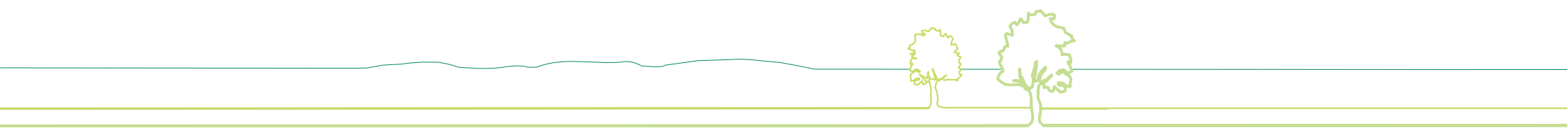


LONGFORD

COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN 2009-2015

Prepared by the Planning Section
Longford County Council



FOREWORD

Note from the Manager

This Longford County Development Plan comes at a time critical in the physical, economic and social development of the Country. In setting a local regulatory framework, the plan provides a clear direction and focus for development over the next six years, while setting the scene for ongoing growth in the context of the Region and Nation as a whole.

There have been significant changes in the national planning framework over the period of the last plan, with the adoption of the Regional Planning Guidelines and various legislative and policy documents at National level. There has also been an enhanced focus on the potential environmental effects of plan implementation through the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment processes. All of these provisions have made for a much more complex, yet comprehensive, document that will provide detailed guidance and direction for all those concerned with development in the County over the coming six years.

One of the primary aims of this document is to promote development in the County in a sustainable manner over the period 2009-2015. Economic sustainability is an important consideration in the current climate and the wise use of resources is a recurrent theme throughout the Plan.

The extensive public consultation process that yielded this document has resulted in the delivery of a well rounded and comprehensive planning framework that addresses all aspects of the physical development of the County over the coming 6 years.

*Tim Caffrey,
County Manager
March 2009*



*Tim Caffrey,
County Manager*



Note from the Mayor

This County Development Plan represents the culmination of an intensive two year process that involved many sections of society in Longford County. Input from interested groups, organisations and individuals over the preparation period of the Plan has guided its direction and indicates the depth of pride and interest that is shared by the people of County Longford in their locality.

The policies and objectives of this plan aim to build on this pride through maintaining and enhancing a strong sense of identity in the development of the County into the future and promote a strong and vibrant outlook in the face of challenging times ahead.

The recently completed process represents a more enhanced environmental element, with the incorporation of Strategic Environmental Assessment which charts the progress of policy development throughout the different stages of plan preparation. This tandem process provides for comprehensive and transparent policy analysis along with enhanced environmental monitoring facilities into the future. This will allow for greater protection of the County's environmental assets over the lifetime of the plan, elements that contribute to the high quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors alike and are fundamental to its identity.

A balance is required in this plan to provide a robust and comprehensive framework to guide the Development of the County over the next six years, through times which may contain economic and financial uncertainty. Key elements in addressing these challenges lie in maintaining a strong sense of community spirit and an overall recognition of what is important and how this is to be protected. I believe that this plan, through the community input from its earliest stages of preparation, strikes this balance.

*Cllr. Sean Farrell,
Mayor of the County of Longford
March 2009*



*Cllr. Sean Farrell,
Mayor*

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SECTION A

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



1

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 County Development Plan, 2003-2009. The Plan was adopted on 16th February 2009 and came into force on the 16th March 2009.

The purpose of the Plan is to set out a framework for the sustainable physical development of the County, while considering 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 County and promote equal opportunities.

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

In order to achieve the primary aims and purpose of the plan, as stated above, the County Development Plan has three main objectives. These are;

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

development policy provisions at a County 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 2003-2009 County Development Plan commenced in April 2007 with the publication and circulation of the relevant notice.

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 ran in tandem with the County Development Plan 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

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."

any plan or program 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 purpose 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 County Council has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment of the effect of the implementation of the Plan on Natura 2000 sites. This process is documented by the Appropriate Assessment report that accompanies this document.

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 undertakers and service providers. The general public were consulted through a campaign of newspaper advertisements, postal notification and public meetings. Four public consultation meetings were held in the main electoral centres of Longford Town, Ballymahon, Drumlish and Granard. Submissions were invited on the development of the County 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 County Council in August 2007. 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 County Council in August 2008.

The elected members considered this Manager's Report, and material amendments of the Draft Plan were placed on public consultation in November 2008. 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 January 2009. The elected members considered this Manager's Report and the plan was subsequently made in February 2009 and came into force in March 2009.

1.1.3 How to Use this Plan

The purpose of the Plan is to set a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County over the relevant period. The format, layout and content of the plan have been guided by the DoEHLG publication *Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2007*.

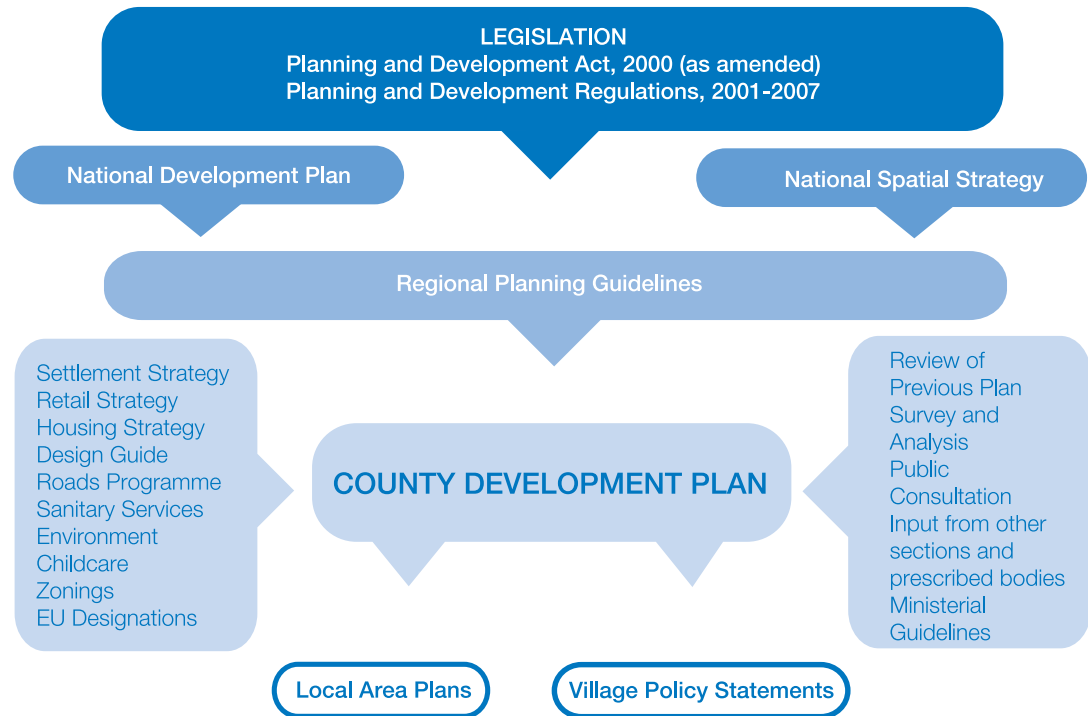
The structure of this Plan has been formulated to facilitate greater readability and access to the most frequently used sections, particularly those most used in the development management process.

Every effort 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.

1.2 Planning Context

1.2.1 National and Regional Spatial Context

This plan should be read in the hierarchical context of legislation and plans that exist at International, National and Regional level (consult following diagram), many of which have come into existence since the adoption of the previous County Development Plan 2003-2009.



National Development Plan

The National Development Plan (NDP) 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:

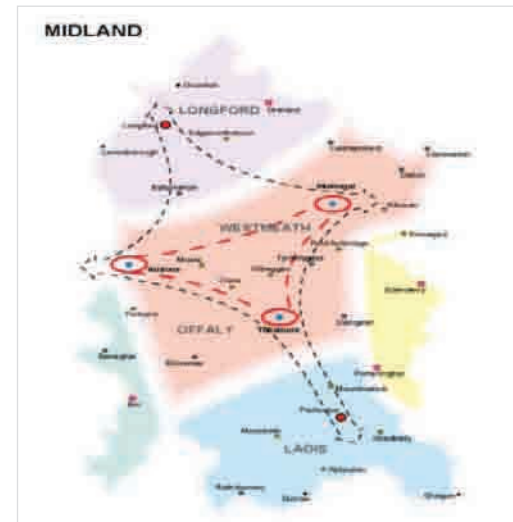
The NSS aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development between regions. The strategy aims to uncover potential for progress, growth and development in a more balanced way across Ireland, supported by more effective planning.

Midland Regional Planning Guidelines:

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines were adopted in 2004 after the completion of the previous County Development Plan in 2003, creating a new regional spatial planning context. The introduction of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the first time provides a strategic approach to planning within the Midlands Region as a unit, consisting of Counties Longford, Laois, Westmeath and Offaly. National policy contained in the Spatial Strategy, is translated to a regional level in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, which will

guide policy making decisions at a local level through the County Development Plan.

Relevant to County Longford, Longford Town is described as a 'principal town' with the function of driving the northern part of the region. Granard is described as a 'Key Service Town'. The purpose of key service towns is to drive their own local economies within their area. Edgeworthstown is described as a 'Service Town' and the function of these towns is to perform important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for essentially local hinterlands and support nearby gateway and principle towns. Ballymahon and Lanesboro are described as 'Local Service Towns' and the regional guidelines envisage these towns performing important local level, residential, retailing, social and leisure functions and providing appropriate local services to a wider rural hinterland.



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)- Part 1 & 2.**
- **Childcare Facilities Guidelines.**
- **Design Standards for New Apartments.**
- **Development Management Guidelines.**
- **Development Plans Guidelines.**
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment.**
- **Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines- Best Practice Guidance.**
- **Landscape and Landscape Assessment (Draft).**
- **Quarries and Ancillary Activities.**
- **Retail Planning Guidelines.**
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) 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 Specific Context

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.**
- **Tourism.**
- **Infrastructure.**
- **Agricultural and Rural Development.**
- **Education.**
- **Health.**
- **Crime and Drugs.**
- **Employment and Training.**
- **Promoting Equality.**
- **Culture and the Arts.**
- **Sports and Leisure.**

1.3 County Profile

1.3.1 Geographical Context

Longford is a relatively small county of approximately 1091 km², occupying a central

position within the Country and bounded by Counties Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Westmeath. The River Shannon, Lough Forbes and Lough Ree form the County boundary to the west and south, while Lough Gowna forms much of the north-eastern boundary.

The general topography of the County may be described as undulating lowland, however, within this classification comes several sub-types such as the extensive commercial peatlands of the south-west, lakeland of the west, south and north-east and agricultural lowland with deciduous forest of the south-east and intermittent pockets of coniferous forest. Ardagh Mountain and the Cornhill area through to Lough Gowna represent the two upland areas.

There is a north/south divide in terms of soil type, with bands of poorly drained clay loam soils in the north with moderately well drained clay loam forming the main soil type in the remainder of the County.

The County lies within two major river catchments, the Shannon and the Erne. It falls within the secondary catchment of the River Inny, which flows into Lough Ree and forms part of the wider Shannon catchment and the Camlin river which flows from Granard through Longford Town to the Shannon at Clondra.

The central position of County Longford is important in terms of the road network within it. Two national

primary routes traverse the County from east to west, the N4 from Dublin to Sligo and N5 from Longford to Castlebar. Longford Town is strategically positioned where the two national roads divide. The national secondary route, N63 leaves Longford Town for Roscommon/Galway and the N55 from Cavan to Athlone takes a north-south route through the east of the County, passing through Granard, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon. Nine regional routes connect these, serviced by a network of county roads.

The Dublin-Sligo rail line traverses the County from east to west, generally following the line of the N4 and serves Longford and Edgeworthstown stations.

1.3.2 Historical Settlement Context²

Historical settlement within Longford has been mainly determined in the same manner as other settlements throughout the Country, evolving along transport routes including roads and waterways, namely the River Shannon and its tributaries.

Landscape mainly determined the nature of roads within Longford, from which settlements became established. In County Longford, the large tracks of bogs and flood lands would have been avoided and therefore many roads traversed through eskers and areas of high well drained land that was easily overlooked. The River Shannon and its tributaries facilitated communication and the movement of people to and from areas that were otherwise isolated.

The Slighe Assail, a medieval route that traversed the County in an east-west direction (dissecting the County) had a significant bearing on the subsequent settlement pattern. The route was traditionally the main route from Meath to Connacht, linking east coast ports to England and beyond to the continent. A number of Anglo-Norman settlements were established along the route of the Slighe Assail with minor routes running from the Slighe Assail at Longford Town, although Longford Town was not yet an established settlement. The minor routes related to the establishment of ecclesiastical facilities and moved in a northerly direction to Granard and Abbeylara, and in a southerly direction towards Ardagh from the main Slighe Assail route. The settlement of Lanesboro was also able to develop in this era given its strategic location on the Shannon.

In the 15th century Longford and Granard developed significantly as market settlements, facilitated by their location on the main route, with Longford at a central crossroads.

Indeed, the road network today remains similar. Subsequently the settlement of Longford became relatively well established and thus the County was named after it.

In the years following, the settlement pattern became more established in the 1600s when the County was systematically planted. New towns were established (although many of these pre-date this era as explained above) at Ballinallee, Granard,

Longford and Lanesboro. In addition to this, estate villages such as Newtownforbes were developed and during the eighteenth century landlord villages were developed including, Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Keenagh.

The construction of the Royal Canal had a significant impact in terms of the physical environment, particularly its associated buildings and infrastructure, both on a domestic and an industrial scale. The ready availability of a bulk transport route to and from Dublin facilitated the initial large-scale commercial exploitation of peat in the region, with further significant impacts on the landscape and built fabric of the County.

² This information has been sourced from the following documents; Doran, Linda. (2004) *Medieval Communication Routes through Longford and Roscommon and their Associated Settlements*, [Online]. Available at <http://www.ria.ie/publications/journals/ProcCI/2004/PC04/PDF/104C03.pdf>. Accessed: 13 November 2006. Bradley, John (1985) Urban Archaeology Survey, County Longford. Report commissioned by the Office of Public Works.

1.3.3 Population and Demography

1.3.3.1 Current Trends

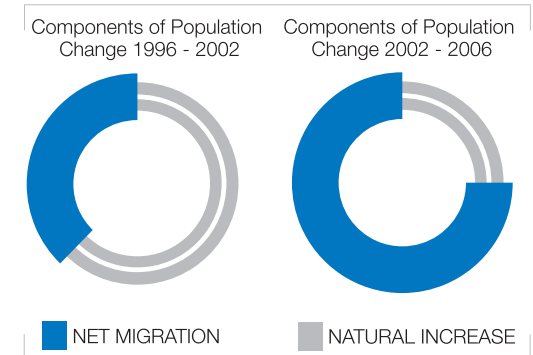
The most recent absolute figures for the population of the County come from the Census of population, 2006 (CSO). This puts the population of Longford County at 34,391, an impressive growth of almost 11% in a four year period.

TABLES 1 & 2: POPULATION CHANGE IN COUNTY LONGFORD, 1991 – 2006

Town	1991	1996	2002	2006
Longford	6393	6444	6831	7622
Longford Environs	431	540	726	1214
Granard	1221	1173	1013	933
Ballymahon	816	790	827	963
Edgeworthstown	801	737	726	1221
Lanesboro	675	596	575	604
Newtownforbes	429	470	561	668
Drumlish	275	274	277	429
Keenagh	218	223	225	241
Rest of the County	19037	18919	16016	20496
Total	30296	30166	31068	34391

District	1991	1996	2002	2006
Longford County	30296	30166	31068	34391
Longford Urban District	6393	6444	6831	7622
Ballymahon Rural District	5412	5374	5350	5887
Granard No. 1 Rural District	7722	7436	7387	8133
Longford Rural District	10769	10912	11500	12749

The population and demographic profile of the County has changed substantially over the last 15 years, and particularly over the last four years. The following table illustrates the components of population change for the County over the last two census periods.

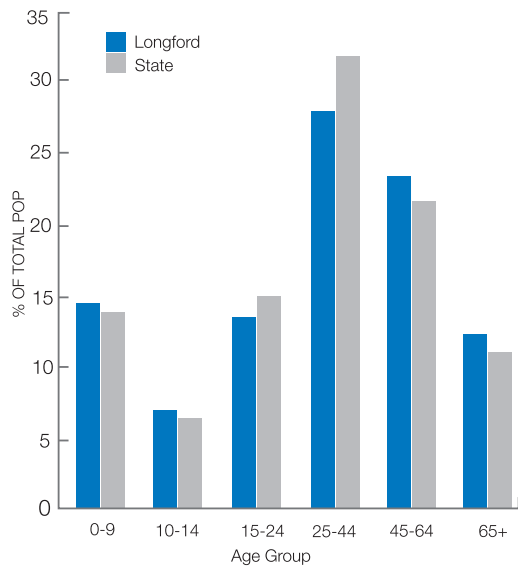


The above data illustrates the strong inward migration trend that has developed over the last intercensal periods. As inward migration is likely to include a high percentage of work seeking persons in the younger and child-bearing cohorts, it is natural to assume that this upward population trend is likely to continue in the medium to long-term, even if net-migration figures begin to decline.

There were nine DEDs that experienced a loss in population over the 2002-2006 period, with a total population loss in these areas of 165 persons. This compares to a loss of 670 persons over 24 DEDs in the 1996-2002 intercensal period. It should be

noted that permission was granted for a total of 331 dwellings in the nine DEDs that experienced population loss over the previous Plan period, giving a population equivalent of 993 additional persons for these areas, apparently in decline.

DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF POPULATION 2006
LONGFORD AND STATE



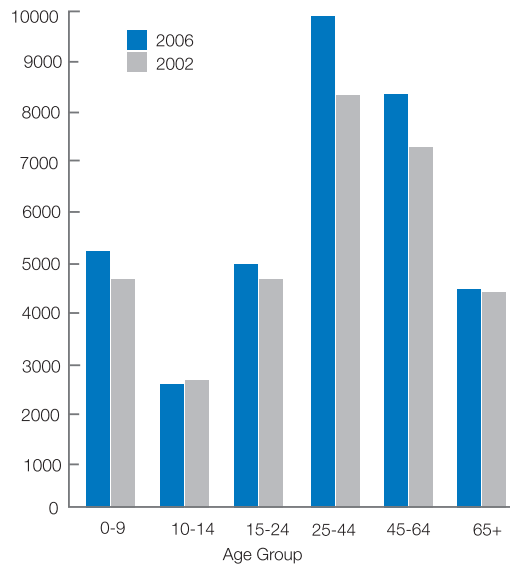
The graph above shows that there is substantial correlation between the County and State in terms of age composition across the population, where as the following graph illustrates the level of change in a selection of age cohorts over the four year period.

The most marked changes in the demographic

composition of County Longford occur in the 25-44 and 45-64 age groups, with a substantial increase in both, as the following graph indicates. As these are the most economically active age groups, this is an indication that the economy of the County was performing well over the 2002-2006 period.

The 0-9 age group has increased by 11%, which has substantial implications for the provision of facilities such as education and childcare for the County, which were apparent over the period with a steady level of applications for school extensions and childcare facilities over the previous plan period. The average number of persons per private

COUNTY LONGFORD DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION 2002-2006



household remains in line with that of the state at 2.8, having dropped from an average of 2.92 in 2002. This trend is set to continue over the plan period in line with trends throughout Europe towards smaller household sizes. This has implications for housing provision within the County, even if the population was to remain static.

As the preliminary census figures illustrate, there has been a shift from natural increase (births minus deaths) to in-migration as the major driver of population growth within the County, a trend which is unlikely to continue in the current economic climate. However, the substantial increase in the number of females in the childbearing cohorts (15-44) over the 2002-2006 period indicates potential for further growth in the form of natural increase going forward.

1.3.3.2 Population Forecasts

Estimates of population forecasts were derived to reflect the requirements of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines which have set a target population of 43,000 for County Longford up to 2020. Details of population growth over the plan period and the physical implications of this growth are addressed in the Housing Strategy and Settlement Strategy Sections of this Plan.

1.3.4 Education

Longford remains without a third level educational institute, however, outreach facilities have been

proposed under the Regional Planning Guidelines. The development of new industries in the County since the adoption of the previous plan means that graduates from the County now have the opportunity to remain in, or return to their locality. Policy provision, such as that included in the County Development Board Strategy, retail strategy for the Town and County, and the provision of design standards, particularly for designated settlements that encourage high quality design will increase the attractiveness of the County to retain the graduate population.

At the time of the 2006 census, Longford County lagged behind the state in terms of educational attainment, particularly in terms of third level degrees or higher.

The provision of suitable educational facilities and the retention of the County's educated natives through the promotion of suitable employment opportunities and establishment of the highest quality of life are measures discussed throughout the Plan to address this situation.

1.3.5 Socio-Economic Context and Employment

There has been significant advancement in the industrial, business and commercial environment of the County over the previous plan period. Major additions include Council business parks at Longford Town, Granard, Lanesboro and Ballymahon, and enterprise units at Longford, and

industrial units at the Athlone Road and at Edgeworthstown have been installed, increasing the level of local indigenous industry on the small to medium scale.

