other man made materials. Internally illuminated plastic signage will generally not be permitted.

SFD 4: Relationship of Shopfront to Building Overhead – The design of a new shopfront should relate to the architectural characteristics of the building of which it forms part. It should relate sympathetically to the upper floors in structural concept, proportion, scale and vertical alignment. Existing detailing features of the building provides opportunities to pick up and identify elements to be reflected in the design of the shopfront. Texture and colour or materials are important considerations in integrating new shopfronts with older buildings.

SFD 5: Relationship of Adjoining Buildings – New shopfront design must respect the scale and proportions of the streetscape by maintaining the existing grain of development along the street and respecting the appropriate plot width. Large expanses of undivided glass should be avoided. Long runs of horizontal facades should be broken up by elevational modelling and vertical division or features. It is important to relate to the fascia heights of adjacent shops.

SFD 6: Shopfront Framework – It is important to create a good visual frame for the shopfront. This will generally be formed by the pilasters, fascia and stall riser, which may be modern or traditional in design. A successful framing helps to contain the shopfront, and provides a context for composing elements within.

SFD 7: Materials – The choice of materials should compliment the architectural character of the building and integrate with the overall visual unity of the street scene. The decision to build a traditional shopfront or a modern one will, to a large extent, dictate the type of materials used. Timber is the most appropriate material in historical buildings, but a high level of attention to

detail and standard of craftsmanship is required. Inappropriate detailing such as artificial rusticated stone cladding should be avoided in the core area. The Council seeks to encourage more examples of well-designed, imaginative, shopfronts.

Plain aluminium, galvanised metal, laminates and plastics will be resisted in favour of timber, coloured/coated aluminium and natural stone. The selection of materials is highly dependent on the existing character of the building and the streetscape of which it forms part. Unsubstantial materials and harsh finishes detract from the appearance of individual buildings and the shopping area as a whole.

SFD 8: Stall-Risers – It is desirable to provide a stall-riser on shopfronts of at least 600mm in height for safety and visual reasons and to provide security, protection from fouling by dogs and splashing from the feet of passers-by. This should be carried out in a durable material. The use of the public footpath for security stanchions or roller shutter fittings/fixtures is not acceptable. A stall-riser also increases security, reducing the likelihood of the shopfront being rammed by vehicles in order to gain access to the goods on display. Timbers should never run directly to the ground. If timber stall-risers or pilasters are preferred, a small stone recessed plinth should be provided between the timber and the ground.

SFD 9: Fascia – The design of the fascia is a key element. Overlarge or over bright shop fascias should be avoided, particularly in a terrace of shops. Fascias will generally be restricted to one meter maximum in height and restricted in width to the width of the shop front. Fascias should not obscure or damage existing architectural features or interfere with the architectural proportions of the first floor. Where a business occupies several adjoining units, each should have a separate fascia and all should be limited to a common design. Continuous fascias stretching across several units are unacceptable and should be vertically divided. Letter design on the fascia should be simple and legible. If spotlights are used, the arms should be short and the hoods of the lights treated to match with the background. The advertisement of brand products on the fascia is not encouraged. Internally illuminated fascias and lettering are not generally acceptable in proposed developments.

SFD 10: Security – Internal roller grilles should be used in favour of solid shutters and should be

colour finished as opposed to raw materials. Grille boxes should be located internally and should be sympathetically integrated into the new shop front design. If this is not practicable, they should be colour finished or clad and should not project forward of the shop front pilasters. Guide channels should be concealed or painted to match the shop front frame. A solid base section to a roller grille may be installed for extra security, provided the solid base does not exceed 0.5metres in height and the slats are colour finished. Solid shutters are not favoured in a Town Centre situation, as collectively they have a detrimental effect on the quality of the environment. Repeated use of shutters along a street causes a particularly hostile and impersonal appearance. Furthermore, by obscuring the shop window display, they remove the light and interest, which shops provide to the commercial Town core outside normal business hours. Accordingly shutters should be of a perforated or see through variety. A brightly lit and inviting atmosphere is required if people are to use central areas outside of shopping hours. Alarm boxes should be sensitively designed and located on the building. Wiring should be integrated and redundant wiring removed. Wiring ducts should not be planted onto the face of the building.