Larger players such as Abbot Ireland have been established over the previous plan period, with expansions of existing industrial installations, including Wessel Cable and Cameron Willis, two major employers in the Longford Area.

The service sector continues to grow and establish itself as a major employer in the County, with the decentralisation of the Prison Service already completed.



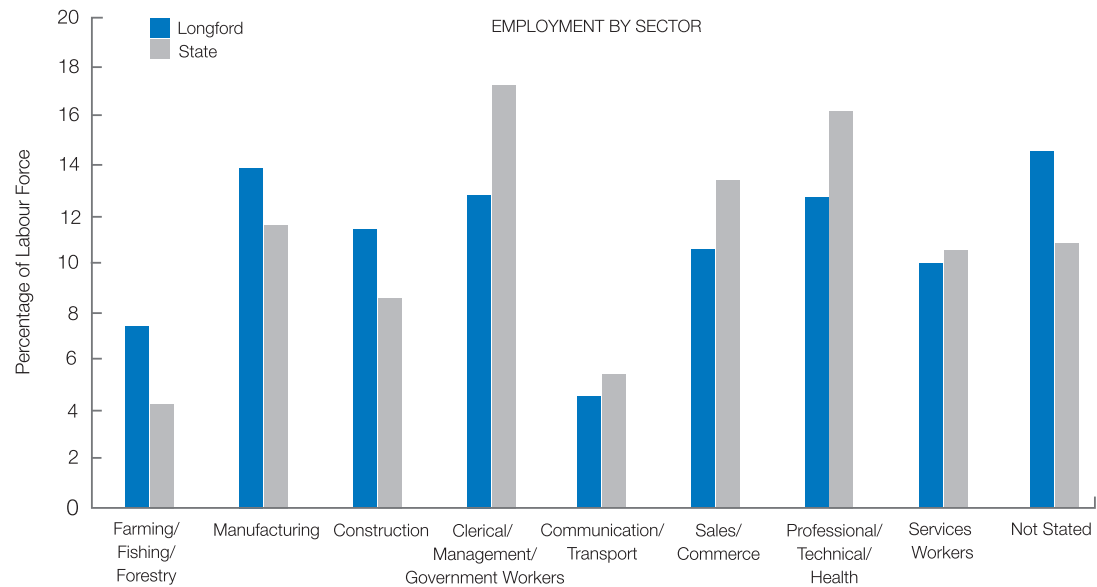
The Irish Prison Service, Longford.

Levels of office floorspace have grown throughout the County. Notable applications granted in this respect include the large-scale business park at Lisnamuck, the established area at Aughadegnan and other significant developments permitted in

Granard, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon.

The challenge facing this plan is how to maintain an appropriate level of growth, providing increased employment opportunities and helping to retain population within the County by providing an attractive living and working environment.

The Following graph compares the employment levels in the County by broad industrial sector with state levels in 2006 (source CSO Census 2006). The level of workers dependent on sectors of agriculture has significantly reduced since the last census period from 13% in 2002 to almost 7.5 % in 2006. Although this is a reduction in the dependence on this sector, it is still almost double the national average which was also the case in 2002. This leaves a significant portion of the County workforce open to high levels of change and uncertainty that exist over new agricultural regulations at EU level and commitments to the Kyoto protocol at global level.

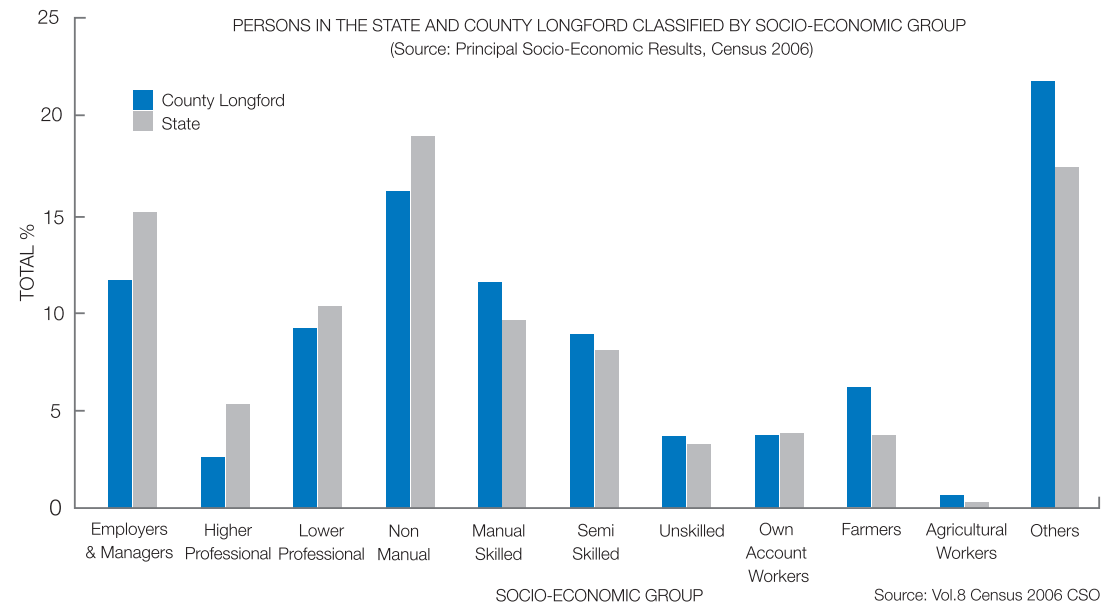


Source: Vol.8 Census 2006 CSO

The high level of employment in the construction sector reflects the building boom associated with the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme and local infrastructure projects. This sector is highly sensitive to external shocks such as peaks and troughs in national economic performance and interest rate fluctuations.

The graph also shows that Longford County lags behind in terms of employment in the professional and business sectors, an important sectoral element that would enhance economic stability and long-term labour force prospects.

The following graph also reflects the difference between Longford and the state in terms of Socio-economic class, in particular, the higher percentages of employers and managers and higher professionals in the state average, combined with the higher percentage of farmers especially in the Longford County Figures.



1.3.6 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. This strategy forms the basis of retail policy contained at the Economic Development Section of this Plan.

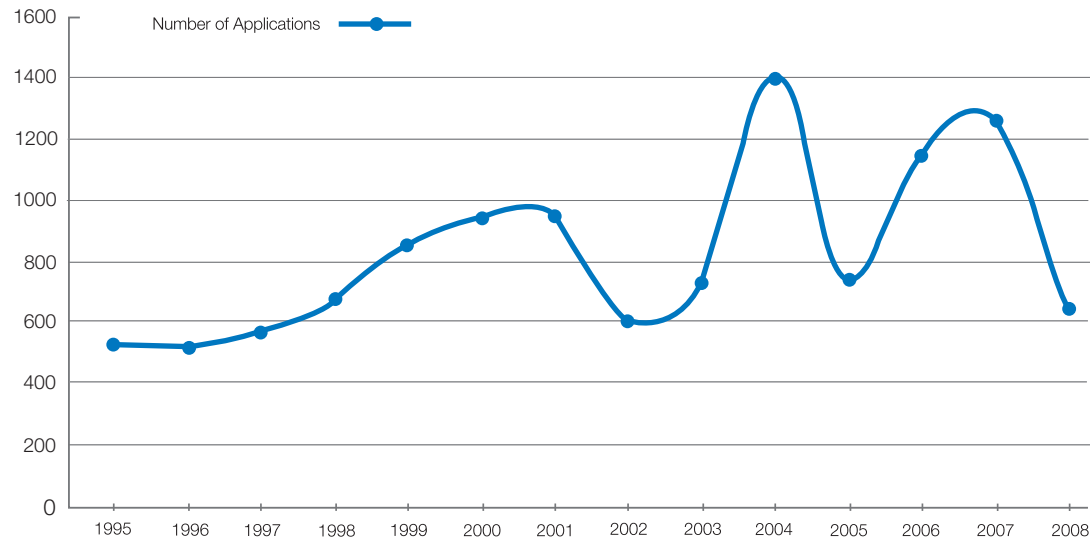
The strategy aims to strengthen Longford's regional and inter-regional links by providing modern retailing facilities of the highest standard. This process is already well underway.

Local level facilities, such as supermarkets, have been proposed at Granard and Ballymahon and implemented at Lanesboro and Drumlish. The potential of these settlements to absorb further retail development in line with their assigned roles in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines may require further exploration.

1.3.7 Development Trends

The planning application figures over a 13 year period from 1995 to 2008 are outlined in the following graph. These illustrate the increases in sheer volume of applications lodged, but do not indicate the nature and complexity of these applications which has also increased steadily over the same period.

The shape of the graph can be largely attributed to the rapid national economic expansion in the period and to two key policy interventions at a national level over the last decade. These are the Upper Shannon Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme, which commenced in 1998 and continued for applications up to December 2004, and the Scheme of Investment Aid for Farm Waste Management (DoA) which provided grant aid for farm waste facilities including slatted sheds.



However, the influence of the previous County Development Plan should not be underestimated. The designation of towns and villages across the County has led to a more focussed concentration of applications of larger developments in areas where infrastructure and services exist, or have the potential to, in the medium to long-term. This has been particularly successful in terms of directing industrial/commercial and larger-scale residential development to the larger settlements such as Granard, Lanesboro, Newtownforbes, Edgeworthstown, Drumlish and Ballymahon. Local Area Plans have also been prepared over the period to reinforce this strategy.



2

**DEVELOPMENT
PLAN STRATEGY**

2. DEVELOPMENT PLAN STRATEGY

2.1 Introduction, Core Aims and Development Plan Goals

2.1.1 Core Aims

This section of the plan aims to outline the overall development strategy for the County over the plan period. 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 County 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 County Longford through optimising the County's economic, social and physical development.

2.1.2 Development Plan Goals

It is envisaged that policies and objectives contained within the plan will facilitate the fulfillment

of the core aims. However, before deriving detailed policies and objectives for achieving the core aims, Development Plan Goals have been identified which are essential in guiding each policy section within the plan. The Development Plan Goals have been derived from main themes that emerged as a result of public consultation and key objectives of other relevant strategies and plans. The Development Plan Goals are as follows;

- Provide a strong network of settlements within an appropriate functional hierarchy that allows for the sustainable growth of the County, while maintaining and respecting rural areas and their communities.
- Provide appropriately zoned lands to cater for the expanding population and growth of the county.
- Facilitate the provision of the county's infrastructure in a sustainable and efficient manner that promotes the social, economic and physical development of the County and the people that live within it.
- Ensure that everybody has the opportunity of obtaining affordable housing, can enjoy safe and accessible environments, have access to employment, education and training, community services and recreational facilities, arts and culture.
- That the vitality and character of established town, village centres and rural areas are maintained, and ensure that quality underpins all forms of development, through developing and maintaining a sense of place and local distinctiveness in established and newly developing areas.
- To integrate the proper planning and sustainable development of Longford County with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population.
- Promote Longford as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism, while encouraging employment growth and economic activity.
- To incorporate and implement the relevant EU, national and regional guidelines, strategies and regulations at County level.
- To identify, conserve, protect and enhance where appropriate, the unique natural, environmental, archaeological, cultural and built heritage of Longford County, for the benefit of its population.
- To identify, preserve, protect and enhance where appropriate, the unique landscape character of Longford County, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.

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 county'**.

Accordingly ensuring that principles of sustainable development practices are promoted within the county is essential. These principles of sustainable development also feed into the County's Settlement Strategy which is outlined in the following section (consult Section 2.3).

Sustainable development policy shall be promoted in accordance with national and regional guidelines. This shall be achieved through the promotion of the establishment and maintenance of viable rural and urban communities, 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 rural environment. There is also recognition of the need to diversify and facilitate the provision of increased employment generating uses. It is envisaged that this approach will consolidate existing settlements, retain population and provide the necessary services in order to increase sustainability.

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 design solutions for derelict or obsolete areas and areas in need of regeneration as part of the settlement strategy (consult following section).

2.2.1 Broad Principles and Enhancing Quality of Life

Enhancing and maintaining quality of life for the people within the county 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 County'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 and Regional Planning Guidelines.

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 County 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 area all sustainable principles that will be promoted as part of this policy document.

At a micro level, flooding will be a significant consideration in the assessment of individual application for development. Flooding will be considered not only in the context of the site, but also in terms of potential downstream effects in more extreme climate. In this context, Longford Local Authorities will liaise with the Office of Public Works (OPW) on the implementation of appropriate flood prevention policy and cooperate in any future flood risk studies (see Policy Provisions FLO 1-3 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 the Plan and will inform the assessment of development proposals within the County area (see also section 2.2.3 and policy provisions at **SET 1-11 HS 1-4 & 7, HOU DS 1-6, HOU RUR 1-10 PED 1-5, RL1-7.BUS 1- 5, RE 1-4**).

The following general sustainable development principles will guide development proposals within the county and inform policy contained within this plan.

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 for developments 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.

Design Standards

- i. Criteria contained in the Design Guide, based on the provisions of the Landscape assessment, shall be adhered to in the design of new residential development with regard to siting, location, form, orientation, materials, open space and parking provision and the preservation and

enhancement of the existing character of the area and of residential amenities.

- ii. It is the policy of the Council to ensure that developments are designed and carried out to a high standard. The general principles embodied in the design guidelines shall be adhered to in new development proposals, however, it is expected that each development shall be designed in order to suit the unique conditions of its individual site.
- iii. 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.
- iv. 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.
- v. 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, particularly in relation to smaller village settlements.
- vi. In general, designs should reflect and respect their location and the local vernacular

architectural tradition in these areas. House designs should be compatible with those typical in rural County Longford and not imported designs from major cities or foreign countries, reflecting different climatic conditions and traditions.

Heritage and Tourism

- i. Conservation and protection of areas identified in the landscape assessment as visually vulnerable or sensitive from a heritage perspective, shall form part of the consideration of determining applications for development.
- ii. 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 for rural and urban/village dwellers and promote location based activity and amenity development at identified honeypot locations.

Natural Resources

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

- i. Protect important resources such as agriculturally productive soils, groundwater resources, existing and potential transport and communication routes, aggregate and mineral deposits as part of the development management process.

- ii. Promote the use of renewable energy and sustainable building technology in terms of materials, energy sources, siting and design.
- iii. Protect the capacity of strategic infrastructure and maintain economic and equitable provision of services and utilities.
- iv. Promote the viability of alternatives to the private car including walking, cycling and public transport initiatives.
- v. Development shall be restricted and curtailed in areas of groundwater vulnerability.
- vi. 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 County.

This policy objective will be achieved by:

1. Encouraging responsible environmental management in construction.
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, 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 reduction 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 1,000 m², 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.

In pursuit of these targets, a menu of superior design and specification options will include the following:

- **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, including rainwater harvesting.**
- **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.**

In the case of non-domestic buildings additional options include:

- **Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.**
- **Electrical energy use including motive power.**
- **Efficient lighting systems and controls.**
- **Building Energy Management Systems.**
- **Occupancy Controls.**
- **Monitoring and Targeting Systems.**
- **Combined Heat and Power (CHP).**

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

2.3 Settlement Strategy

2.3.1 Introduction

The 2003-2009 Longford County Development Plan

Settlement Policy concentrated on the development of existing towns and villages throughout the County in order to relieve pressure on sensitive rural areas and to encourage the development of critical mass in settlements to facilitate the provision of local level infrastructure and services.

Local, Regional and National Policy encourages new developments to locate in existing towns and villages where the basic social and infrastructural services are available and where such services may be provided or expanded on an economic basis. This policy direction has the primary aim of facilitating sustainable live-work patterns to strengthen the existing urban centres in order to encourage enhanced commercial and employment opportunities, to provide an increased range of social and recreational facilities, to protect the agricultural industry and rural areas including designated sensitive rural landscapes and protected views and prospects.

It is important to recognise the rural nature of the County and that sustaining these rural areas is central to the achievement of the settlement strategy. The Development Plan in aiming to achieve sustainable development must balance this with the social, cultural and economic requirements of the County. In achieving this balance, the important role that rural villages play in the sustainability of rural areas must be considered to ensure the reversal of population decline and the provision of key amenities and infrastructure needed to serve the wider rural area.

The 2003-2009 Longford County Development Plan defined a settlement hierarchy that was further reinforced by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands, adopted in 2004. This hierarchy is contained and further developed in Section 2.3.3 of this Plan. The Settlement Strategy proposed in this plan more closely aligns itself with the terminology and goals set out in these guidelines, and is also informed by guidelines set out at a national level in relation to sustainable rural and urban residential development.

The Settlement Strategy should be read in conjunction with section '3. Housing'.

2.3.2 Key Aims of the Settlement Strategy

The following policies have been established as key aims of the Settlement Strategy to facilitate its delivery on a strategic level.

SET 1:

The Council shall continue to support the strengthening of the urban and village network throughout the County in accordance with the hierarchy outlined in the following sections and supported by the Regional Planning Guidelines, Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, issued by the DoEHLG.

SET 2:

Functional roles of the larger towns shall be maintained and supported by the promotion of appropriate development in these areas and through the Development Management process.

SET 3:

The Settlement Strategy aims to create vibrant and thriving urban and rural communities, firmly rooted in the concepts of sustainability and maintaining a high quality of life. The extensive village network shall be used to support rural communities through the provision of neighbourhood level facilities, community services and social functions. Development shall be commensurate with the level of infrastructural provision anticipated over the lifetime of the plan (see infrastructural section – programme of works).

SET 4:

The physical and social environment of the urban and village network is an important element in the promotion and strengthening of the settlement hierarchy. The Council aims, through the development management process and periodic initiatives at national and regional level, to create attractive urban and village environments with unique identities and an appropriate mix of uses to attract and retain population within the County.

2.3.3 Designated Settlements

The Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines, issued in 2004, outline a settlement hierarchy for County Longford as follows:

LONGFORD – PRINCIPAL TOWN
GRANARD – KEY SERVICE TOWN
EDGEWORTHSTOWN – SERVICE TOWN
BALLYMAHON & LANESBORO – LOCAL SERVICE TOWNS
VILLAGE NETWORK

This settlement strategy adheres to the regional hierarchy outlined above and further refines this to a county context that includes the sub-division of the 'Village Network' tier into three levels.

Unprecedented development pressures experienced in some of the smaller towns prompted the need for specific local area plans in lieu of the proposed village policy statements. This creates an additional tier of settlements within the county that perform a specific function in the hierarchy which is acknowledged in this settlement strategy.

The policy of the Council is to promote the development of Longford Town as the primary County/Regional centre for the area. The Town Council area is covered by a separate Development Plan. Lands immediately outside the town boundary within the County area are addressed in Section 2.3.3.2 as Longford Environs.

The following paragraphs outline the settlement strategy for the County based on the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines, refined to reflect the functional roles of these settlements at a County Level.

1. Longford - County Town of Regional Importance. Major growth centre with a high level of access and existing services where majority of industrial, commercial, business and retail development will be channelled. The urban area is covered by a separate Town Development Plan. Local Area Plans for the Southern and Northern Environs cover the environs areas that straddle both administrative areas. Additional zonings under Section 2.3.3.2 of this Plan cover the environs area of the Town that fall under the County Council administrative area and that are not otherwise zoned at present.

2. Granard - Key Service Town. County growth centre with a regional element. Strong emphasis will be placed on the growth of the local economy in Granard and the development of its vital administrative and social functions to support and complement growth in the region, developing and enhancing synergistic links with the adjacent Border Region.

3. Edgeworthstown - Service Town. This town serves a wide hinterland in terms of service provision and accommodation where major transport nodes are present. It is envisaged that Edgeworthstown will continue to act as a County

service centre. A Local Area Plan has been prepared where provision has been made for the orderly and sustainable expansion of this centre.

4. Ballymahon and Lanesboro - Local Service Towns. These towns have an important role in the provision of local level retailing, social and leisure functions and local services to wider rural hinterland. Emphasis shall be placed on the maintenance and enhancement of strong visual character and built fabric.

5. Villages. This step on the regional tier provides for services to rural communities, including housing, neighbourhood level retail and social facilities. The Regional Guidelines recognise the importance of the village structure to the settlement network of the region, in particular its importance in the delivery of services to a highly dispersed rural population. Longford has a weak urban network and is heavily dependant on a number of small to medium sized villages in the provision of social, community and neighbourhood services at a local level. In order to reflect the dynamics of village settlement in the County, this tier has been sub-divided into three levels.

Tier 1 Villages

Drumlisk, Newtownforbes, Keenagh, Ballinalee, Carrickglass, Clondra, Abbeylara, Ardagh. These are larger settlements which provide an important role in the delivery of housing, social, community and other facilities, reflected in the development demands in these areas over the last

number of years. Each settlement in this category plays a specific role in the functional hierarchy of the County, a role that is acknowledged in specific Local Area Plans prepared in each instance. Carrickglass, Clondra and Ardagh in particular are specialised settlements that function as Local Growth Centres with unique attributes in terms of natural and/or built heritage and specific cultural and historic associations that require specific designation to protect and enhance their character³. The potential for tourism and amenity development is recognised and has been promoted and encouraged where appropriate in the Local Area Plans which have been prepared for these locations. These settlements are serviced by mains sewer or are approved for such service provision over the plan period (with the exception of Abbeylara - see Infrastructure section).