SFD 11: Window Frames, Doors and Entrances – Timber window frames are appropriate in a traditional context, and also work well when combined with stone. Modern materials may be acceptable, depending on the situation and the finish used. In a modern shopfront, door handles can be creatively used to introduce a feature. The size of door opening in a shopfront depends on the relationship of the opening to the width of the shopfront. Doors should be sufficiently wide to facilitate access for all.

SFD 12: Colour – Strong colours are a feature of traditional shopfronts. The colouring of a shop should be determined by the need to harmonise with the rest of the building and the streetscape. Generally, timber work should be painted, with detailing picked out in a contrasting colour.

SFD 13: Canopies – If sun canopies are required, they should be incorporated into the design of the shopfront with the blind box recessed. Traditional-style, canvas, open-ended blinds are acceptable. Perambulator-style, closed-end canopies, which seriously reduce the view to adjacent shopfronts are out of character with the Irish-style shopfront. Advertising on the blind is not permitted.

SFD 14: Projecting Signs – Projecting signage of various sizes located at random over shop fronts is a major contributor to streetscape clutter. Each shop should be limited to a maximum of one projecting sign. This sign should be situated at fascia level and have a minimum of 2.4 metres ground clearance. The sign should be in keeping with the style of the shop front and building character and not obscure or damage architectural details. Projecting plastic illuminated signage will not generally be permitted.

SFD 15: Corporate Images – Developments involving the use of corporate logos/advertising matter or shop fronts will not necessarily be permitted particularly where they conflict with civic design. Corporate logos will not be permitted if they are detrimental to the visual amenity of the streetscape or if they dominate adjoining retail units.

SFD 16: The Day-to-Day Retail Operations of Shop Units – The following considerations are relevant to the operation of shop units and the design of the shopfront:

- a)** Designs consisting of the permanent removal of the shopfront and the creation of an opening uncharacteristic of the street are not acceptable.
- b)** Direct trading onto the pavement from a shopfront left open, as above, or through openings is not permitted.
- c)** Use of the public footpath for casual advertising (e.g. free-standing sandwich boards) or goods display have the potential to cause obstruction and tend to cause clutter and will be the subject of strict control.
- d)** The broadcasting of music and/or speech and the emission of noxious fumes from premises is unacceptable.
- e)** In newsagents, etc., provision should be made internally for the delivery of newspapers to avoid the need to erect bulky security boxes on the outside of the shopfront.

SFD 17: In areas zoned for light industrial, the grouping of advertising signs shall be considered whereby all the names (and logos) of the establishments located within are placed on a single advertising structure. This should be located at the entrance and can be accompanied with a layout map of the estate indicating each unit's location.

SFD 18: In relation to Bed and Breakfast accommodation, the following guidelines shall apply:

- a) To permit advertisements within the curtilage of the premises in which the business operates subject to appropriate design and limited size considerations. (Only one advertisement per establishment will be permitted.)
- b) To permit a fingerpost sign on a main road, only where the premises is located off the main road (i.e. national primary/national secondary/regional road) having regard to the possible conflict with road signs at junctions and considerations of amenity. Fingerpost signs will not be permitted on new national roads. Within Longford Town fingerpost signs will not be generally permitted for guesthouses because of the likely proliferation of signs in built-up areas.
- c) To operate a licensing arrangement whereby an annual fee is paid to the Local Authority in respect of such fingerpost signs subject to certain conditions.
- d) To ensure the removal of all unauthorised signs by enforcement where necessary.

7.5 Urban Renewal and Regeneration

Longford has been successful over the current plan period in the regeneration of several derelict sites and properties through out the central area of the Town. The continued re-use and regeneration of derelict/obsolete land and buildings is an important objective in this plan, which will help achieve the preservation of the character and quality of the town, particularly in terms of vernacular/historical architecture, scale, height, density and massing. The potential for the re-use and regeneration of derelict buildings and brownfield sites in the town centre and in edge of centre locations should be considered in the formulation of development proposals. Re-development of under-used/vacant or derelict sites must be of an appropriate nature and scale.