Tier 2 Villages

Abbeyshrule, Aughnaclyffe, Ballinamuck, Cullyfad, Drumhaldry, Enybegs, Kilnatruan, Kilashee, Legan, Legga, Moyne, Newtowncashel, Stonepark. These are areas which are designated for the primary purpose of fulfilling local housing need and absorbing demand from the rural hinterland. Some of these settlements have already experienced significant development in the recent past. It is envisaged that these areas will also provide limited local level services such as post offices, neighbourhood shops, schools etc. Consideration will also be given to the provision of childcare facilities at these locations. There shall be a strong emphasis on the creation and maintenance of a

³ See Appendix 15 for specific specialist designations

sense of identity and local character at these locations. Some of these settlements have been approved for the provision of municipal sewage treatment systems. Residential densities shall be restricted in these settlements, particularly in areas dependant on septic tank methods of effluent disposal. In accordance with the *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* guidelines issued by the DoEHLG, no individual proposal for development shall exceed 10-15% of existing housing stock in village settlements.

Tier 3 Villages

Ballycloughan, Ballywillin, Barry, Bunlahy, Carrickboy, Coolarty, Colehill, Derraghan, Dring, Forgney, Lisryan, Melview, Moydow, Mullinalaghta, Ratharney, Taghshinny.

These are smaller settlements designated to cater specifically for locally generated housing need and limited neighbourhood level services as appropriate.

2.3.3.1 Population Distribution

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 with a population allocation of 9,583 (as per housing strategy projections) up to 2015 in support of its defined regional role as the northern driver in the regional polycentric urban model.

Based on the 2006 census figures and the settlement strategy, the following table outlines the indicative population distribution considered appropriate over the plan period. The prioritisation of development in these settlements at a County level shall be closely related to the needs assessment and programmes of works outlined in the infrastructure section of this document.

TABLE 2.3.1 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

	POP 2006	% OF COUNTY		POP 2015
		2006	2015	
Longford Town	7,622	22.1%	24%	9,583 ⁴
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 County	34,391		13%	5,192
				39,926 ⁵

The above analysis illustrates the situation outlined at the 2006 census and how this may be distributed 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 Midland Region. The table to the right (table 2.3.2) illustrates the spatial distribution of residentially zoned land

throughout the County and its potential yield over the plan period. It should be noted 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 each settlement. In this regard, preference will be given to developments that will consolidate the structure of the village or town, usually from the centre outwards in line with a logical and sequential approach.

A monitoring system shall be established to keep track of developments in the smaller settlements to ensure that the macro-phasing programme is maintained.

⁴ Figure obtained from housing strategy projections

⁵ Figure derived from Midland Regional Population projection, Longford County allocation

TABLE 2.3.2 RESIDENTIAL LAND AVAILABILITY 2015

	1. Res. zoned area ⁶ (ha)	2. Dev't Area ⁷	3. Remaining Undev'd Zoned Land (1. - 2. ha)	4. Max Density Per ha ⁸	5. Potential Units (3. / 4.)	6. (a) 2015 Projected Additional Pop (Persons)	6.(b) 2015 Projected Additional Pop (Units) ⁹	7. Zoned Land Availability (5. – 6.b) ¹⁰
Principal Town	339	191	148	25	3700	3142	1218	2482
Longford Town								
Northern Environs								
Remaining Environs								
Key Service Town	166	49	117	12	1404	1063	412	992
Granard								
Service Town	127	64	63	12	756	376	146	610
Edgeworthstown								
Local Service Town	210	76	134	12	1608	321	124	1484
Ballymahon								
Lanesboro								
Villages 1 ¹¹	546	333	213	5	1065	232	90	975
8 Settlements								
Villages 2 ¹²	377	169	208	* ¹³	416	192	74	342
13 Settlements								
Villages 3 ¹⁴	242	79	163	*	326	208	81	245
16 Settlements								
							2145	7130
Total County	2007	961	1046		9275	5534	4021¹⁵	5254

Note: This table should be read in conjunction with the footnotes below. Figures have been rounded to exclude decimal points

⁶ Calculated for smaller villages and towns through removal of other uses from current "blanket" zoning. ⁷ Existing developed area, including extant planning permissions and developments under construction. ⁸ In accordance with the provisions of the Sustainable Urban Housing Guidelines, no individual proposal shall exceed 10-15% of existing housing stock in village settlements. ⁹ 2.58 has been used to calculate household size over the period – this is an average of CSO estimated household sizes from 2006-2016. ¹⁰ Development shall be prioritised in a sequential manner from the centre of the settlement in each instance to avoid "leapfrogging", with a preference toward the redevelopment of Brownfield sites. ¹¹ These are Abbeylara, Ardagh, Ballinalee, Carrickglass, Clondra, Drumlish, Keenagh and Newtownforbes - locally important Towns and Villages with potential for further development by reason of the availability of existing physical, social/community and/or economic infrastructure, strategic location, availability of public transport, historic settlement patterns/associations and tourism development potential. These settlements have, or are proposed to have, Local Area Plans prepared. ¹² These are villages which, in most cases, have, or are likely to come under significant development pressure and require consolidation while catering for local need – Abbeyshrule, Aughnaccliffe, Ballinamuck, Cullyfad, Drumhalry, Enybegs, Kinatruan, Kilashee, Legga, Legga, Moyne, Newtowncashel and Stonepark. ¹³ It is intended that development density in these settlements reflect existing densities in the zoned area, existing village character/settlement pattern and acknowledge the fact that mains sewerage provision is unlikely in these areas in the short to medium term. For this reason, and considering an element of market choice, a nominal density of 2 dwellings per ha has been used to calculate the figures in col.5. ¹⁴ These are settlements designated specifically to cater for low density rural generated housing in clusters at or in the vicinity of congregational spaces such as churches, schools shops or other community facilities, providing a potential alternative to dispersed single house development in sensitive areas. These settlements are Ballycloughan, Ballywillin, Barry, Bunlahy, Carrickboy, Coolarty, Colehill, Derraghan, Dring, Forney, Lisryan, Melview, Moydow, Mullinalaghta, Ratharney and Taghshinny. This also includes provision for one-off housing as provided for under the SRHGs. ¹⁵ This figure has been adjusted to reflect the findings of the housing strategy which show that additional units are required to cater for the shortfall generated by decreasing household size in the existing population (table 2.1 housing strategy).

2.3.3.2 Longford Town and Environs

Longford Town is the County Administrative headquarters of the Local Authority and the commercial, retail, service and industrial centre of the County. It is the policy of the Council to promote and enhance this role, and protect the town from any proposals, which may detract from its position as a County/Regional centre. It is essential that provision is made for retail and employment functions of the town so that they are developed and expanded to provide the necessary facilities to serve the people and its catchment area, and to promote and strengthen the role of Longford as a 'principal town' with its key function as driving the northern part of the Midlands Region, which is defined in the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines.

The Town Council area is covered by the Longford Town Development Plan 2004 (which is currently under review). In recognising the importance of the lands within the County's functional area which bound directly onto the town, a Local Area Plan has been prepared for the Northern Environs Area of the town and a Local Area Plan is currently being prepared for the Southern Environs of the town. Any proposals for development within these areas shall have cognisance of the provisions defined in the relevant Local Area Plan, including zonings.

In addition to both Local Area Plans, lands to the south west, east and north of the town have been zoned. In these locations, zonings have been

selected which allow for the natural growth of Longford Town and relate to existing zonings within the town boundary. In addition to this, it is policy of the Council that lands adjoining Longford Town in the County Administrative area including those lands unzoned outside the bypass may be considered for development where appropriate, to be assessed on a site by site basis, subject to the availability of services and compliance with the development management standards and other policies and objectives contained within this plan.

The Northern and Southern Local Area Plans will be available as separate documents however, zonings to the south-west, east and north of the town and objectives for these areas are outlined in this Section.

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 and should not detract from the amenity of the area. These zonings should be read in conjunction with the Development Plan Standards, particularly in relation to design, materials, public open space and parking requirements.

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

completed, including zonings.

A Local Area Plan is proposed to be prepared covering the existing residential areas and adjacent lands potentially suitable for development to the north of Longford Town in the Clonbalt, Foynescourt and Clonrallagh areas. Preparation of this Plan is to commence by September 2009 subject to available resources.

SET 5:

The following zoning objectives (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.

Residential

- **To primarily provide for residential development; to preserve and improve 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 higher housing densities, natural, locally sourced materials, energy efficiency and transport implications, the impact on the existing ecology and compatibility with local environmental conditions.

In particular, neighbourhood facilities such as a neighbourhood shop, post office, school, crèche etc will be encouraged in the residential area identified as part of Map 2.

Recreational

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

The proposed utilisation of the River Camlin and Royal Canal as a walk and park would provide a recreational backbone to the town which would provide a wildlife corridor and a potential link to other walking routes, facilitating the establishment of a pedestrian network of pathways.

Residential/Commercial

- **To primarily provide for residential development with a possible element of commercial/retail development.**

Development carried out under this zoning should have regard to the dual use of the zoning, and, in particular, shall have regard to the retail strategy for the County once adopted. Developers should be cognisant of the high profile locations of this zoning and design, siting and materials should be chosen accordingly.

Industrial/Commercial

- **To primarily provide for industrial development with a possible element of commercial development.**

The dual zoning is weighted towards industrial development, with allowances made for ancillary commercial development. Larger scale commercial development under this zoning will require the preparation of a detailed plan for the area involved prior to consideration, and, in particular, retail warehousing only (which shall not include town centre retailing uses), to be considered in light of the findings of the retail strategy.

Industrial

- **To primarily provide for industrial/workshop and warehouse development including compatible uses such as offices and distribution.**

Zonings of industrial nature are indicative and are adaptable to the nature, size and requirements of future employment/industrial development. The creation of local employment is the primary aim of this zoning. Hi-tech business/office, and light industrial developments will be considered within this zoning.

Hi-Tech/Light Industrial/Employment Generating

- **To primarily provide for Hi-Tech/Light Industrial and employment generating uses.**

Zonings of this nature are indicative and are adaptable to the nature, size and requirements of future employment/hi-tech industrial development. The creation of local employment and generation of economic development is the primary aim of this

zoning. Hi-tech business/office will be considered within this zoning.

The provision of developments within this zoning shall be designed to the highest architectural standards and will be flagship in terms of quality, employment and status.

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, crèches, nursing homes etc.

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

Rapid population growth and increased economic activity over the timeframes of the previous Longford County Development Plan and current Town Development Plan have lead to significant pressures on existing infrastructure that threaten the continued prosperity, quality of life and overall vitality and viability of Longford Town and its environs, through increasing traffic congestion and resultant deterioration of the pedestrian environment. In order to enhance the attractiveness of the town as a commercial destination and as a prime location to live, work and visit, a Land Use and Transportation Study for the area has been commissioned.

The primary aim of the study is to create a land-use and transportation planning framework at a strategic level for Longford town and its environs over a twenty year projected period, intended to advise and guide current and future plans at County, Town and Local level. The following main issues will be addressed as part of this:

- **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 alternative transportation opportunities to private vehicles through recommendations based on integrated spatial analysis of existing and potential land use provision in critical sectors to be identified throughout the study area.**
- **The creation of a broad three-stage service provision and multi-modal transportation framework, providing for future public transport initiatives, including a potential dedicated depot at Longford Town, an enhanced pedestrian environment and opportunities to promote cycling, ranging from strategic to local level based.**

- **Physical constraints such as rivers, natural features, flooding, existing and proposed infrastructural projects ranging from water supply to communications will be considered in this regard.**

Accordingly, where appropriate, any proposals for development within this area will have cognisance of the future recommendations of the LUTs study, and it is envisioned that the LUTs study will adequately and appropriately inform the review of the Longford Town Development Plan.

2.3.3.3 Local Area Plans

Local Area Plans have been prepared (or are currently being prepared) for the following settlements, over the previous plan period. The plans have proved instrumental in the encouragement of development to locate and consolidate in designated areas. These shall be reviewed and updated as required.

PRINCIPAL TOWN	TIER 1 VILLAGES
• Longford Northern Environs	• Drumlish
• Longford Southern Environs	• Newtownforbes
KEY SERVICE TOWN	• Carrickglass
• Granard	• Clondra
SERVICE TOWN	• Keenagh
• Edgeworthstown	• Ballinalee
LOCAL SERVICE TOWNS	• Ardagh
• Lanesboro and Ballymahon	• Abbeylara

It is envisioned that Tier 1 Villages are suitable to cater for local need and also act as strategically important satellite areas that provide an important function of absorbing demand for development from the surrounding rural hinterland and combating trends identified in Section 2.3.4.1 (v) which suggest that particular rural areas beyond Longford Town are experiencing increased demand for one-off housing. This level of the settlement hierarchy is considered essential when the alternative is identified i.e. the proliferation and undesirable demand for one-off housing in the countryside.

2.3.3.4 Village Settlement

In addition to the Local Area Plans, it is intended to produce village policy statements to address development issues in the following settlements. In the interim the area contained within each identified village envelope shall be zoned for 'residential and compatible uses', except where specifically stated otherwise. These locations were originally selected on the basis of the availability of existing congregation areas and services such as schools, shops, post offices, public houses and residential houses. Villages have been divided in to three tiers to reflect their size, function and role within the overall settlement strategy (these have been largely dealt with at section 2.3.3). Tier 1 villages are covered by local area plans and have been addressed in Section 2.3.3.3 above.

Tier 2 Villages

Abbeyshrule, Aughnaclyffe, Ballinamuck, Cullyfad, Drumhaldry, Enybegs, Kilnatruan, Kilashee, Legan, Legga, Moyne, Newtowncashel, Stonepark.

Settlements within the second tier should primarily cater for local need. In general, developments of an intensive nature will not be permitted in these locations. In recognising the rural nature of the county, the role of these settlements is considered essential in offering a secure future on a social, cultural and economic plane.

Tier 3 Villages

Ballycloughan, Ballywillin, Barry, Bunlahy, Carrickboy, Coolarty, Colehill, Derraghan, Dring, Forgney, Lisryan, Melview, Moydow, Mullinalaghta, Rathamey, Taghshinny.

These settlements are primarily proposed to absorb development at existing low densities from the surrounding rural hinterland.

All the above settlements have been chosen on the basis of their strategic location within the County, their current level of growth and their capacity to absorb further development through the existing physical, social and economic infrastructure which is present and capable of expansion. Development envelopes are identified for these settlements and are illustrated on the maps contained in **Appendix 2.**

Maps of these areas and the proposed development envelope associated with each, including zonings where considered appropriate, are contained in **Appendix 2.**

The following objectives shall be considered in terms of the development of village settlements

SET 6:

It is an objective of the Development Plan that the Village Policy Statement may contain zonings and will also contain policy statements which will provide a basic framework for the development of each village settlement.

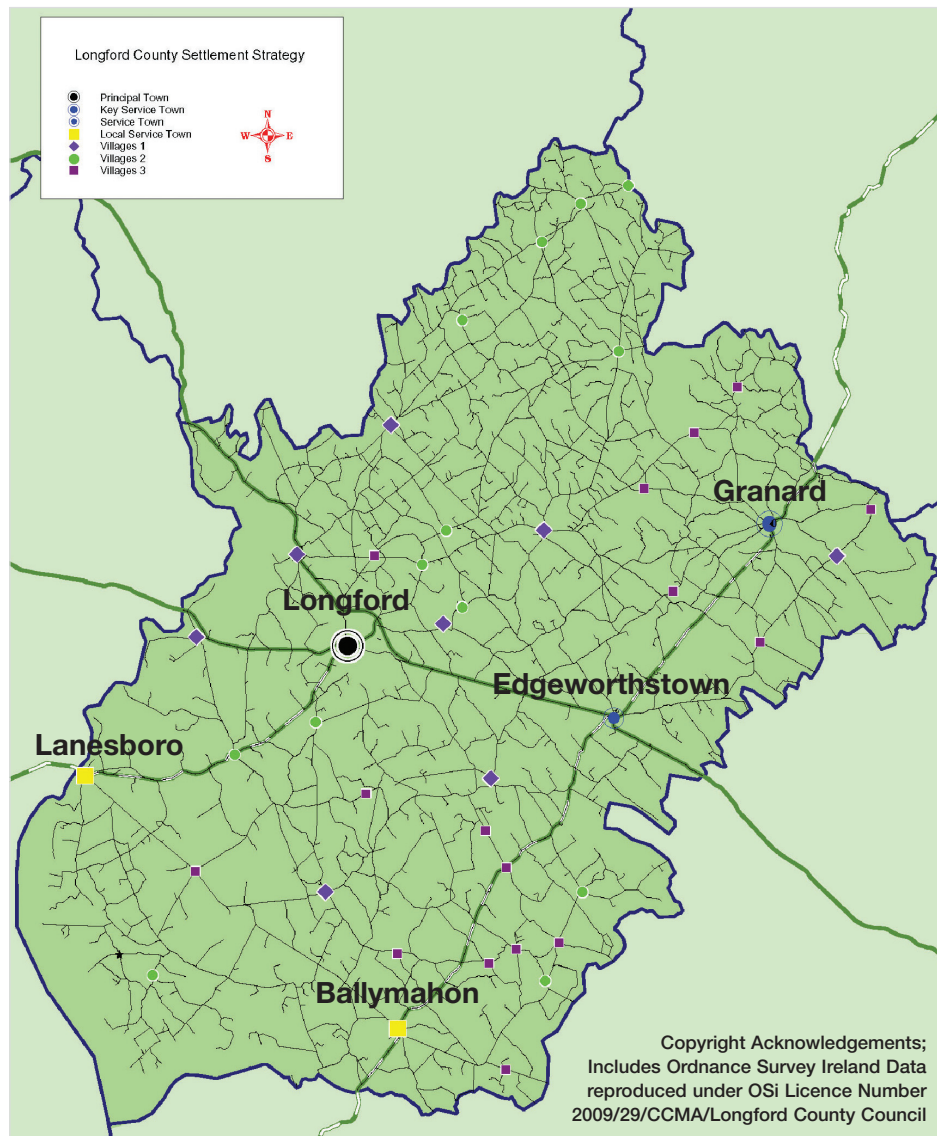
SET 7:

Applications for development in these villages will be subject to assessment in terms of the size of development considered appropriate to the location, their visual impact and other normal planning criteria, including their ability to enhance existing village character, and create or strengthen a sense of identity and distinctiveness for the settlement. These provisions shall include potential restrictions on residential density.

SET 8:

All developments are to provide normal facilities appropriate to the location such as roads, footpaths, street lights, services and any other such requirements considered appropriate.

The map overleaf indicates the distribution of designated settlements throughout the County.



2.3.4 Rural Areas

Where an area of land is outside a designated settlement (i.e. an area not covered or proposed to be covered by a Local Area Plan or Village Policy Statement, as listed in the previous Section), and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Development Plan or Longford Town Development Plan, this area is termed 'rural' for the purposes of the plan. This section should be read in conjunction with the Infrastructure and Environment, Heritage and Amenities sections of this plan.

For Holiday/Second home developments see Tourism Section

2.3.4.1 Sustaining Rural Areas

i) Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines

These Ministerial Guidelines were issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 in April 2005. The main thrust of these guidelines is embodied in the following principles:

- People who are part of the Rural Community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas, including those under strong urban pressures.
- Anyone wishing to build a house in rural areas suffering persistent and substantial population decline will be accommodated.
- The development of the rural environs of the

major urban areas, including the gateways and hubs identified in the NSS and County and other larger towns over 5,000 in population needs to be carefully managed in order to assure their orderly development and successful functioning into the future.

In order to apply these principles in a policy context for the County, criteria must be developed to define the following:

- **Rural areas.**
- **People who are part of the rural community/Rural Generated Housing Need.**
- **Rural Areas suffering persistent and substantial decline.**
- **Rural environs of relevant Urban areas.**

ii) Rural Areas

This County Development Plan has 41 designated settlements, excluding Longford Town and Environs, for which different levels of plan have been identified and specific development envelopes applied. The Northern Environs Local Area Plan and Southern Environs Local Area Plan (forthcoming) also identify zoned lands. It is now proposed that areas other than the aforementioned and lands zoned as part of this plan, Longford Town Plan and any future plan prepared, are designated as rural.

SET 9:

Areas other than those defined as part of the settlement hierarchy and lands zoned as part of this plan, shall be designated as rural for the purposes of the plan.

iii) People who are part of the rural community/Rural Generated Housing Need

The County Development Plan aims to create a balanced approach to rural housing and includes a definition of where development in rural areas will be considered. This closely mirrors the suggestions put forward at 3.2.3 of the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines and is defined below as SET 10 for the purposes of this Plan. However, it should be noted that relevant applications for permission will remain subject to normal planning criteria and design and siting requirements contained in the relevant plan section.