Work is ongoing in a number of areas within the Town that are in need of regeneration, including Breadans Lane, Richmond Street/top of Great Water Street area and St. Michael's Road area. The following policies aim to continue this work and promote further initiatives into the future.

Accordingly, the policies of the Council are:

UR 1: Development of infill and under utilised backland sites will be encouraged in the town centre area, especially where the commercial or residential function of the Town is strengthened.

UR 2: The Planning Authority will seek to retain buildings and streetscapes of character in the Town and new development will be expected to enhance streetscapes and retain features of interest and vernacular detailing.

UR 3: New development will be expected to create or positively contribute towards a connected network of streets and spaces, putting the requirements of pedestrians and cyclists as a priority by creating direct routes that connect to the existing network.

UR 4: New development will be expected to create or positively contribute towards a connected network of streets and spaces, putting the requirements of pedestrians and cyclists as a priority by creating direct routes that connect to the existing network.

UR 5: To secure the development of all derelict sites in the urban area.

UR 6: To facilitate the redevelopment and regeneration of the areas identified below, which may provide for a reduced parking requirement and/or development charges in accordance with a scheme to be developed where such proposals would significantly progress the regeneration of the areas.

7.5.1 St. Michael's Road

St. Michael's Road redevelopment is now in its second phase. The area initially exhibited all the physical and social symptoms of an area that is in severe decline. Phase I of the regeneration was successful in the provision of 82 units of social housing in the surrounding area.

The area in question is located on the outskirts of the Town core. St. Michaels Road runs between Strokestown Road and the Athlone Road and is frequently used as a short cut by vehicular traffic. Most of existing housing is circa 100 years old and in poor condition.

Clúid Housing Association is currently in the process of taking a stock transfer from Longford Town Council for 38 houses on St. Michael's Road and O'Connell Terrace. Clúid Housing Association has recently completed the redevelopment of the areas to the north and south of the street by the construction of the Lanna Aoibhinn Estate and the redevelopment of the area now known as Annaly Gardens. Congress Terrace to the east of the site is mainly private houses and Strokestown Road to the west of the site is comprised of a mixture of industrial, commercial, waste and derelict ground and a small number of local authority social housing.

The socio-demographic profile of St. Michael's Road is consistent with inner-urban decline. There are a number of retired elderly people living in the area who account for approximately one third of the occupants. Many of those in the area are outside of the taxation system and therefore unable to benefit from the recent tax-relief based development initiatives.

The local community project occupies Harmony House which is a purpose built community centre

built by Clúid as part of the redevelopment of the surrounding area. The area is marred by a poor public image, exacerbated by incidences of anti-social behaviour.

The existing residential layout is poorly articulated and inefficient in terms of land use. It is proposed to redevelop the area, including refurbishment of existing, demolition and new build of dwellings, ensuring that all dwellings are designed to lifetime homes standard, generate a physical sense of community, with 'defensible' boundaries, to reduce the inflow of anti-social behaviour and examine ways to eliminate the back alleyways yet allow residents access to their rear gardens and redesign the road way to minimise speed, allowing for some residential parking, street furniture, trees and emergency service/civic service bays.

In addition to the existing community centre, it is proposed to provide a childcare facility, which will free up space in the existing community centre for the provision of other services as required.

7.5.2 Breadan's Lane



Breadan's Lane is located between Dublin Street and New Street, in the centre of the town. On foot of rejuvenation proposals under the previous development plan, Longford Town Council have been successful in obtaining development fronting onto Breadan's Lane. Further development is required if the lane is to realise its full potential as an important element of the urban core. There is huge potential for turning this underused street into a vibrant pedestrianised shopping route, connecting Dublin Street, the Old Garda Barracks and New Street. The back areas of Ballymahon Street and Dublin Street, if developed appropriately, could provide commercial consolidation in the town centre.