SET 10:

a) The following categories of applicant shall be considered for the development of housing in the rural area with a view towards sustaining rural communities:

- **Members of farm families, seeking to build on the family farm.**
- **Landowners with reasonably sized farm holdings who wish to live on their land.**

- **Members of the rural community in the immediate area, this includes returning emigrants or their children with remaining substantial family or community ties, who wish to permanently settle in the area.**
- **Persons whose primary full or part-time employment is locally based or who are providing a service to the local community.**

b) Speculative and unsustainable urban-generated housing development will be discouraged in the rural area.

c) Occupancy Conditions may be attached in accordance with Ministerial Guidelines to protect the policy application and integrity.

iv) Rural areas suffering persistent and substantial decline

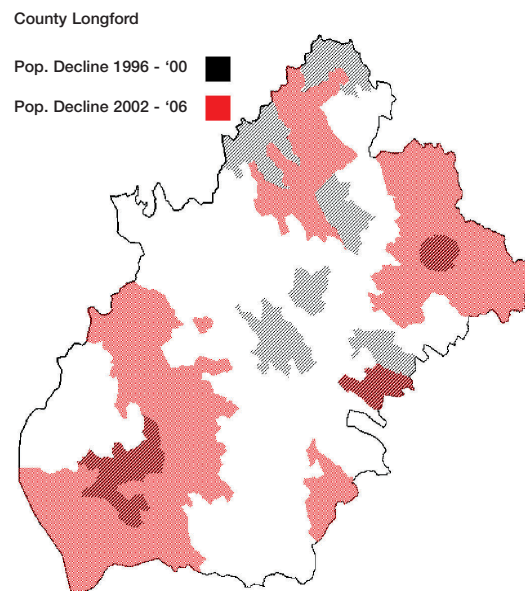
There are few areas within the County that suffer from decline of this magnitude, particularly over the last census period. The following analysis points to the potential trend towards intra-county outward migration from more urban areas to urban environs/rural locations.

In the period 1996 to 2002, 24 district electoral divisions (DEDs) lost population, totalling 670 persons (compared with an overall County population growth of 902 persons). The heaviest losses were in Longford and Granard Urban areas, totalling 148 and 160 persons respectively. This

would suggest that there was a substantial movement within the County from urban to rural areas.

The 2002 to 2006 timeframe tells a significantly different story, with 9 DEDs experiencing population loss, only 3 of which overlap with the 24 DEDs experiencing loss over the previous intercensal period. These are Granard Urban, Cashel East and Ballymuigh. Of these three, two are located within or contain designated settlements, where housing development has been actively promoted over the plan period. Total population losses in these nine DEDs amounted to 165 persons (of which losses in Granard Urban District account for over half), while permission has been granted in these areas for over 330 dwellings over the same period, giving a population equivalent of almost 1,000.

The map below illustrates areas of population decline over the intercensal periods of 1996-2002 and 2002-2006.



The map above shows areas of population decline over the 1996-2002 intercensal period shaded red, while the areas shaded black are DEDs that experienced decline over the 2002-2006 period.

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The 10% growth in the County population over the same period and the lack of significant overlap between rural DEDs experiencing losses would suggest that population losses in rural areas of

County Longford tend to be transient in nature and minor in extent.

Having considered the above, it is not proposed to designate any areas in the County as suffering from “persistent and substantial population decline”.

v) Rural Environs of Urban Areas

Mapping of rural housing applications in the development management process indicated that significant pressure exists in the environs of Longford Town.

This area, which covers 11 DEDs and the Longford Urban Area, has steadily increased both in population figures and as a percentage of the total County population, having risen from 42% in 1991 to 47% in 2006. It should be noted that this increase in percentage continued at a steady 2% every six year period, even when population losses were experienced in the Longford Urban DED from 1996 to 2002.

The 2003-2009 County Development Plan attempted to address rural areas under pressure from the Longford Urban area through the designation of settlements at Clondra, Stonepark, Kilashee, Melview, Kilnatruan, Enybegs and Cullyfad, in addition to the Local Area Plan Settlements of Newtownforbes, Drumlish, and Carrickglass. The relative success of this policy can be seen on the following map which illustrates the spatial distribution of new buildings by townland

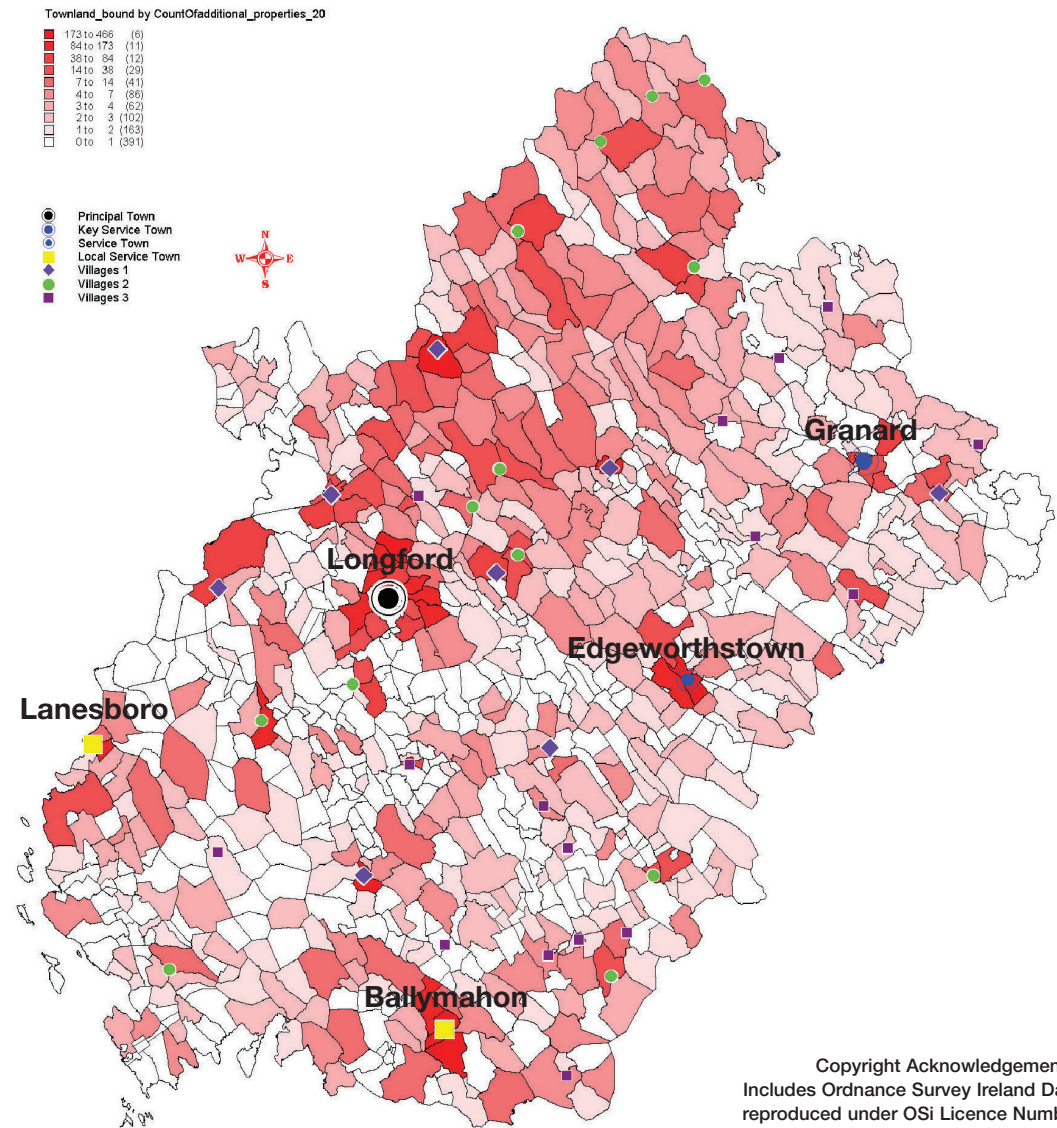
over the period from 2003-2008, overlaid with the location of the 42 designated settlements.

This analysis would point to the fact that the rural area, particularly that under the influence of Longford Town, requires further policy protection. This is contained at Section 3.2.2 of this plan.

SET 11:

In accordance with the policies outlined in the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Longford County Council shall strictly apply policy SET 10 in the vicinity of Longford Town in order to prevent over-proliferation of urban-generated one-off housing in the rural area. Further ribbon development on all approaches to Longford Town, regional routes R194 and R198 in particular, shall be discouraged.

This thematic map represents the spatial distribution of new properties from July 2003 up until January 2008 (data sourced from An Post Geodirectory). When overlaid with the Longford County Settlement Strategy, it is evident that there has been a certain degree of success in the concentration of development into designated settlements over the 2003-2009 plan period.



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SECTION B

POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES



3

HOUSING

3.1 HOUSING STRATEGY

The dynamics of the housing market in the County have changed significantly over the period of the previous plan. This is substantially due to the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme which spurred on demand for housing units within the County, and is represented in the increased population growth that has occurred (see Section 1.3.3 of this plan). A review of the housing strategy was commissioned by Longford Local Authorities in June 2007 and carried out by Keith Simpson and Associates. Adjustments were made to the strategy to take into account the Regional Population targets and allocations formulated in 2008, which are also reflected in the settlement strategy at Section 2.3 (tables 2.3.1 and 2.3.2).

The results of this are summarised below and form the basis of Social and Affordable Housing policy. The full Housing Strategy document is available at Annex 1 of this plan.

3.1.1 Housing Strategy Synopsis and Policy

The Housing Strategy is for the period of 2009-2015, which is the lifetime of this proposed Development Plan. It covers the entire County area including that of Longford Town. Under the remit of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), 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.**

3.1.1.1 Residential Zoning and Settlement Strategy

(To be Read in conjunction with Section 2.3)

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 improve residential amenity, dwellings and compatible uses including social and community facilities, open spaces and local shopping facilities. In certain instances low density and medium density residential zonings have been applied.

Commercial/Residential

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

Based on the Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin 2006 (2007) prepared by the DoEHLG, the survey of housing zoned serviced land availability states that Longford County has 140 hectares available of undeveloped serviced zoned residential land. This includes the settlements of Longford Town, Granard and Ballymahon. In addition to the aforementioned settlements, there is also 822 hectares of undeveloped zoned residential land throughout the County.

The housing demand for County Longford established that a total of 4,526 residential units will be required from 2007-2016. Estimates of available zoned land and capacities provided at table 2.3.2 indicate that there is sufficient allocation over the lifetime of the plan to cater for these projections. However, it should be noted that these estimates for the capacity of the zoned land 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.

Housing units will be provided within the residentially zoned lands in the settlements of Drumlish, Edgeworthstown, Ballinalee, Lanesboro, Kenagh,

Ardagh, Carrickglass, Clondra, Abbeylara and Newtownforbes, with a smaller remainder of the housing units being provided in the town/village areas that are to be covered by a village policy statement¹⁶.

In supporting the settlement strategy for the County, the residential density within these settlements to be covered by village policy statements will be significantly less than the larger settlements throughout the County. Although it is recognised that this is not the most efficient use of land, particularly by urban standards, it is considered that in ensuring provision of adequate land for housing to meet the needs of the County's population, it is necessary to recognise the rural and dispersed nature of settlement distribution within Longford and balance sustainable development with the social, community and cultural requirements of the County (Section 10 (2) (d) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000). This approach offers a more secure future for the rural population of Longford where a network of rural settlements is built upon to sustain a range of viable services and community facilities.

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, including those factors outlined in the document *Housing Supply, Guidelines for Planning Authorities*

(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.

An important element of zoning provision within County Longford is the factor of land availability which refers to the likelihood of the land actually being developed in the short-term. Although levels of workers dependent on the agricultural sector has reduced in the County during the last intercensal period, 2002-2006, Longford still remains to have a larger percentage of the labour force employed in the agricultural sector than the state average (Volume 8 Census 2006, CSO). This has a direct impact on residentially zoned landholdings within settlement boundaries, including Longford Town, which are still used for agriculture and therefore the likelihood of the land being developed is reduced which must be considered in determining residential zoning provision.

In addition, development within an area 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 and to support its role of 'principal town' in the functional hierarchy of the settlement strategy and ensure its sustainability. However, it is expected that the land will come on stream in the latter half of

the lifespan of this 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 county.

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. This issue has been faced through ensuring the provision of an appropriate level of residentially zoned land in accordance with the functional hierarchy outlined within the settlement strategy 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 which, 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 encouragement of the spatial distribution of future population in accordance with the settlement strategy also promotes the provision of housing units in areas where greater employment opportunities and facilities exist, and in locations that have greater access to public transport links.

¹⁶ Namely, Abbeyshrule, Aughnaccliffe, Ballinamuck, Ballycloghan, Ballywilliam, Barry, Bunlahy, Carrickboy, Colehill, Coolarty, Cullyfad, Derraghan, Dring, Drumhalry, Ennybegs, Forgney, Kilashee, Kinatruan, Knockawalky, Legan, Leggagh, Lisryan, Moydow, Moyne, Mullinaghta, Newtowncashel, Ratharney, Stonepark and Taghshinny.

This reduces the need to travel and increases and improves the sustainability of the settlement distribution within the County, which is still influenced by rural settlement trends and patterns.

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

HS 1:

It is the policy of the Council to normally provide such housing within existing defined settlements in order to realise the economics of providing infrastructure and services in towns and villages, and to facilitate the expansion of existing settlements in a planned and orderly fashion with the benefit of a broad range of services and infrastructure.

HS 2:

Without prejudice to the above, housing shall be provided in rural areas where it promotes the role, and combats isolation of, the farming community, and promotes social inclusion.

HS 3:

The Council will promote and encourage the provision of a broad mix of housing types in towns and villages in order to cater for the changing demographic outline of the County. This will include the provision of housing for the elderly, persons with disability, lone parents and travelling families.

HS 4:

The Council will give due consideration to DoEHLG's publications of "Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities - Policy Statement" (2007) and "Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities- Design Guidelines" (2007)¹⁷.

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

HS 5:

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 County Housing Strategy - over the Plan period.

HS 6:

Provision of Social and Affordable Housing shall be forwarded through the ongoing purchase programme of turnkey developments, co-operation with voluntary housing organisations, the Health Service Executive and consultation, discussion and agreement with private developers as well as the Local Authority's own house building programme.

HS 7:

Housing developments will be located in areas appropriately zoned under the Development Plan

and Local Area Plans. Additional residential developments where the required infrastructure is present (or readily available) and areas close to social and community facilities, and that are in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, may also be considered.

HS 8:

The specifics of these requirements shall be dealt with by the planning authority in pre-planning consultations and by condition and agreement as part of a planning permission for residential development.

HS 9:

It will be necessary for the planning authority to reserve 20% of applications for private housing developments to provide an element of Social and Affordable Housing, in order to provide an even spread of housing of all types and encourage social integration¹⁸.

HS 10:

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:

- **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;**

¹⁷ "Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities - Policy Statement" (February, 2007), is a new policy statement for housing aimed at building sustainable communities, responding to housing need and ensuring effective delivery of housing programmes. Focus is placed on transforming Irish housing services, providing for special housing needs, creating paths to home ownership through affordable housing, etc, and expanding social housing output. "Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities- Design Guidelines" (February, 2007), these guidelines will assist in the implementation of the policies set out in previous publication.¹⁸ The basis for this figure is summarised in Table 2.13 of the County's Housing Strategy contained at Annex 1 of this plan. This table demonstrates a summary of anticipated social and affordable housing needs in the County. The maximum percentage allowable under the Planning and Development Act is not more than 20% and as illustrated in table 2.13 the anticipated social and affordable housing need often exceeds this.

- **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 11:

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 2000 (as amended)*' which outlines options for compliance with Part V.

HS 12:

Longford County 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 13:

New developments will be required to be 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 14:

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). The planning authority will have cognisance of the needs of the elderly with regard to accessibility, security and social interaction.

HS 15:

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 16:

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 17:

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.

3.2 Settlement Policy and Requirements for Residential Development

The following Policies and Objectives are proposed to address the issues outlined in the settlement strategy.

Policy relating to the location of settlement and development comes under two headings for the purposes of distinction between policy statements:

- For areas which are covered by Local Area Plans, Village Policy Statements and lands zoned as part of this plan - “**Designated Settlements**”
- For areas which are not covered by an additional plan, but are subject to the policy statements in other sections of the County Development Plan - “**Rural Areas**”

3.2.1 Designated Settlements

The Settlement Strategy contained at Section 2.3 of this document identifies a hierarchy of settlements within the County. As illustrated above, these areas and other zoned lands are defined as Designated Settlements.

The nature of the following policy with relation to residential development within designated

settlements is twofold as defined below;

- i) Primarily outlined below are **general policies** (Section 3.2.1.1) for residential development within these areas in order to ensure the maintenance and development of thriving communities, and to provide quality physical development that is attractive and sustainable.
- ii) Secondly, **standards required for residential developments** within designated settlements or as otherwise zoned as part of this plan, including where appropriate areas within Longford Environs.

3.2.1.1 Designated Settlements - General Policy and Objectives

In general, developments within designated settlements shall have cognisance of the following policies;

HOU DS 1:

In residentially zoned areas, planning permission will normally be granted for developments appropriate to the zoning, subject to compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the development plan, local area plan or village policy statement, the functional area of which the settlement forms a part.

HOU DS 2:

The Council will continue to utilise relevant national and regional initiatives in order to facilitate the improvement and enhancement of the County's settlements. This programme is required to be administered on a priority basis and in accordance with a phased plan.

HOU DS 3:

It is the policy of the Council to promote the development of settlements identified in the settlement strategy at an appropriate scale in terms of their existing size, availability of resources and their position in the existing settlement hierarchy. The following policies shall be adhered to in the development of designated settlements:

- a) A principal consideration in the assessment of proposed new development in a particular settlement shall be the enhancement of a unique and distinctive identity through encouraging appropriate design guidance, rejuvenation of derelict sites and the use of Protected Structure/Architectural Conservation Area mechanisms.
- b) Existing features that form integral elements of village character shall be protected from inappropriate development. These features include existing recreational spaces, both active and passive, located in many settlements but particularly in the smaller villages (e.g.

Newtowncashel and Abbeyshrule). Proposals that aim to remove, develop or otherwise interfere with these spaces will be considered contrary to this Policy and unlikely to be considered favourably.

- c) Developments should reflect existing development patterns in terms of density, scale, layout, design and material finishes. Where appropriate, village/town houses shall be required to be built up to the footpath in order to maintain existing or establish new building lines in the interest of the settlement structure and character.
- d) High quality designs and finishes will be required in connection with new development which may include the provision of street furniture, lighting and pavement treatment to the satisfaction of the Council.
- e) New residential developments in towns and villages will generally be required to provide open space at a minimum rate of 15% of the total site area. The space provided shall be in a useable form in terms of layout, size and shape and reserved for public open space for the life of the development. Development will not be permitted on lands reserved for public open space save where it can be demonstrated that such development would clearly benefit the users of the space.
- f) Individual sites will generally be required to provide minimum back garden lengths of 11

metres. These standards will apply unless otherwise specified in individual Local Area Plans/Village Policy Statements or where residential density guidelines are applied with alternative requirements particularly in relation to the quality of the completed development and/or specific use criteria (e.g. sheltered housing provision).

- g) Development will be prioritised in settlements where infrastructural facilities, utilities and community services are available and/or can be provided within a reasonable timeframe. In other settlements, development may be conditioned on a phased basis pending the provision of the above requirements, either by the Council where included as an objective of the relevant statutory plan, or by the developer as appropriate in each individual circumstance.
- h) It is policy of the Council to provide for parking in Local Area Plans and Village Policy Statements, where appropriate. This provision shall have cognisance of the existing character of the town or village and shall be concentrated in areas where strong pedestrian links are possible between the parking area and core commercial area. Town and village character shall also be considered in terms of proposed road widening or traffic calming.
- i) Facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, and permeability through towns and villages shall be a consideration in the design of new developments,

particularly where these have the potential to create new non-vehicular connections to main thoroughfares and/or social, community and amenity facilities.

- j) Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) shall be put in place, as appropriate by developers in association with new developments.
- k) The Council shall promote and encourage the reuse, refurbishment, rebuilding and stabilisation, as appropriate, in terms of heritage and safety considerations, of derelict sites and dangerous buildings within the County.

HOU DS 4:

The Council may promote and encourage development in existing settlements by private, voluntary and co-operative groups where practical and appropriate through the following measures :

- a) Opening up of appropriately zoned previously inaccessible land banks and making this land available to the relevant parties.
- b) Reduction in development charges in order to promote the re-use and/or refurbishment of derelict or run-down properties.
- c) The acquisition of derelict property where it can provide infill and/or reduce negative visual impact,

particularly in or adjoining areas designated as being of high amenity or of high scenic value.

3.2.1.2 Designated Settlements - Requirements and Standards for Development

In order to optimise the efficiency of this plan, the following section outlines the requirements for residential developments within designated settlements. The following section should be read in conjunction with the Rural Design Guide (Annex 2), Section 2.2 of this plan which outlines Sustainable Development principles and Section 5 of the plan which contains Infrastructure objectives and policy.

HOU DS 5: DESIGN STANDARDS

- a) Generally, house design should be of a high standard, yet simple, with a minimum of different materials, finishes and detailing.
- b) Houses should be energy efficient in their siting and design, and utilise local materials where present and practicable. The use of renewable resources and alternative energy will be encouraged (see Section 2.2.2).
- c) Design solutions should be employed to minimise overlooking/overshadowing and to preserve and

enhance the residential amenity of the entire development.

- d) A variety of house types, sizes and designs (compatible with the overall scheme) will be encouraged in new developments. Developers should refer to “Social Housing- Design Guidelines” (DoELG, 1999- or subsequent update), Section B2 as a guide to minimum room sizes in proposed residential development.
- e) Private open space to the rear of dwellings shall be provided at a minimum of 11 metres 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 town and village centres and areas of higher residential densities where a satisfactory public open space/recreational, congregational area is provided.
- f) 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.**

- g) 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.
- h) Substantial developments may require prior consultation with relevant service providers, e.g. ESB

HOU DS 6: LAYOUT AND DENSITY

- a) Road layout in housing areas shall be designed in accordance with “Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas” (DoELG, 1998) or any subsequent update, and parking shall be provided in accordance with development plan standards.
- b) Generally, density should reflect the existing and traditional character of the settlement. In line with the “Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (DoEHLG, 2008) or any subsequent update, higher densities shall be permitted in urban and town centres, particularly in areas with close proximity to rail lines and other modes of public transport. In all other cases, the density of developments will be assessed on a site by site basis. In this regard, pre-planning discussions are actively encouraged.
- c) Layouts should reflect the existing town or village character. 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 type developments may be appropriate. In addition to this, where appropriate, the applicant may be requested to abide by the following set back distances;

Road Classification	Required Set-back
County	18 metres
Regional	21 metres
National Roads*	30 metres

***In accordance with national policy, planning permission will not normally be granted to new developments on national routes unless in exceptional circumstances. The following criteria shall be used in determining whether an application constitutes “Exceptional Circumstances”:**

- i. The compatibility of the proposal with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines.**
- ii. The relevance and appropriateness of the proposed development in supporting the aims and objectives of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines.**
- iii. The nature of the proposed development and its impacts on the national road, including the**

volume of traffic generated by the proposal, implications for the safe and efficient operation of the national road, its capacity and service life and, where appropriate, the cumulative impacts including the existing level of development in the area and the precedent that could be set by a grant of permission in that particular instance.

- 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.
- e) Developers will normally be required to install cycle lanes in conjunction with footpaths throughout the proposed development.
- f) Cul-de-sac layouts are generally preferred in smaller villages and towns, however, consideration shall be given to alternative layouts where access is provided to rear lands and where the layout is favourable towards safe and efficient traffic circulation.
- g) 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 the required form that forms part of any subsequent update).

HOU DS 7: PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

- a) The developer will normally be required to reserve 15% public open space in association with new developments (this requirement may be relaxed in conjunction with areas of higher density as outlined above) 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 settlement 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 0.1 ha may be provided in lieu of public open space.
- c) On sites that abut important recreational areas such as playing pitches, riverbanks, walking routes etc., the developer may be required to provide pedestrian links and/or wildlife corridors to connect the proposed development with its surroundings and potentially extend/enhance existing recreational facilities within the settlement and pedestrian routes toward the town/village centre. Pedestrian links should be secure, overlooked and well lit, or alternatively, be able to be locked at night.
- d) Areas of public open space should be designed, located and managed to encourage biodiversity and provide wildlife corridors where possible.
- e) Incidental open space, such as grass margins, leftover spaces or unusable areas shall **not** be

calculated as part of the open space provision for a development.

- f) Public open space should be provided in an area where it is useable, accessible and secure. It shall be provided as an area of passive 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.
- g) Where open space is provided adjacent to a main public road, this shall be fenced with an appropriate boundary material.
- h) The above requirements may be relaxed in certain instances, for example in developments consisting of Sheltered Housing or OPDs.

HOU DS 8: 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) Stands of mature trees on sites shall be preserved and protected in developments including their root systems. During construction the trees and their root systems shall be fenced off for protection.
- c) Soft landscaping should be carried out utilising

native/semi-native species, and exclude the use of exotic and/or invasive species, particularly in areas adjacent to riverbanks and wildlife areas.

- 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 point, or to emphasise and enhance children's play areas or promote sensory experience, or provide 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 following standards or similar suitable alternative;
 - i. Ornamental type public lighting, such as Urbis lighting, 8m high Chatsworth decorative columns with 1 metre cascade brackets and albanys lanterns with 250W SON lamps or similar approved equals.

- ii. Any proposed lighting shall meet the requirements of the Department of Environment publication "Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas," (1998) and ESB standards.
 - iii. For the roads network in and around an immediate housing area or along a public walkway, public lighting shall be provided to the following standards such as, Tubular Columns with Urbis K-lux lanterns with height of columns and wattage requirement to that of ESB standards.
- g) Generally, developers shall be required to retain hedgerows and mature trees on-site. If this is not possible, the developer will be required in most instances to replace trees removed and/or strengthen existing hedgerows.

HOU DS 9: PHASING AND COMPLETION

- a) The developer will be required to submit a bond ensuring the completion of the development to the satisfaction of the planning authority. This bond shall represent the size and extent of the development and shall be submitted to the planning authority prior to the commencement of the development.
- b) Where applicable, 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 houses in each phase of the development.

- c) Housing estates shall be named and numbered in accordance with a logical and sequential scheme to be agreed with the planning authority prior to the commencement of the development.
- d) Housing estate names shall be in Irish or in Irish and English and shall reflect local personages, landscape, heritage, historical and cultural features. Names shall be submitted in advance to the Planning Authority for approval by an established place names committee of the Heritage Forum or the Planning Authority.

HOU DS 10: INFILL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- a) Infill Residential development will be promoted in order to retain continuity of the built fabric and enhance the vitality and viability of village centres.
- 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 DS 11: MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY DEVELOPMENTS

- a) Apartments and flats may be considered in larger settlements and Local Area Plan settlements, where appropriate and where their sustainability has been demonstrated. Consideration may be given to such developments in the centre of smaller settlements where their sustainability has been demonstrated to a satisfactory degree by the developer and where the proposed development will not adversely affect the character of the settlement.
- 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.

HOU DS 12: EFFLUENT DISPOSAL (not public sewerage)

- a) It will be the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of waste water and effluent treatment services by private developers in order to promote development in identified settlements where significant deficiencies exist and where it is not proposed to provide such services within the life of the Development Plan. Their preference is for single houses with their own treatment system in the smaller settlements.
- b) Proposed treatment plants shall be purpose designed to the required County Council standards, appropriate in capacity and scale, and have a suitable outfall and method of disposal. As part of any application, the applicant should indicate the type and design capacity of the proposed treatment plant.
- c) All applications for residential developments in areas where public sewerage mains are not present shall be accompanied by the documentation as required by the relevant EPA Treatment Manual (or subsequent update),

certified by a fully indemnified professional, indicating the suitability of the site for the disposal of effluent.

- d) These treatment plants shall be subject to legally binding maintenance and management agreements, indicating the day-to-day caretaking and maintenance contract for the plant, and the developer shall lodge a bond with the Planning Authority in order to secure the continuing operation, management and maintenance of the plant in accordance with the relevant guidelines.
- e) Where it is proposed to dispose of treated effluent direct to a watercourse, the applicant shall submit an Assimilative Capacity Report on the receiving water, prepared by an experienced hydrologist and containing the following information;
 - i. Assessing the chemical, biological (Q rating) and bacterial condition of the receiving water.
 - ii. Assessing the flow data of receiving waters, indicating 95 percentile flow and Dry Weather Flow.
 - iii. Provide an assessment of the associated impacts of the proposed discharge on the chemical, biological and bacteriological quality of the receiving waters with regard to the relevant legislation.
- f) Where it is proposed to dispose of treated effluent

by percolation, a detailed site assessment and characterisation should be submitted in accordance with EPA standards. The Council may require an experienced hydro-geologist report to be submitted on the likely impact of the discharge on ground water quality.

3.2.2 Rural Areas

The Settlement Strategy contained at Section 2.3 of this document identifies a hierarchy of settlements within the County. The settlement strategy also acknowledges the rural nature of the County and Section 2.3.4 of this plan details objectives and policy for residential development within these areas.

The nature of the following policy with relation to residential development within rural areas is twofold as defined below;

- i) Primarily outlined below are **general policies** (Section 3.2.2.1) for residential development within these areas in order to ensure the sustainability of rural communities and the surrounding landscape.
- ii) Secondly **requirements and standards for development** (Section 3.2.2.2) within rural areas.

3.2.2.1 Rural Areas- General Policy and Objectives

In general, residential developments in rural areas shall have cognisance of the following objectives and policies.

HOU RUR 1:

Assessment of residential development in rural areas shall be guided by the suitability of the area in terms of its sensitivity, its ability to accommodate development in a sustainable manner and compliance with the relevant technical criteria.

HOU RUR 2:

In terms of rural housing, Longford County Council recognises the need of applicants defined within policy SET 10 to locate in their own rural areas. These cases shall be assessed on their merits, with regard being had to ability of the applicant and/or proposed resident to provide, at their own expense, the services required to sustain the proposed development without detrimental impact on road safety, water quality, public health or environmental and landscape integrity.

HOU RUR 3:

Outside designated settlements and development envelopes, there shall be a presumption against extensive urban generated commuter development, ribbon development, development by persons who do not intend to use the dwelling as their primary

residence and unsustainable, speculator driven residential units. In this respect, applicants for permission for residential development in non-designated areas shall be required to submit a statement indicating the sustainability of the proposal, which shall form part of the assessment of the application for planning permission and in which shall be outlined :

- a) The reason for the location of the proposed dwelling in a particular locality.
- b) The connection or close relationship between the applicant and/or proposed resident and the locality in which the proposed dwelling is to be situated and the criteria outlined in SET 10.
- c) The place of employment of the applicant and/or proposed resident where relevant.
- d) A demonstration of the ability of the applicant and/or proposed resident to provide, at their own expense, the services required to sustain the proposed development without detrimental impact on road safety, water quality, public health, views and prospects, landscape, environmental integrity and amenity.

HOU RUR 4:

Applicants for planning permission for residential development in rural areas under strong urban influence may be required to agree to an occupancy condition, applied in accordance with ministerial

guidelines, restricting the occupancy of the dwelling to the applicant and/or the applicant's immediate family for a specified period, as part of any grant of planning permission.

HOU RUR 5:

Ribbon development of one-off housing extending out along routes from settlements shall be actively discouraged.

HOU RUR 6:

The Council shall establish, implement and maintain a Rural Housing Application GIS database to monitor Countywide pattern and feed into long-term policy making, subject to staff resources.

HOU RUR 7:

It is policy of the Council to have regard to the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities, April 2005.

The principles set out in the guidelines require that new houses in rural areas be sited and designed to integrate well with their physical surroundings and be generally compatible with:

- i. The protection of water quality in the arrangements made for on site waste water disposal facilities;
- ii. The provision of a safe means of access in

relation to road and public safety;

- iii. The conservation of sensitive areas such as natural habitats, the environs of protected structures and other aspects of heritage.

In regard to septic tanks, the Planning Authority will be positively disposed towards the use of septic tanks and/or with additional package treatment systems, where necessary, with Irish Agrément Board Certification. In order to protect groundwater, all site suitability tests shall be carried out in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency Waste Water Treatment Manuals – Treatment Systems for Single Houses, or any subsequent update.

3.2.2.2 Rural Areas - Requirements and Standards for Development

The following section outlines the requirements for residential development within rural areas. The following section should be read in conjunction with the Design Guide, Section 2.2 of this plan which outlines Sustainable Development principles and Section 5 of the plan which contains Infrastructure objectives and policy.

HOU RUR 8: EFFLUENT DISPOSAL, DRAINAGE AND WATER SUPPLY

- a) The minimum acceptable site size for a dwelling

using an individual treatment system (septic tank and percolation area or equivalent) is 0.2ha. Where there are existing treatment systems adjacent, and/or where percolation tests are borderline (in the upper or lower 20% of permitted limits) this figure shall be increased and/or the applicant may be required to install an additional treatment system.

- b) The applicant shall submit details of the proposed effluent treatment system in accordance with the relevant wastewater treatment manual (or any update) by the EPA.
- c) Where a treatment system is to be installed, the applicant shall submit full site specific details of the proposed system certified by a suitably qualified and indemnified individual, and shall include Irish Agrément Board Certification and manufacturer's certification of site suitability. Maintenance agreements for a minimum period of five years shall be in place prior to the first occupancy of the dwelling.
- d) In order to safeguard ground and surface water resources, Longford County Council shall investigate the establishment of a panel of assessors for the submission of site assessments for effluent treatment systems in accordance with the relevant EPA guidelines. The purpose of this panel is to ensure an acceptable and consistent level of quality in the reports submitted. On the establishment of this panel, site assessments will only be accepted from approved assessors.

- e) Details of proposed methods of surface water disposal shall be provided, including location of soakpits and the means of prevention of surface water accessing the public roadway.
- f) Where residential development is proposed within reasonable distance of an appropriate mains water supply, the developer will generally be required to connect to the mains system in favour of using bored wells on-site for domestic water supply purposes.

HOU RUR 9: ACCESS AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

- a) Any site proposed for the development of a dwelling will generally be required to provide a minimum of 30 metres road frontage.
- b) Sight lines shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the NRA Road Geometry Handbook (or any subsequent update) or suitable alternative to be agreed with the Roads Department on a site by site basis. The applicant shall demonstrate that adequate sightlines are achievable in each direction along the public road from the proposed access to the new development. Where the achievement of these sightlines requires the maintenance/removal of hedgerows/ditches/boundaries that are not in the ownership of the applicant, a signed letter of agreement allowing such maintenance/removal should be obtained from the relevant landowner and submitted as part of the application for

planning permission.

- c) Minimum set back distances shall be adhered to in the case of frontage developments along public roads unless in instances where it is considered that building lines should be maintained. Measured from the nearest edge of road surface to the front wall of the proposed dwelling, the following set back distances should be adhered to:

Road Classification	Required Set-back
County	18 metres
Regional	21 metres
National Roads*	30 metres

*In accordance with national policy, planning permission will not normally be granted to new developments on national routes unless in exceptional circumstances (See policy HOU DS 6(c) for criteria).

- d) Where a new front boundary is constructed, applicants will be required to relocate all existing utility poles from the set back area, to be in line with the new boundary or alternatively placed underground. Set back areas shall be appropriately surfaced in keeping with the adjoining road, with sufficient drainage provision provided in order to prevent surface water entering the public road.
- e) Adequate provision shall be made for drainage to

ensure that surface water arising from the proposed development does not enter the public road and that water from the public road does not enter the site.

- 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 the required form that forms part of any subsequent update).

HOU RUR 10: DESIGN AND SITING

Site specific design solutions should be employed for individual one-off dwelling proposals. Dwelling houses should respect their location in terms of siting, design, materials, finishes and landscaping. Designs should be site specific and integrated into the landscape in accordance with the design principles contained in Annex 2 – Rural Design Guide.

Hedgerows should only be removed where necessary to achieve the required sightlines and should be replaced with a stone wall, backplanted with native species and maintained at the required level in order to provide an unobtrusive replacement for the hedgerow, which allows sight lines to be achieved. Post and rail fences should only be used in exceptional circumstances. The use of concrete walls along the entire site frontage is not encouraged as it has a substantial detrimental impact on the local character of the area.



4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Central to the successful implementation of the Development Plan Strategy is the goal which aims to **‘Promote Longford as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism, while encouraging employment growth and economic activity.’**

A vibrant economy is essential to provide employment opportunities to retain and sustain the population of the County, particularly given the 10.5% growth in population that the County experienced over the last census period.

Changes in the national planning framework, infrastructural provision and increased economic activity have had a positive influence on the economy of Longford. Of particular importance is the recognition of the central location of the County 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 County Longford has changed significantly over the period of the previous plan. Previously, Longford was over dependent on low level manufacturing and agricultural activities, with limited high skills or employment opportunities. The current economic landscape, however, consists of a diverse range of quality employers operating across a number of sectors, providing high skilled employment. The successful attraction of high levels of inward investment has stimulated business

confidence, a key driver of economic growth. The key challenge for the future is to maintain competitive advantage.

Longford County Council has played, and continues to play, a lead role in driving this economic shift. The zoning of lands for economic development in the previous County Development Plan, within this Plan and through the respective Local Area Plans has been, and still remains to be, essential to ensure the availability of appropriate land-banks into the future.

The land management process is crucial in the creation and facilitation of economic development. Longford County Council is continually proactive in the creation of available land appropriate for employment generating uses through acquisition and management of suitable land parcels.

The provision of supporting infrastructural services continues to be an essential element in the activation of economic development land and the development of business parks. Business parks have been provided in Longford (2), Granard (1), Lanesboro (1) and Ballymahon (1) over the period of the previous plan. The spatial distribution of these business parks is critical in supporting the balanced development of the County and enhancing their respective local economies.

Quality of life issues are increasingly important in the investment decision making process, influencing not only decisions to locate businesses and industries, but also in the creation and retention of a suitable labour force to service and further develop

established and proposed commercial concerns.

The maintenance and protection of natural and cultural heritage has a fundamental role to play in the attractiveness of Longford as a destination and a location in which to live, work and recreate. In this regard, this section should be read in conjunction with the other policies and objectives throughout the plan, particularly in conjunction with the specific infrastructure requirements outlined at Chapter 5.

The following Sections combine the physical development of the County with its economy in an integrated manner that considers the principles of economic growth with the proper planning and sustainable development of County Longford.

4.2 Industry, Commercial and Business Development

In facilitating Industrial, commercial or business developments, such development shall reflect the policies contained in this chapter. This requires a combined approach that takes account of the following key aims;

- **To facilitate the continued economic growth of the County in appropriate areas and encourage the generation of employment and increased economic activity in a spatially balanced manner within a sustainable framework.**

- To ensure a high quality environment, including the provision of hard and soft¹⁹ infrastructural facilities in order to attract inward investment thus increasing employment opportunities, while at the same time enhancing the attractiveness of the area for the labour force to locate/ remain within the County.
- To continue the development and retention of a highly educated workforce that will consolidate an enhanced economic environment within the County.
- To facilitate the development of critical mass in the industrial sector, promoting synergistic relationships between facilities and the establishment of spin-off developments, with a view towards creating an industrial centre of excellence in the north midlands.
- To promote sustainability and the use of “clean technology” in existing and proposed industrial developments, including the use of alternative and renewable energy sources and the promotion of developments located within walking/cycling proximity of larger residential areas.

4.2.1 Policies and Objectives

ECON 1:

The Planning Authority will encourage the development of industrial, commercial and business developments at appropriate scales having regard to the settlement strategy of the County. Generally, where the proposed development is considered to be a large scale employer or considered intensive in nature, such developments shall preferably locate within Longford Town or Local Area Plan settlements²⁰ as defined in the Settlement Strategy or on lands zoned for these purposes, as part of this plan.

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 county, subject to normal development management requirements and technical criteria.

ECON 3:

To zone sufficient and appropriate land for the facilitation of business, commercial and industrial purposes that stimulates the economic growth, viability and vibrancy of the county, without compromising the environmental, residential or amenity potential of the area. Zoning will be carried out as part of this Development Plan, Local Area Plans or where required in consultation with

Longford Town Council.

ECON 4:

It is policy that 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 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 outside a settlement (i.e. an area not covered or proposed to be covered by a Local Area Plan or Village Policy Statement, as listed in this document), and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Development Plan, Local Area Plan or other statutory document, 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.

¹⁹“Hard Infrastructure” refers to the provision of roads, sewerage etc. “Soft Infrastructure” refers to the provision of enterprises, institutions, market reforms etc.

²⁰Retail developments in particular shall be of a scale appropriate to their location as defined by relevant retail policy contained in this plan

ECON 6:

Proposals for specialised high-tech business industrial and associated office development with significant employment potential will be favourably considered, subject to the provisions of National Policy and in accordance with a sequential approach. This approach will include considerations of the availability of adequate transport networks, sufficient services and utilities, compliance with Development Management and technical standards and other policies contained within this Development Plan.

In particular, a detailed Local Area Plan shall be prepared to facilitate the development of Hi-Tech/Light Industrial and Employment Generating Uses to the East of Longford Town, once a route for the N4 Mullingar- Rooskey realignment is finalised. The preparation of the Local Area Plan shall commence within three months of the route being finalised, subject to staff resources. A specific road line shall be reserved for access to lands proposed for zoning that directly abut the N4 Dublin Road. Any proposed development in this area shall remain subject to a traffic impact assessment and shall ensure that the capacity of the National Route is preserved.

The Council will actively consult with the NRA in the design process for the N4 realignment, to promote the provision of accesses and junctions that take the potential use of these areas for employment generating purposes into consideration.

ECON 7:

The establishment of suitable small-scale industrial/commercial developments on family owned land promoting rural diversification will be encouraged subject to the satisfaction of normal planning and technical criteria.

ECON 8:

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 disposal of foul and surface water following appropriate treatment.

ECON 9:

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 10:

The reuse of sites and/or existing building stock shall be encouraged where possible. Older commercial and light industrial structures shall be protected as appropriate.

ECON 11: 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. Landscaping measures shall be detailed at application stage and should utilise native, non-invasive plant species.
- 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 Section 5.1.2) and circulation areas should be provided by the applicant within the curtilage of the proposed development unless otherwise agreed with the planning authority.

h) Substantial developments may require prior consultation with relevant service providers, e.g. ESB.