The rejuvenation project was launched for this area in September 2004 by Longford Town Council. A brief was prepared to provide a guide for the redevelopment of Breadan's Lane and a template for unlocking its commercial possibilities. It was envisaged that a succession of small, high quality commercial and residential developments carried out by the property owners would open up this back street location providing a lively and vibrant core in the heart of the town.

The surface of the lane would be improved using high quality cobble blocks and the erection of decorative lights. A new square could be developed at the back of the Old Garda Barracks with its own separate entrance to Dublin Street. The vision is of a high quality pedestrianised street and square to create a safe, comfortable environment for shoppers and add to the overall character of the Town.

The property owners have been invited to draw up proposals for the redevelopment of the lane in association with Longford Town Council.

It was envisaged in this report that the back street would be primarily two storeys with a select few feature three storey buildings; with ground level shops, offices, business and starter units for small enterprises, and upper floors being residential, office, storage or possibly business use. In some cases the option will be available for some businesses to front onto both Ballymahon Street and Breadan's Lane (dual frontage).

The emphasis, however, remains on developing Breadan's Lane in its own right as a major pedestrianised link route with a high quality environment as well as a place to do business and shop. To date, there has only been limited development in this area and Longford Town Council will continue to promote the redevelopment of this area.

The vitality of the existing Town will depend not only on the ability to carry forward a restored urban fabric in good shape, but also to generate new possibilities through consolidation and intensification of use of the existing centre. The regeneration of this area of the Town is to strengthen the core, by guiding an intensification process to keep a compact Town Centre. The rejuvenation of this area would provide the Town with a high quality pedestrian shopping street and will enhance the attractiveness of Longford and ensure its long-term viability as a place to do business.

A scheme was previously approved by the Council allowing for reduced development contribution charges/car parking requirements to be applied to developments in this area, subject to a number of conditions including the fact that the development is to be designed to a high architectural standard so as to provide an attractive and inviting frontage onto Breadan's Lane, the ground floor use is to consist of retail, cafés, office, business, or other similar uses, which would significantly enhance pedestrian interest and in the case of dual frontage units, the proposed reduction/relaxation, will only be applied for development located within 10m of the

nearest edge of Breadan's Lane. This will continue to apply.

7.5.3 Richmond Street

Richmond Street is the primary approach road to Longford Town from Westport and is important in terms of the initial impressions and "advertisement" of the settlement. This approach road is currently of poor visual quality, with poorly maintained and derelict structures.

The road surface at this location is also in poor condition. Plans are underway to address this problem, but this will be ongoing while current traffic volumes persist. The area suffers from heavy volumes of traffic, in particular heavy goods vehicles, travelling along the N5.

There has been some redevelopment of this area to date, with a number of recent developments constructed. However, significant work remains to be carried out in order to improve this important junction to the town. The provision of the N5 bypass will greatly enhance this area of the town.

Environmental improvements at this location would greatly improve the visual amenity of the area, including upgrading of surfaces, improving the urban fabric at this location and would enhance the impression of the town for people accessing the town.

The Council will encourage measures to actively address the condition of structures at this location and utilise its powers of enforcement where required. Relocation of businesses better suited to out-of-town locations will also be promoted in order to improve the residential and pedestrian environment of the area.

7.5.4 Rear of Kilashee Street/Main Street

It is proposed to designate this area of underutilised land for urban regeneration to encourage appropriate development in this high profile and prime commercial location. Development in this area will be promoted in association with a specific masterplan, consistent with the following criteria:

- Plan shall provide for a minimum of 50% car parking to site area
- High architectural quality, medium to high density residential provision in conjunction

- with commercial units at ground floor level
- High level of pedestrian permeability to main thoroughfares
- Specific, distinct and useable security provisions, including maximum passive overlooking a suite of mutually compatible uses extending over day, evening and night time
- Provision of landmark buildings compatible with streetscape at this point.

This masterplan shall be prepared within 2 years of the adoption of this Plan.