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 areas such as parking provision.

b) Building finishes should be of the highest quality and exterior colours should be sedate and unobtrusive.

c) Building height 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) 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.

f) 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.

g) Lighting shall be unobtrusive and shall not adversely affect traffic safety on adjacent roads. Specific lighting standards may be required in particular instances.

4.3 Retail Development

A review and update of the 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. This study document is available for viewing on request.

The purpose and intent of a retail strategy must be apparent if it is to be effective. To achieve this, the objectives of the strategy must be well founded and coherently presented. The underlying framework for achieving this was formulated in 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.

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). General policies and objectives for all other towns and villages are included in the strategy, but are expressed in greater detail in the individual Local Area Plans. The key objectives of the retail strategy were heavily 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 initiative to encourage the improvement of town centres; and
6. Identification of criteria for the assessment of retail developments.

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 County Development Plan, the Longford Town Development Plan and the various Local Area Plans prepared for settlements within Longford. Central

to the provision of additional retail floorspace is the need to reinforce the retail hierarchy of the county, in 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 this document. This framework is set by:

- (i). Longford Town's position in the national retail hierarchy;
- (ii). Identifying the County Retail Hierarchy;
- (iii). The Spatial distribution of new retail development with the County Retail Hierarchy;
- (iv). The core retail areas;
- (v). The sequential approach; and
- (vi). A consideration of need.

4.3.3 Longford Town's Position in the National 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 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 Town within the level three retail centres.

4.3.4 Identifying the County Retail Hierarchy

The 2004-2009 Longford County Retail Strategy did not explicitly establish a retail hierarchy for the county. This in part is attributable to the onset of county wide development pressure at a level previously not seen. This has been addressed by the adoption of a series of Local Area Plans for the county's main settlement centres. Thus, in the update and review of the strategy, an assessment has been undertaken of the county's extant retail policy framework and the issues and opportunities prevailing in each of the county's main centres. From this examination, it is possible to produce a county retail centre hierarchy taking into account the influence of the national, regional and local planning policy frameworks. Based upon this, the Longford County Retail Hierarchy is set out in Table 1.

4.3.5 Spatial Distribution of Additional Retail within the County Retail Hierarchy

This update and review of the Longford County Retail Strategy, provides a strategic policy framework, in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Planning Guidelines, for the spatial distribution of new retail development in the county. While such a framework inherently emphasises strategic guidance on the location and scale of major retail development, it must ensure that the strategy does not inhibit appropriate scale retail development in identified centres within the county, specifically in smaller settlements. Thus, it is implicit in the key objectives of the strategy that such developments should be encouraged and facilitated where possible to enhance the sustainability, vitality and viability of smaller centres within the county. Therefore, this review provides strategic guidance on how the retail strategy defines the distribution of strategic and non-strategic retail floor space within the county's retail hierarchy. Such guidance is provided in Table 2.

TABLE 1: 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

TABLE 2: COUNTY RETAIL HIERARCHY			
HIERARCHY	SETTLEMENT TYPE	IDENTIFIED COUNTY CENTRE	APPROPRIATE RETAIL TYPE
Level I	Principal/County Town	Longford Town	Major Convenience and Comparison (with an emphasis on high-end comparison)
Level II	Key Service Towns	Granard Edgeworthstown Ballymahon	Large-medium scale convenience and middle order comparison
Level III	Local Service Centres	Lanesboro Drumlish Newtownforbes	Lower order convenience with limited tourist related comparison
Level IV	Villages	Keenagh Carrickglass Other Villages	Predominantly lower order convenience, but not excluding tourism related comparison

4.3.6 Core Retail Areas

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 3**. 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 has 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, ensuring the continued vitality and vibrancy of the central area into the future.

4.3.7 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 (or district or major village 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 and cycling 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 in the best interest of the vitality and viability of the core area.

4.3.8 Consideration of Need

Developing the retail offer of the county, 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.

Apart from Longford Town, the other retail centres in the county are small both in terms of population

size and quantum of retail floorspace. The improvement of the retail offer of these centres needs to be encouraged and facilitated. Concurrently, 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.

While it is recognised that the minimum and maximum requirements for additional retail floorspace outlined in Table 3 below provide a useful quantifiable platform against which to assess trends in retail development within the county, 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 in the centre.

4.3.9 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.

**TABLE 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 (m ²)	3,000 to 7,000	7,000 to 16,000

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

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.

4.3.9.1 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.

Strategic Policy 2:

Key Service Towns (Granard, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon)

It is Council policy to encourage the growth and development of retail floorspace and other town centre services/functions in Granard, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon in order to support their transition into more self-sustaining centres within the county's settlement and retail hierarchies.

The Council will encourage the consolidation and increase of the retail functions of these centres to enable them to fulfil their important retail/services function within the county settlement/retail hierarchy; to realise their role as 'key service towns' under the provisions of the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines; and help them to maintain their position within the hierarchy outlined in the Retail Planning Guidelines.

Strategic Policy 3:

Local Service Centres (Lanesboro, Drumlish, Newtownforbes)

It is the policy of the Council to consolidate, promote and encourage the provision of local scale retail development in these towns with a view to strengthening their position as local service centres.

These centres provide important local service functions which will be actively encouraged.

Strategic Policy 4:

(Keenagh, Carrickglass, Other Villages)

It is Council policy to assist and encourage small scale retail development throughout the villages of the county in recognition of their important role as rural centres in the county retail hierarchy.

Local level retail development in rural villages will be supported where this is consistent with their organic growth patterns and subject to the directions of the sequential approach.

4.3.9.2 General Policies

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

General Policy 1:

Enhancement of towns and villages

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 Local Authority will;

- **Prepare clear design guidelines for retail development in urban centres.**
- **Assess the potential of new retail developments with regards to existing traffic congestion problems.**
- **Promote and facilitate improvements in the public realm.**

General Policy 2:

Innovation in retail

It is Council policy to promote innovation in the county'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 county.

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:

Sustainable and Sequential Retail Development

It is the policy of the Council to actively encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of appropriately located derelict land and buildings for retail use, including the promotion of appropriate uses for upper floors of commercial buildings within town centres.

In line with the sequential approach, the 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.

4.3.9.3 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.

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.

4.3.10 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.

RET 1: DEVELOPMENT TYPES

1) Large Convenience Stores

The RPG's have set a 3,000m² upper floorspace limit on food store development outside of the Greater Dublin area. This retail strategy will 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**²¹
- **Convenience goods net retail floorspace of hypermarkets**²² (as defined within planning application documentation).

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 new development.

(a) Regional Shopping Centres

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 Facilities²³ will be considered subject to the relevant planning criteria contained within this plan.

(b) District Shopping Centres

District shopping centres²⁴ 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 County 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

²¹ Superstores defined as single level, self service stores selling mainly food, or food and some non-food goods, usually with at least 2,500 m² net sales floorspace with dedicated surface level car-parking. ²² Hypermarkets defined as single level, self-service stores selling both food and a range of comparison goods, with net floorspace in excess of 5,000 m² with dedicated surface level car-parking. ²³ Regional shopping centre defined as out-of-town malls generally of 50,000 m² gross retail floorspace or more, typically enclosing a wide range of clothing and other comparison goods with extensive dedicated car parking. These do not generally incorporate retail warehousing. ²⁴ District centre is defined as either a traditional or purpose built group of shops separate from the town centre and either located with the built-up urban area or in a suburban location on the edge of an urban area, usually containing at least one food supermarket/superstore and non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants.

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 3, 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 8,000 m²) 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 in the relevant Development Plan 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) Shops in Rural Areas

The emphasis is on the need to build up the retailing core of settlements, accordingly there will be a general presumption against shops in rural areas i.e. outside town and villages. Exceptions to this include:-

- i. Small scale shops attached to a permitted tourist or recreational development.
- ii. Retail outlets associated with other rural activities

where the retail aspect is secondary to the operation - shops selling agricultural produce, crafts etc.

- iii. The development of a small shop in association with an existing post office or petrol station will generally be allowed.

(b) Take- Away Food Premises

All applications for take-away premises need planning permission whether it involves a change of use of an existing building or an entirely new building. The following Planning considerations will apply to any assessment of a planning application for a 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.
- 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.
- vii. Litter bins shall be provided inside 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. Facade 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. Corporate logos will be permitted, only where they meet Local Authority design criteria.

(c) Petrol Stations

The Council recognizes the more intensive role of petrol stations in recent times, the expansion from merely fuel depots to the provision of a wide range of convenience and other goods and service. 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 waste water 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. Developments of this type should be located within the 50kph speed limit, usually acceptable within the edges of the designated settlements. 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 7.3 metres and a maximum width of 9.1 metres will be required with appropriate turning curve based on road design speed and the relevant standards.
- vii. The frontage of the site shall be defined by a

boundary wall, not exceeding 0.5 metres in height. Footpaths and lighting to ESB standards shall be provided to the roadside boundary.

- viii. No pumps shall be located within 7metres 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 user, whether pedestrian or vehicular.

Applications for such development should be accompanied by detailed landscaping proposals in order to effectively integrate the proposed development into its surroundings.

4.4 Agriculture

The agricultural industry continues to change at a rapid pace nationally, however figures illustrated at Section 1.3.5 demonstrate a significant dependence on agriculture in Longford, above the national average.

The importance of the agricultural industry to the economy of the County is recognised, however the Council also recognises the increasing importance of small indigenous industry in providing local employment and in helping to stimulate economic activity among local communities.

New legislative provisions and grant schemes to facilitate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive have also altered agricultural practice in the County over the Plan period. It is likely that such provisions will continue into the future and, as such, any management strategy for development within the County should be sufficiently flexible and adaptable to address this. Accordingly the approach to agricultural development within the County aims to achieve the following;

- **To facilitate the modernisation of the Agricultural Industry in the County in accordance with statutory responsibilities and national guidance.**
- **To encourage best practice in the design and**



Vintage Tractors parked outside Hourican's, Aughnacliffe, demonstrating the heritage connections with agricultural practices that exist within the County.

construction of agricultural installations to protect visual amenity and prevent pollution, particularly in sensitive areas.

- **To encourage and promote appropriate initiatives which will secure the development and viability of existing rural communities.**

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 County Development Plan.

4.4.1 Policies and Objectives

4.4.1.1 General Policies

AGR 1:

Where an area of land is outside a settlement (i.e. an area not covered or proposed to be covered by a Local Area Plan or Village Policy Statement, as listed in this document), and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Development Plan or The Longford Town Development Plan, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agricultural. Primarily agricultural zoning 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 control standards and other policies and objectives contained within this plan.

The Establishment of suitably small-scale industrial/commercial developments in rural areas

on family owned land and developments which would promote rural diversification, subject to relevant planning criteria, will also be encouraged.

AGR 2:

It is the policy of the Council to promote the agricultural industry and appropriate rural development and diversification, balanced with the natural, architectural and archaeological heritage of the County. In this regard, proposed development should consider potential heritage impacts and identify mitigating measures where required to ameliorate negative impacts.

AGR 3:

To investigate the potential for farm diversification within the County, including an examination of forestry potential, the feasibility of small scale craft industries, tourism based activities, educational facilities and alternative uses of cut-over boglands. Larger industries, offices, warehousing and other forms of non-retail service industry will generally be directed toward the larger settlements.

AGR 4:

It is the policy of the Council, in accordance with the relevant Government agencies, to investigate the development of suitable areas of underutilised land, such as cutaway/cutover bog for the growing of biomass/biofuels for the renewable energy industry. This shall be carried out in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in order

to ensure the protection of areas with a high heritage value.

AGR 5:

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.

AGR 6:

To control, through the development management process and the relevant environmental legislation, the application of effluent spreading on land in order to protect ground and surface water sources in the County. This will limit spreading to certain times of the year and/ or prohibit spreading in certain areas.

AGR 7:

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 Guidelines²⁵ and the Nitrates Regulations in this regard.

4.4.1.2 Specialised and Intensive Developments

Agricultural developments have the potential for immense impact on the environment. As previously

stated, the traditional form of agricultural buildings is disappearing with the onset of advanced construction methods and wider range of materials available. Some new farm buildings have the appearance of industrial buildings and due to their scale and mass can have serious visual impacts. Accordingly, all applications for agricultural developments shall have cognisance of the following policy;

AGR 8: DESIGN

- a) The Planning Authority accepts the need for agricultural buildings and associated works (walls, fences, gates, entrances, yards etc.) to be functional, but they will be 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 visual amenity.
- b) 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.

²⁵ "Explanatory Handbook for Good Agricultural Practice Regulations", DAF 2006 or subsequent update

AGR 9: INTENSIVE PIG AND POULTRY UNITS

In assessing an application for intensive pig or poultry units, the Planning Authority will have regard to the Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters Regulations, 2006 and require information on the following:-

- a) Depending on the size of the unit, an E.I.S. may be required. In addition, an Integrated Pollution Control licence may be required from the Environmental Protection Agency.
- b) The character of farm settlements should be retained and enhanced where possible. In this regard, landscaping plans will be required as part of applications for new developments and extensions to existing farmyards and structures. The removal of hedgerows to accommodate agricultural developments will only be considered as a last resort and provision shall be made for the maintenance and enhancement of existing hedgerows in accordance with best practice.
- c) Scale and intensity of operations including the cumulative impact of similar type developments within close proximity.
- d) Waste management including frequency and location of disposal relative to pig and poultry units. The control of odour is another important consideration.

- e) Air pollution arising from housing units and effluent storage, transportation and spreading.
- f) Proximity of development to aquifers and water courses.
- g) Population density in vicinity - units should not be developed at a distance of less than 200 metres from a dwelling other than with the owner's consent. In the case of villages and towns intensive poultry and particularly pig units will be required to be located a much greater distance away from the settlement because of the impacts on residential amenities.
- h) Animal housing units in terms of design, and associated activities such as cleaning, ventilation and heating.
- i) Landscaping of site - a comprehensive landscaping plan should be submitted as part of the planning application.

4.5 Tourism

This Section should be read in conjunction with the Environment, Heritage and Amenities Section.

Longford has a vast array of natural, historical, cultural and landscape attractions that, if sensitively managed, have the potential to raise the profile of Longford County as a significant tourist destination.

Longford County Council is committed to working with other relevant statutory agencies, private sector groups, community associations and individuals to develop the coherent approach necessary to successfully market Longford County on a national and global stage.

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" identifying this as vital for the development of the County and a valuable contribution to the identity of the region as a whole.

Centrally located within the Country, Longford has yet to fully exploit this position in terms of tourism potential. The lack of an appropriate tourist accommodation base is a severe limiting factor, not only in terms of the development of Longford County as a product, but also in terms of its cultural and economic survival. At present, Longford County lacks any substantial conference facilities. The development of such facilities would be an important step forward for the business and leisure industry in the County.

The inland waterways of the County, discussed at Section 6.2.2.7 of this Plan, remain a vast untapped tourism resource. Developments on the Royal Canal have improved navigability, with the inland waterway route due open as far as Clondra. Longford County Council will continue to engage and consult with Waterways Ireland, particularly with reference to the potential opening of the Royal Canal Spur into

Longford Town and in relation to other development in proximity to 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 assessment of new development in the Canal corridor.

Lough Ree, Lough Gowna and their associated islands, the Shannon/Erne River system the River Camlin, and the network of bogs and wetlands throughout the County provide an excellent base for the development of niche leisure and activity breaks, fishing and ecotourism. Appropriate management of these resources must be put in place, including the concentration of associated tourism development in designated settlements, to prevent environmental damage.

The potential for the development of walking routes within the County and linking with neighbouring Counties should be explored, particularly where these have a cultural or historical association e.g. the Táin Trail.

Longford has a rich cultural history, as reflected in the number of annual festivals celebrating music, literature, natural history and other aspects of County life. These festivals are an essential element of the identity of the County and attract substantial numbers of national and international visitors each year. These include the:

- The Granard Harp Festival held in March, originally started in 1781 and revived 200 years later.

- The Banjo Festival is held each September in Longford Town and showcases Irish and Bluegrass music and the cultural connections between the two.
- Natural heritage is celebrated in the Bord na Mona Water Festival and Lough Ree Environmental Summer School and Arts Festival, both held in Lanesboro each summer.
- The Ballymahon Festival is a four day event with music, drama and children's theatre.
- The Maria Edgeworth Literary Festival is held each year in Edgeworthstown.

The archaeology of Longford is extensive and substantial work has been carried out under the County Heritage Plan to promote public awareness. The booklet "Archaeological Monuments in County Longford" compiled by Sam Moore in association with the Heritage Office provides details of archaeological tours through the County and is an important tourism resource.

The Council will continue to promote the development of countywide tourist trails and networks, linking different historical, cultural and natural attractions to provide a broad focus and facilitating the experience of all aspects of County identity.

The Battlefield site in Ballinamuck is an important element of national history and identity, attracting

visitors to its interpretative centre. Another centre is located at Corlea and interprets the recently discovered prehistoric Toher road through the bog near Keenagh village.

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, including promoting the distribution of tourism products and improving the readiness of the County 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 throughout the County and 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 County 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. The Council shall actively engage with the relevant stakeholders in the preparation of a visual spatial directory. This will consist of a map, potentially web-based and interactive, illustrating the

existing and potential tourist attractions throughout the County in order to encourage this holistic approach to the exploitation of these largely untapped resources. This visual representation will include, but shall not be limited to:

- **Key nodes of Tourism Activity in the County.**
- **Existing Transport Links and Identified Trails.**
- **Strategic Tourism Centres.**
- **Sensitive Environments.**

Accordingly the policy of the Council is as follows;

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 County 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 County 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 and future Village Policy Statements, 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. In particular, the Council shall support the development and enhancement of a linked tourism trail throughout the County in accordance with the Strategic Spatial Tourism Plan.

TOU 5:

The Council shall encourage and support increased coordination, cohesion and linkages between its own departments and 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.**

Specific Tourism Policies

TOU 7:

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

- **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:

Subject to normal planning criteria, including environmental and landscape provisions, the Council shall support appropriate Agri-tourism initiatives in the form of on-farm visitor accommodation and associated and spin-off activities such as health farms, heritage and nature trails, pony trekking and water-based activities.

TOU 9:

a) The Council shall promote and encourage the development of “Honeypot” tourism developments at the locations indicated below.

These settlements have been chosen due to their proximity to particular features and the possibility that these settlements may act as a base from which these features may be enjoyed and utilised in a managed way without detrimental impact to the features themselves, while bringing benefits to the towns in which they are located.

- **Lanesboro - River Shannon, Lough Ree. In particular with a view to developing the amenity area to the south of the town adjoining Lough Ree for commercial/tourism development.**
- **Aughnaclyffe - Lough Gowna.**
- **Ardagh - Heritage Village.**
- **Ballinamuck - 1798 associations, Lough**

Sallagh, coarse fishing.

- **Abbeysrule - River Inny, Abbey, Airfield, Royal Canal.**
- **Keenagh - Canal, harbour, Corlea trackway.**
- **Legan - Summer Schools, fishing.**
- **Ballymahon - River Inny, Red bridge, Barnacor, Derrynagallia, Lough Ree, Royal Canal, Newcastle, Lough Drum.**
- **Clondra - Royal Canal, River Camlin, River Shannon.**
- **Granard - Granardkille, Lough Kinale, Derragh Lough, Lough Gowna, Black Pigs Dyke, Ballywillin Rail Station.**

b) Specific opportunities for tourism projects will be particularly encouraged at Clondra²⁶ and Ballybranigan Harbour as indicated in Appendix 4. This section should be read in conjunction with the zoning explanations contained as part of this appendix.

These areas have been identified on the basis of the potential for existing tourism to be strengthened, and a recognition that high quality and advantageous tourism projects in these areas could be realised over the life span of the plan, counteracting the current ‘tourism vacuum’ that exists within the County.

It is also considered that tourism developments in these areas could be easily linked into the main fabric of the adjacent settlements, thus creating potential benefits not only for the immediate site but the adjoining settlements also.

- i) Clondra; Clondra is the terminus on the entire stretch of the Royal Canal. Facilitating the development of tourism within this settlement would create a strategic tourism asset within the County. Clondra provides a link from the Royal Canal via the Camlin River and/or the Cloondara Canal to the Shannon River. The Shannon from this point is navigable until Athlone and also provides a potential link into the Erne waterway. Given the strategic nature of Clondra on these stretches of water infrastructure, it is considered that this provides an excellent opportunity to develop tourism within the County.
- ii) Ballybranigan Harbour; Ballybranigan Harbour on the Royal Canal provides an excellent opportunity to build on an existing tourism asset and develop this in a manner that improves the attractiveness of the area for tourism development. As identified in the ‘Waterways Corridor Study 2004- Shannon River and Royal Canal’ (The Heritage Council), Ballybranigan Harbour previously functioned as the Harbour for the nearby town of Ballymahon. It is identified within the aforementioned study that the settlement of Ballymahon currently has little integration with the Royal Canal and that improvements to Ballybranigan Harbour, including the refurbishment of old canal related structures

²⁶ Development of this nature within Clondra will be dependent on the preparation of a Local Area Plan for Clondra which will provide an overall framework for the orderly and sustainable development of the settlement

will potentially generate increased use of the Canal as an amenity.

It is considered that such development could be linked into the fabric of the existing settlement of Ballymahon, providing potential tourism revenue for the settlement and supporting the local and wider economy. This will in turn support the status of Ballymahon in the County and Region's settlement hierarchy as defined in Section 2.3.3 of this plan. The development of existing tourism infrastructure on the Royal Canal is an essential component in improving inland cruising which is vital to the Midlands Economy.

TOU 10: HOLIDAY/SECOND HOMES

- a) Holiday and second home development shall be predominantly directed towards designated settlements to prevent over development of areas of sensitive natural resources and to protect affordability of housing for permanent rural communities.
- b) Redevelopment of brownfield sites and/or appropriate renovation of traditional buildings (including protected structures where appropriate) will be considered for the provision of such accommodation.
- c) The renovation of existing ancillary structures associated with a permanent residence may also be considered subject to normal planning criteria.

- d) In smaller towns and villages, particularly those identified as honeypot locations in the plan, care shall be taken to ensure that holiday home development is not of a nature or scale that threatens the viability or undermines the unique identity of the settlement.

TOU 11:

The Council shall continue to engage with the following agencies:

- **Waterways Ireland, particularly in relation to the development of the Royal Canal Spur into Longford Town and the upgrading of its associated infrastructure.**
- **The Regional Fisheries Boards with regard to the enhancement of the angling tourism product and the development of associated infrastructure.**
- **National Parks and Wildlife Service, Coillte, ESB/Bord Na Mona with regard to the potential for tourism related uses of cutaway bogland.**



Boats parked on the Royal Canal at Ballybranigan Harbour and the settlement of Ballymahon in the background.



Boats parked at Richmond Harbour, Clondra.

4.6 Aggregates and Mining

Proposals for the establishment or expansion of existing facilities for the extraction of sand, gravel or minerals within the county shall comply with the Irish Concrete Federation and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government's code of practice for the protection of heritage and any other relevant codes, guidelines or updates which may apply. Proposed developments may be requested to demonstrate such compliance.

Mineral extraction including rock, sand and gravel can adversely impact on its surroundings in terms of noise, dust, vibration, visual intrusion, loss of groundwater supplies, water pollution, traffic generation and adverse impact on the road network. Applications for mineral extraction will therefore be considered on their merits in terms of environmental capacity.

An environmental impact statement will be required as part of a planning application where certain thresholds are met and in other cases where extraction is likely to have significant effects on the environment as determined by the Planning Authority. The cumulative workings of an area will be taken into account when assessing a planning application.

Accordingly the Councils' policy is as follows;

AM 1:

Consideration shall be given to the need for the development in terms of local and national importance and the impact of the development on the local economy in determining an application of this nature (whether for a new quarry or an extension to an existing quarry).

AM 2:

In assessing an application for a quarry/quarry extension the following shall be taken into consideration and where necessary the required information submitted as part of any application:-

- a) Nature and quantity of material to be extracted.
- b) Location of where materials are to be transported to and used.
- c) Location - relative to residential areas, areas of geological interest, aquifers and groundwater, environmentally sensitive areas, special amenity areas and areas of archaeological potential in particular.
- d) Proposed working life of quarry and the nature and extent of operations including ancillary operations.
- e) The nature of the full development works such as buildings, site offices, stockpiles, service roads, storage of soil and waste materials and settling ponds.

- f) Working methods and hours of operation - frequency of blasting etc.
- g) Noise and dust generation and control.
- h) Waste disposal - waste rock, contaminated soil etc.
- i) Water supply and discharge requirements and impact on water table.
- j) Transportation and potential impact on the road network in the area.
- k) Effects on amenity of the area and in particular residential and visual amenity.
- l) Reinstatement proposals - a financial bond is also required by the Planning Authority to safeguard against non-reinstatement; It should be noted that the record of past restoration by the developer will be taken into account.
- m) Retention of existing screening and installation of additional screening of site, either by natural or alternative means.

AM 3:

Any proposed development which may impact on areas identified for potential mineral extraction shall be referred to the relevant section of the Department of Communications, Energy and

Natural Resources for observations/comment prior to a grant of permission/approval being obtained. In particular, the zinc/lead deposit at Keel is recognised.



5

INFRASTRUCTURE

5.1 TRANSPORTATION

Central to the achievement of the Development Plan Strategy is the Development Plan Goal which aims to “Facilitate the provision of the county’s infrastructure in a sustainable and efficient manner that promotes the social, economic and physical development of the County and the people that live within it”. Key to this is the objective to integrate transport and land use in promoting sustainable development within the County. Accordingly this section of the plan is complemented by zoning objectives and policy contained in Section ‘2.3 Settlement Strategy’ of this plan.

In order to strengthen the economic competitiveness and social vitality of the County a strong transportation network is required to ensure adequate linkages between Longford, the remainder of the Midlands region and beyond.

In order to properly sustain and deliver improved transport within the County, this section aims to outline key transportation policy which is ultimately framed by the following key aims;

- **Promote an integrated and sustainable approach to transport and landuse within the County, by encouraging development within a hierarchy of settlements as identified within the Settlement Strategy.**
- **Facilitate the provision, where appropriate, of rural transport initiatives and services in order to promote the socio-economic and cultural development of the entire County.**

- **Encourage the provision of alternative forms of transport that reduce dependence on the private car, such as public transport initiatives and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.**

5.1.1 Roads

The position of Longford within the North Midlands means that several strategic transport routes traverse the County from east to west. These include the N4, N5, N55, N63 and several strategically important regional routes, including the R392 that provides an alternative route from Mullingar to the N5 via Ballymahon and Lanesboro. Previous County Development Plan policy was successful in the protection of these strategic routes from further access creation in the maintenance of the capacity and safety of these roads.

The continued upgrading of these roads is of central importance so as to develop a safe and comprehensive road system within the County. It is anticipated that the emerging preferred route corridor for the N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Road Scheme is to be announced in April 2009 with the preferred route corridor confirmed towards the end of June 2009. The next steps will involve completing the Preliminary Design, Environmental Impact Assessment and Compulsory Purchase Order, before the Statutory Process can begin. The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the N5 Longford bypass was confirmed by An Bord Pleanála on the 9th July 2008. The next steps are purchasing the required land confirmed by the CPO, the appointment of design and construction

consultants/contractors and the eventual construction of the scheme. In addition, the Edgeworthstown bypass was completed during the life span of the previous plan.



The Edgeworthstown Bypass under construction (above) and a completed roundabout on the bypass (below)



Environmental improvements have been carried out to the roads network under the Urban and Village Renewal scheme in Granard, Ballymahon, Drumlish, Lanesboro, Abbeyshrule, Keenagh and Ardagh. Works have also been carried out in Ballinalee and Edgeworthstown under the 2006/7 scheme allocation. The Council will segregate, where possible, through the Urban and Village Renewal programme and the process of development management, vehicular and non-vehicular traffic in existing settlements and proposed new developments.

This section should be read in conjunction with the specific road requirements for developers dependent on the development type e.g. Policy HOU DS 6.

5.1.1.1 General Road Policy and Objectives

ROADS 1:

To provide the highest quality road access and capacity on routes of economic importance to the County, 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 and industrial, commercial and business development.

ROADS 2:

To provide a road network which is safe and

efficient for all road users, cognisant of the requirements of all traffic, including motorised vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

ROADS 3:

Promote sustainability in road use and the reduction of negative impacts on the natural environment including 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 County in the context of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines, including the relief of bottlenecks at strategic locations.

ROADS 5:

To maintain and improve the capacity of routes of strategic regional and local importance within the County and promote improved access between the major settlements of the County and to important centres in the Midlands region, particularly those identified in the Regional Planning Guidelines.

ROADS 6:

To provide, where possible, for the establishment of integrated transport nodes.

ROADS 7:

To ensure that infrastructural policies and investments assist and enhance the economic and social development of County Longford, and preserve and improve the physical attractiveness of the County and minimise negative impacts on its background environment.

ROADS 8:

It is the policy of the Council to require a license 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 request the provision of specific information on the potential impact of proposed developments on the roads network of the County. All applications will be required to submit the required roads form as outlined within the Longford County 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.

5.1.1.1 Specific Road Policy

ROADS 10:

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 County.

Lands shall be reserved on proposed route corridors for the following schemes.

- **N5 By-Pass to the West of Longford.**
- **N5 Longford - Scramogue Scheme.**
- **N4 - N63 - N5 By-Pass to the South of Longford.**
- **N4 from the Westmeath County boundary to the Leitrim County Boundary to facilitate the N4 Mullingar to Longford Road Improvement Scheme including the Newtownforbes By-Pass.**
- **N55 Granard By-Pass.**
- **N63 Killashee By-Pass.**
- **N55 Edgeworthstown By-Pass.**
- **N55 Ballymahon By-Pass.**

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 yet been developed 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 County Council, in consultation with the NRA, to ensure that the final route is identified within a reasonable timeframe.

ROADS 11:

Routes of strategic importance within the County, as outlined below, shall be protected from further access creation and development on national routes shall be actively discouraged. Development on the Regional Routes outlined below shall be carefully considered to preserve their strategic role.

- **N4 to Dublin and Sligo & N5 to Castlebar.**
- **N55 to Cavan and Athlone & N63 to Galway.**
- **R194 Longford to Virginia.**
- **R198 Longford/Arvagh.**
- **R392 Lanesboro/Mullingar.**
- **R393 Longford to Ballynacarrigy/Mullingar.**
- **R395 Edgeworthstown to Castlepollard/Delvin.**
- **R396 Granard to Castlepollard.**

- **R397 Longford/Ballymahon.**
- **R398 Derraghan to Brickeens.**
- **R399 Ratharney to Kilcurry.**

Proposed widening or intensification of use of existing accesses along these routes shall be assessed according to the relevant technical criteria, including the NRA Road Geometry Handbook (and/or subsequent update).

ROADS 12:

The Council shall undertake a strategic review of the road network throughout the County in order to identify further routes of strategic economic, social or other importance throughout the County. Once identified, these strategic routes shall be protected from inappropriate development.

ROADS 13:

Applications for planning permission for developments proposed within any NRA study areas shall be forwarded to the NRA for evaluation and comment, which shall be taken into consideration in the assessment of the application. Where route selection corridors exist, it is the policy of Longford County Council, in consultation with the NRA, to ensure that the final route is identified within a reasonable timeframe.

ROADS 14:

Where appropriate, proposals for development shall be accompanied by traffic and transport assessments and/or road safety audits and, where relevant, should address the proposal and any potentials cumulative impact in association with neighbouring developments on the road network.

ROADS 15:

Proposals for development in the vicinity of interchanges and junctions on National Road Infrastructure shall, where appropriate, submit a transport study clearly assessing the implications of the proposal on the operation and performance of the relevant junctions/interchanges. Where required this shall include an assesment of any potential cumulative impact in association with other developments on the road network.

ROADS 16:

It is the policy of the Council, as a consequence of the revised Department of the Environment "Traffic Signs Manual", the requirements of the Health and Safety Authority, the County Council's Traffic Management Policy and the Major Emergency Plan, to improve existing local (Regional and Local Primary) roads in order to create effective routes for the diversion of traffic to facilitate emergencies and road improvement works on National and Regional Routes in the County.

In accordance with this policy the following roads have been identified and lands along these roads may be reserved for their improvement;

LP – 1016

From Monaduff 3 roads to Derawley 4 roads.

LP – 1019

From Kiltycreevagh 3 roads (East) to Kiltycreevagh 4 roads.

LP – 1020

From Kiltycreevagh 3 roads (East) to Cloonelly 3 roads.

LP – 1022

From Gaigue Bridge to Monaduff 3 roads.

LP – 1024

From Cloonelly 3 roads to Legga 4 roads (North, Main Road).

LP – 1025

From Gaigue 4 roads to Gaigue Bridge (at School).

This policy shall not preclude the creation of new accesses or the widening or intensification of existing accesses along these roads but such developments shall be subject to assessment in accordance with the relevant technical criteria.

Carriageway improvements will be carried out in accordance with a phased programme of works as outlined below:

Programme of Carriageway Improvement 2007 – 2015

NATIONAL ROADS			
PROJECT	COMPLETION OF DESIGN	CONTRACT AWARD	CONSTRUCTION COMPLETION
ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES			
N4/N55 Edgeworthstown Inner Relief Road	Complete	2005	June 2006
N4 Dromod Rooskey By-Pass	Complete	2006	Winter 2007
N5 Longford Town By-Pass	2007	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N4 Rooskey to Longford Road Improvement Scheme	Mid 201	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N4 Longford to Mullingar Road Improvement Scheme	Mid 2012	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N55 Granard By-Pass	Development Driven		
Granard Inner Relief Road (Area Plan)	Development Driven		
N55 Restoration/Improvement	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N55 Edgeworthstown By-Pass	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N63 Restoration/Improvement	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N63 Killashee By-Pass	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
Longford Streets Restoration / Improvement	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
Ballymahon Streets Restoration / Improvement	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
Granard Streets Restoration / Improvement	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
TRAFFIC CALMING & LOW COST SAFETY MEASURES			
N5 – Longford	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N55 – Ballymahon	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N63 – Longford	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant
N63 – Killashee	Ongoing	NRA Dependant	NRA Dependant

NON-NATIONAL ROADS

EU SPECIFIC SCHEMES

PROJECT	COMPLETION OF DESIGN	CONTRACT AWARD	CONSTRUCTION COMPLETION
R392 Ballymahon/Lanesboro improvement	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R392 Ballymahon to Westmeath Co. Boundary realignment via Forgney	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R198 Road Improvement – Longford to Arvagh via Drumlish.	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R194 Road Improvement – Longford to Ballywillan via Ballinalee, Granard	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R393 Road Improvement – Longford to Ballinacarrow Bridge (Agharra) via Carrickboy	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R395 Road Improvement – Edgeworthstown to Balloo	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R396 Road Improvement – Rathcronan to Camagh	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R397 Road Improvement – Cartrongeeragh to Tirlickeen	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R398 Road Improvement – Derraghan to Brickeens	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R399 Road Improvement – Ratharney to Kilcurry	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
Development of Granard Parking Access Road	2004	2004	Ongoing
Newtowncashel to Saints Island Road Improvement	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
Aughnaclyffe to Ballinalee restoration/improvement	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
Lisdreenagh to Clontymullen (L5187/L1099/L1096) restoration/improvement	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
Lanesboro Amenity Scheme Restoration	Complete		
Kilnacarrow Road (L52652) improvement	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
VARIOUS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENTS	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Bridge north of Ballinamuck on L1017 restoration/improvement	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
Various Bridge Restoration Projects	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
TRAFFIC CALMING & LOW COST SAFETY MEASURES			
R392 Lanesboro & Ballymahon	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
R393 Carrickboy	Ongoing	DoT Dependant	DoT Dependant
L5213 Stonepark to Lisduff	2007	2007	Ongoing

These improvements shall include, where appropriate, the implementation of accident reduction and traffic calming measures, public lighting installation and upgrading, strengthening and surfacing of carriageways and the improvement of signposting.

5.1.1.2 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 and is not considered to comply with Health, Safety & Welfare at work regulations. Accordingly the Council adopt the following approach to such development.

ROADS 17:

It is policy of the Council to refuse permission for the parking of vehicles, trailers etc. that use the road network within the County (including on National, Regional and Local Roads) for commercial purposes, whether for provision of services, advertising for the sale of individual vehicles. Such development is considered to constitute a traffic hazard to road users and therefore will not be considered favourably.

ROADS 18:

The Council shall consider the provision of a suitably designed and privately developed commercial

vehicle rest stop/park outside of the urban area, subject to the provision of safe access and circulation, suitable public facilities, adequate screening and the compatibility of adjacent land uses.

5.1.1.3 Advertising on Roads

ROADS 19:

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 and to implement the provisions of the NRA policy document "Policy on the provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads" and the document "Longford County Council Policy on Advertising Signs."

5.1.2 Parking

Parking facilities continue to be provided to County Development Plan standards as part of new development (including facilities for the disabled). Local Area Plans prepared also provide guidance in terms of potential locations for car parking within the larger settlements, including guidance on pedestrian linkages to the town centre, security of these linkages and potential, where possible, to provide a double frontage to main streets, increasing development potential. The Council's approach to parking is therefore framed by the following aims;

- **To improve and enhance parking facilities in the major towns and villages of the County, in order to relieve and prevent traffic congestion and generally enhance the amenity of its major settlements.**
- **To pursue a policy of access for those with limited mobility in terms of parking provision.**

This section should be read in conjunction with Policy AM 1 which deals with the provision of parking at specific amenity sites.

5.1.2.1 Policies and Objectives

PKG 1:

Where settlements are covered by a Local Area Plan or Village Policy Statement, provision for parking shall be included in these documents.

PKG 2:

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.

PKG 3:

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 4:

Town and village character shall also be considered in terms of proposed road widening or traffic calming.

PKG 5:

Adequate space shall be made for the servicing of the facility, 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 spaces or part thereof.
- **Shops and buildings with public access:**
Minimum one space of appropriate dimensions in the first 25 standard spaces,

minimum three 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 in towns and villages throughout the County.

PKG 8:

The provision of coach and bus parking shall be investigated in appropriate areas of the towns and villages of the County.

PKG 9:

It is the policy of the Council to discourage unauthorised parking of commercial vehicles on public roads.

PKG 10:

Parking provision shall normally be provided in accordance with the standards outlined in the table

entitled 'Parking Standards'.

PKG 11:

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

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.

Parking Standards

The Council shall normally require parking provision to the following standards in conjunction with new development and alterations to existing premises:

LAND USE	PARKING SPACE REQUIREMENTS
Houses	2 per Dwelling
Apartments/Flats	1.25 - 2 per Unit
Retail	1 per 25m ² gross floor space within speed limit. 1.5 per 25m ² gross floor space outside speed limit
Offices	1 per 30m ² gross floor space within speed limit. 1.5 per 30m ² gross floor space outside speed limit
Financial Institutions	1 per 20 m ² gross floor space
Retail warehousing	1 per 35 m ² gross floor space
Cash and Carry Outlets	2 per 90 m ² plus adequate loading/unloading and circulation facilities (minimum 90m ² per 2000m ²)
Industry	1 per 30 m ² gross floor space or 1 per 4 no. employees, whichever is greater
Warehousing	1 per 100 m ² gross floor space or 1 space per 4 no. employees, whichever is greater
Hotels, B&B's, Guesthouses*	1space per 2 bedrooms within speed limit. 1 space per bedroom outside speed limit
Bars and Lounges*	1 per 7 m ² gross floor space within speed limit. 2 per 7 m ² gross floor space outside speed limit
Dance Areas, Dance Halls and Function Rooms	1.5 per 7 m ² gross floor space within speed limit. 3 per 7 m ² gross floor space outside speed limit
Restaurants	1 per 7 m ² gross floor space within speed limit. 2 per 7 m ² gross floor space outside speed limit
Take-away	6 per unit
Commercial Garage	1 per 30 m ²
Service Station	1 per 300 m ² gross floor space + shop requirements
Showrooms	1 per 100 m ² gross floor space + shop requirements
Marina	1 per berth
Hospitals	1 per bed
Nursing Homes	1 per 3 bedrooms
Surgeries/Clinics	3 per consulting room
Funeral Home	1 per 10 m ² gross floor space
Childcare/Crèche/Montessori	1 per employee + 0.25 per child
Schools	1 per classroom plus sufficient bus circulation and off-loading facilities to cater for school-going population
Community Centre/Sports Club	1 per 14 m ² gross floor space or 2 per 90m ² gross floor space plus 2% whichever is greater
Golf and Pitch and Putt Courses	2 per hole
Golf Driving Range	1 per bay
Bowling Alley*	4 per lane
Theatre/ Cinema/Stadia/Churches*	1 per 5 seats
Non-Retail Service Outlet e.g. Hairdressers, Bookmakers etc	3 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.

5.1.3 Pedestrians and Cyclists

In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, emphasis has been placed on the accessibility of alternative transport to the private car. This includes broad principles such as the enhancement of the potential for live-work opportunities in designated settlements down to specific objectives to improve pedestrian/cyclist access and permeability.

As part of the development management process, developments adjacent to rivers and lakes are usually required to facilitate public access. Walkways and cycle ways are also a feature of most Local Area Plans produced, which also aim to create pedestrian and cyclist permeability throughout the individual settlement, particularly between outlying residential areas, backlands and the town/village commercial centre or core.

This is also required in larger apartment/courtyard type blocks where archways may be installed for added permeability. Secure, communal storage areas are usually required to facilitate cyclists in these developments.

PED 1:

The Planning Authority aims to improve the attractiveness and usability of the pedestrian environment of the County, particularly in residential areas, designated settlements and in areas of high amenity.

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.

PED 3:

Facilitate the provision of cycleways and footpaths, particularly in conjunction with new housing developments. The Council shall also promote the potential development of long distance walking routes, particularly those with historical and cultural associations and links to other routes in adjacent Counties.

PED 4:

The Council shall promote the organisation of traffic in towns and villages in order to separate motor vehicular, 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, DoELG 2000.

PED 5:

The Council shall investigate the provision of dedicated cycle routes along routes of high amenity and along the Royal Canal.

5.1.4 Public Transport

The Council is committed to achieving a sustainable Public transport system and working towards the integration of spatial planning and transport, in line with recommendations contained in the document "Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020" (DoT). In this regard, the Council is currently preparing a Land Use and Transportation Study (LUTs) in order to create a suitable framework at a strategic level for Longford Town and its Environs over a projected 20 year period, which is outlined in more detail at Section 2.3.3.2 of this Plan. The facilitation of a Rural Transport Network is also central to the achievement of sustainable development within the County and promoting social inclusion for rural communities. Accordingly, the Council's policy is as follows:

PT 1:

The Council shall promote the facilitation of a public transport system that works towards the integration of spatial planning and transport, in accordance with the recommendations of the future Land Use and Transportation Study.

PT 2:

The Council shall support the provision of transport initiatives that promote the development of Rural Transport Networks that enhance social inclusion of rural communities.

5.1.4.1 Rail

The main rail infrastructure within the County is the Sligo-Dublin line, which provides a service to Longford Town and Edgeworthstown and is an essential transportation link for the County.

The continued intensive development of Edgeworthstown may indicate an increased use of rail as a commuter medium. 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. The role of the rail network as set out in a regional context in the Midland Guidelines also requires investigation.

The Council's policy is as follows;

RL 1:

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

RL 2:

To facilitate the expansion and development of existing and any future proposed rail facilities and supporting infrastructure within the County.

RL 3:

To support the development of intra-regional rail

linkages in accordance with Regional policy.

RL 4:

To utilise the existing rail service and promote its use as an alternative mode of transport in line with the principles of sustainable development.

RL 5:

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.

RL 6:

To facilitate and promote greater integration of public and private transport modes.

RL 7:

To promote the use of the rail system in relation to the industrial and commercial development of the County.

RL 8:

The heritage value of the entire rail network is acknowledged and, as such, the retention, conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of this valuable resource is promoted.

5.1.4.2 Bus

At present, most of the major settlements in the County are covered by Bus Eireann services, with varying degrees of frequency.

- **The Longford/Athlone service, which covers Longford, Keenagh and Ballymahon, has one service per day. In addition, the Belfast-Athlone service, via Cavan, Longford town and Granard, which is run in conjunction with Ulsterbus, has two services per day.**
- **The Dublin-Sligo Service, covering Edgeworthstown, Longford and Newtownforbes has four services per day.**
- **The Dublin-Ballina service covers Edgeworthstown, Longford and Clondra and has four services per day.**
- **The Longford-Galway service covers Killashee and Lanesboro and has one service per day.**
- **A limited service two days per week operates Wednesday and Saturday and covers Ratharney, Legan, Carrickboy, Ardagh, Abbeyshrule and Barry. A new service, covering Longford to Tullamore via Mullingar is proposed for the future.**

In addition to Bus Eireann, there are several private companies operating in the county which provide important travel opportunities to those without a car.

Accordingly, the Council's policy is as follows;

BUS 1:

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

BUS 2:

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

BUS 3:

To facilitate the provision of an integrated transport system for the Town and 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 service.

BUS 4:

To provide, subject to consultation with Bus Eireann

and local groups, bus stop facilities in towns and villages. This may include, where feasible and appropriate, bus parking facilities in suitable locations, particularly in town centres and areas of high amenity.

BUS 5:

To provide, subject to consultation with Bus Eireann and representatives of schools and local groups, school bus stop facilities in the vicinity of local schools.

5.1.4.3 Air

County Longford is served by the private airfield at Abbeyshrule. Given the location of Longford both within the Midlands Region and within the Country as a whole, it is important that development of the airfield is facilitated in order to optimise this opportunity. Accordingly, the Council's policy on air travel is as follows;

AIR 1:

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and promote the development of Abbeyshrule airfield as the Midlands Regional Airport, subject to the relevant development management standards.

AIR 2:

The potential expansion of Air Facilities at Abbeyshrule shall be considered in the context of the surrounding heritage features including the

architectural and amenity value of the village and the Royal Canal.

5.2 Water Supply and Waste Water Services

Significant and intense changes in the settlement pattern of the County over the previous development plan period have led to an increased demand for the provision and complexity of water supply and waste water services throughout the County.

A significant deficit exists in the provision of water services infrastructure throughout the County, 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 Town Council infrastructure throughout this section.

5.2.1 Water Supply

There are five regional water schemes throughout the County, at the following locations (see map overleaf). These schemes also facilitate over 150 public sourced group water schemes;

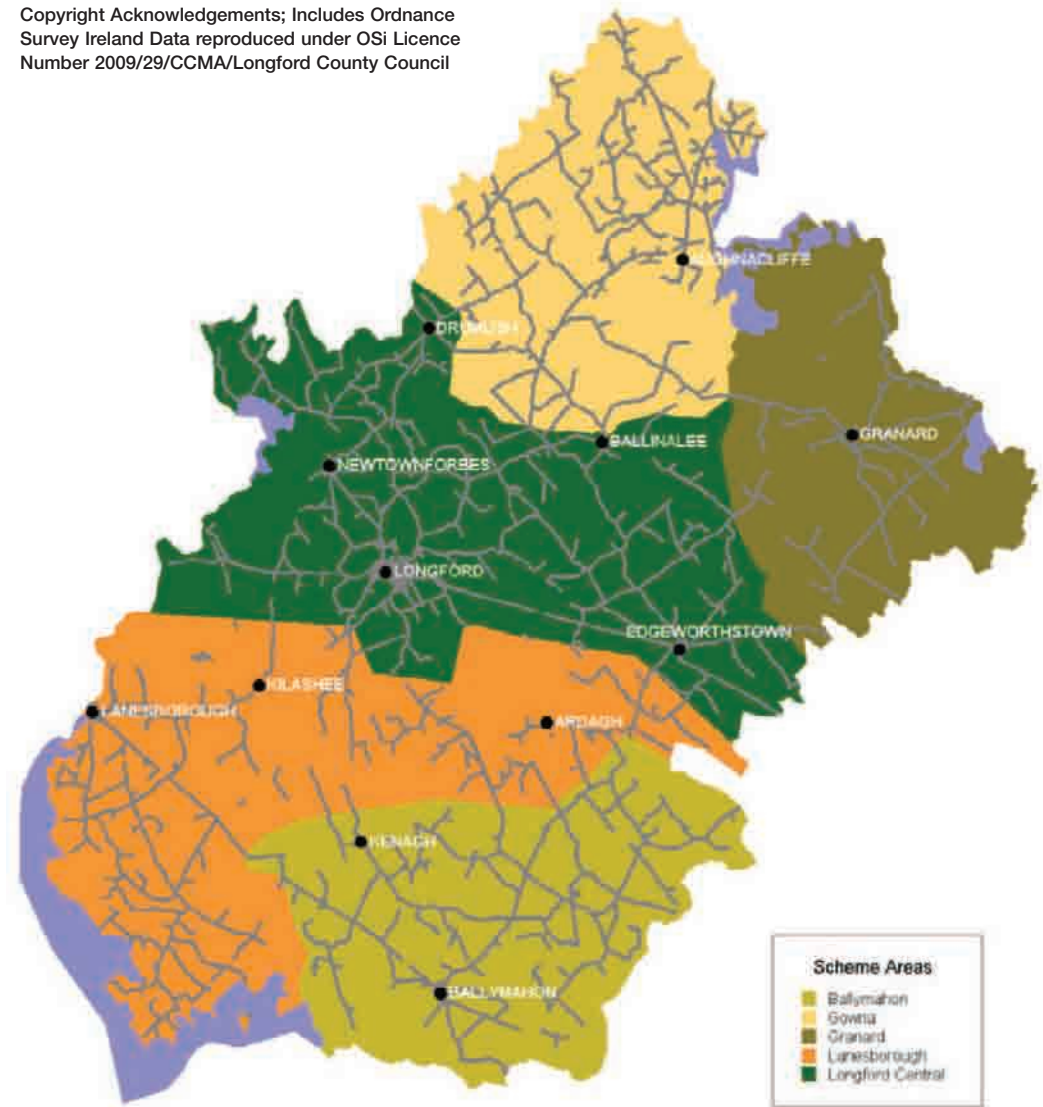
- **Ballymahon.**
- **Lanesboro / Newtowncashel.**

- Longford Central.
- Lough Gowna.
- Granard.

A comprehensive Water Conservation and Network rehabilitation scheme is currently being implemented throughout the 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. The Water Conservation Project and maintenance of Water Services project was brought into mainstream operation while Phase 1 of the Watermains Rehabilitation Program began construction in early 2008.

Other actions include quality control of group schemes with development and implementation of best practice guidelines, design, layouts and projects such as water metering.

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Map of County Longford indicating Water Scheme Areas

5.2.2 Existing and Proposed Sewerage Schemes

There are eleven public sewerage schemes in the County and a number of proposed sewerage schemes as illustrated on the map (right). The existing schemes are located at the following locations;

- Abbeyshrule.
- Ballymahon.
- Keenagh.
- Lanesboro.
- Longford.
- Newtownforbes.
- Drumlish.
- Granard.
- Edgeworthstown.
- Clondra.
- Legan.

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Existing and Proposed Sewerage Schemes in County Longford

5.2.3 Operations of the Water Supply and Waste Water Services Department

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 the water and sewer networks in the county, has been developed to facilitate works associated with water supply and waste water services and monitor progress.

The following works have been completed over the period of the previous County Development Plan 2003-2009:

- Clondra Sewerage Scheme.
- Advance works on reservoir and pipelines Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme.
- Preliminary Report for Drumlish and Newtownforbes Sewerage Schemes.
- Preliminary Report for Ardagh, Aughnacliffe and Ballinalee Sewerage Scheme.
- Strategic Review for Granard Regional Water Supply Scheme.

The current assessment covers the current needs for the period 2007-09 and contains a strategic assessment of investment requirements up to 2014

covering 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 following programme of works is derived from this needs assessment.

PROGRAMME OF WORKS 2007-2009

WATER SUPPLY SCHEMES		
NO.	SCHEME NAME	PROJECT STATUS
1.	Longford Central Regional Water Scheme Stage 6 - reservoir & pipelines (Longford Town)	Under construction – due for completion December 2009
2.	Longford Central Regional Water Scheme	Upgrade of Lough Forbes Treatment Plant to be progressed in 2009
3.	Granard Regional Water Supply Scheme - Strategic Review	Preparation of contract document for upgrade to be progressed
4.	Ballymahon Regional Water Supply - Strategic Review	Preparation of contract document for upgrade to be progressed
5.	Lanesboro Regional Water Supply Scheme	Contract document for well field development to be progressed
6.	Water Conservation Stage 2 & Network Rehabilitation Stage 3	Approved by Department for water conservation report and network rehabilitation of key defective distribution mains in Longford Central and Lanesboro. Contract documents prepared for tender for stage 3 phase 1 rehabilitation works. Application for stage 3 phase 2 submitted to DoEHLG for approval

SEWERAGE SCHEMES

NO.	SCHEME NAME	PROJECT STATUS
1.	5 VILLAGES SEWERAGE SCHEME DBO ²⁷ BUNDLE – Ardagh, Aughnaccliffe, Ballinalee, Drumlish & Newtownforbes Scheme to include operation & maintenance of existing plants – Granard, Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, Clondra & Abbeyshrule	Network contracts at construction stage. DBO at tender stage
2.	LONGFORD SEWERAGE SCHEME PHASE 2 Network extensions to Longford foul & storm drainage catchments	Awaiting completion of local area plan
3.	LONGFORD TOWN SEWERAGE SCHEME – NETWORK & TREATMENT PLANT & SLUDGE HUB CENTRE Project to incorporate surface water drainage, network analysis, stormwater separation and collection network rehabilitation.	Procurement of consultants ongoing
4.	EDGEWORTHSTOWN SEWERAGE SCHEME Refurbishment works and nutrient removal facilities	Construction completed December 2007
5.	LANESBORO SEWERAGE SCHEME	Network contract for the 16 villages scheme is at construction stage. Conditional approval for DBO received February 2009
6.	12 VILLAGES SEWERAGE SCHEME Abbeylara, Barry, Ennybegs, Killashee, Stonepark, Legga, Moydow, Moyne, Newtowncashel, Taghshinny, Legan and Keenagh	The department required design brief prepared for 5 villages considered viable - Abbeylara, Barry, Ennybegs, Killashee and Stonepark. Replacement of Abbeyshrule and Ballinamuck with Legan and Keenagh approved by DoEHLG. Site acquisition being progressed in Legan and Keenagh

²⁷ Design Built Operate (DBO)

As identified in the Water Services Investment Program, Assessment of Needs 2007 – 2014 the following list of Water and Sewerage Schemes are required to complement the development strategy of County Longford.

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.
Sewerage Schemes for the following areas - Ballycloughan, Ballywillin, Bunlahy, Carrickboy, Coolarty, Colehill, Cullyfad, Derraghan, Dring, Forgney, Kilnatruan, Lisryan, Melview, Mullinalaghta, Ratharney	Sewerage Schemes	To comply with the settlement strategy as identified in the County Development Plan and objectives of the National Spatial Strategy

The Council recognises the importance of the provision of water services in the development of the County, particularly in relation to the delivery of the settlement strategy as outlined at Section 2.3. As such, 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, providing for the development of the County in an orderly and sustainable manner.

Accordingly, the Council's policy is as follows;

WS 1:

To consolidate the provision of basic environmental services in accordance with the 7 year programme as outlined, providing an integrated infrastructural base for the physical, economic and social development of the towns and villages in County Longford.

WS 2:

It is the policy of Longford County Council 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:

It is the policy of the Council to establish and implement a small water and sewerage scheme programme for Longford County as part of the Rural Water Programme, established for the construction and upgrade of Group Water Schemes, small public water and sewerage schemes, and the taking in charge of Group Water Schemes.

WS 4:

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 new development, the developers shall be required to pay a contribution towards the cost to the Council of this extension.

WS 5:

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, including the promotion of water conservation measures in new and existing developments.**
- **The Rural Water Plan.**

WS 6:

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 7:

It is the policy of the Council to restrict or prohibit the large-scale development of unserviced land where existing serviced land of an appropriate size and nature to meet the reasonable needs of the

proposed development exists in the vicinity.

WS 8:

To ensure that the public drinking water supply of the County complies with relevant EU drinking water standards and to extend supply, where necessary and where resources permit, to meet demand.

WS 9:

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 5. In these areas it must be demonstrated that development proposals will not have an adverse impact on the proposed water source.

WS 10:

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

WS 11:

Where 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 12:

To facilitate where appropriate and where resources permit, the connection of private water supply schemes into the public water supply network of the County.

WS 13:

The upgrading of Longford Town effluent treatment plant and phased sewerage system improvements shall continue on an on-going basis.

5.2.3.1 Group Water Schemes

Currently there are over 150 publicly sourced group water schemes within the County. Funding is available from the Department of the Environment and Local Government through Longford County Council for the taking in charge of group schemes. Second grants are also available to Group Schemes for upgrade work. Where a group scheme is to be taken in charge approval will be required from Longford County Council and the group should engage an engineer to draw up plans and employ a contractor to carry out the works.

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 County.

WS 15:

The Council shall consult the EPA publication “Urban Wastewater Discharges in Ireland for Population Equivalents Greater than 500 persons – a Report for the Years 2004-5” (and any subsequent update) in the provision, maintenance and expansion of water treatment systems in the County.

WS 16:

The Council will require the following information when taking in charge of group schemes.

- **Permission from all group members must be obtained.**
- **Bulk water meter(s) should be installed where the group connects to the public water supply. If a meter already exists it should be checked and refurbished/replaced if necessary.**
- **All fittings, i.e. sluice valves, air valves, hydrants, scours, etc. should be identified and checked. Any faulty fittings should be replaced, marker posts should be restored and an “as built” plan of the pipe network should be prepared. Any new fittings that may be desirable should also be installed.**
- **Wayleave agreements for every location that the watermains traverse private lands must be obtained by the group scheme.**

- **Ownership of pumphouses etc. must be established in the Group's name.**
- **Private source group schemes must consider the feasibility of connecting to the public supply. If it is possible it must be done. If it is not possible consideration must be given to treating the supply.**
- **Funds are available from the DoEHLG for taking in charge of group schemes. Second grants are also available to Groups for upgrade work. Whether the group should engage an engineer to draw up plans and get a contractor to do the work or whether the Council should do the work is a matter of policy.**

A priority list of schemes to be taken over should be produced as it is likely that requests will exceed what is feasible with the current level of resources and funding.

5.3 Surface Water, Drainage and Flooding

5.3.1 Surface Water and Drainage

Built up areas can significantly increase the rate of surface water run-off due to the impervious surfaces. This can be accommodated through natural dissipation into nearby watercourses,

streams or ditches or through the installation of artificial drainage systems. It is essential that adequate surface water measures are put in place in order to prevent flooding and to recognise that the alteration in natural flow patterns can lead to problems elsewhere within the catchment.

Accordingly the Council's Policy is as follows;

SW 1:

The discharge of surface water run-off and rainwater into foul sewage systems shall be strictly prohibited.

SW 2:

Surface water storage 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 Urban Drainage Standards (SUDS), “Dublin Corporation Stormwater Management Policy Technical Guidelines” and “Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works” incorporating “Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study, Volume 2 , New Developments” or any future updates.

5.3.2 Flooding

It is essential that flooding issues are properly addressed particularly given the swell in developed lands leading to increased run-off and climatic change that has occurred over the last plan period.

Accordingly development should be restricted and limited in areas of known flooding without clear demonstration that the proposed development has appropriately addressed any flooding concerns.

The Council's Policy is as follows;

FLO 1:

In areas susceptible to flooding, development may be restricted and where necessary developers will be required to submit a Flood Risk/Impact Assessment and proposals for a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS). This shall also apply in areas where it is considered that the proposed development will impact on flooding elsewhere.

FLO 2:

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 County area.

FLO 3:

The Council shall have regard to the provisions of the guidelines issued by the DoEHLG regarding flooding in the operation of its duties.

5.4 Environmental Services

5.4.1 Waste Recovery and Disposal

Since the adoption of the previous County Development Plan in 2003, Longford County Council has actively been involved in facilitating the delivery of a more sustainable approach to waste management within the County. 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:

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 County. There are no active landfill sites in the County.

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

practice 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 26 bring banks within the County for the collection of aluminium cans and glass. There are also a number of textile banks throughout the County and two civic amenity sites in operation for the disposal of recyclable materials and waste electrical and electronic equipment. In accordance with the aforementioned aims, the Council will seek to develop such facilities over the life span of this plan.

Accordingly, the Council's policy is as follows;

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 control criteria. The Council shall promote the development of an additional Civic Amenity facility in the south of the County.

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 County.

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 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 County 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 County.

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 County.

LIT 4:

The Council shall continue to pursue its programme of stray/nuisance dog and horse control within the County.

5.5 Energy and Communications

5.5.1 Electricity

The work of ESB networks in enhancing the capacity, reliability and efficiency of supply to the County is acknowledged. Longford County Council will support and encourage further measures in this regard, for example, the upgrading of Edgeworthstown supply and associated line improvements to help reduce energy losses and emissions.

Lanesboro Generating Station, located on the banks of the River Shannon, operated as a peat burning power station from the late 1950s until its closure in 2005. A new peat fired power station, Lough Ree Power, of 100 MV capacity received planning permission in 2003. As the old power station continues to be demolished, and most notably the demolition of the well-known chimneys on 7th August 2007, the site will ultimately be redeveloped. Work is currently underway to develop proposals for the future use of the old Lanesboro Generating Station Site.



Lough Ree Power Station, Lanesboro

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

EC 1:

To facilitate the provision, upgrading and maintenance of electricity infrastructure within the County subject to meeting the relevant development management standards.

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. A favourable approach will be taken towards applications for renewable energy developments provided they are environmentally sustainable and are in accordance with general planning criteria. The cumulative effect of such developments on the landscape will be taken into consideration. The key aim is to;

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

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 development.**

RE 2:

The Council will consider the promotion of

renewable energy and low energy/passive houses to be a high priority to help reduce global warming. 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 Council shall investigate the potential use of biomass as an alternative to peat.

RE 4:

The following documents and guidelines shall form part of 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 Region Development Strategy.**

- **Sustainable Development- a Strategy for Ireland.**

5.5.2.1 Wind Energy

Longford, like many other counties, provides good opportunities for the harnessing of wind energy. The wind energy potential available within the County is 3120 MW²⁸ of power per annum. This accounts for 2.3% of the state's wind energy potential and is quite substantial given the geographical size of the County. In attempting to achieve a more sustainable way of living in the County, acknowledging the need to respond to climate concerns and recognising the growing difficulties associated with continued use of fossil fuels, it is accepted that the demand for wind energy will increase over the plan period.

In determining applications for wind farm developments, consideration shall be given to "Wind Energy- Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoEHLG). 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 County. 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.

The Council has identified as illustrated in Appendix 6 areas of wind potential where wind farms will be encouraged. These areas have been selected in line with the areas of wind potential identified in the

Wind Atlas for Ireland produced by Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI).

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 County, as defined on the Map contained in **Appendix 6**.

WD 2:

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

- a) Not either individually or cumulatively, adversely affect the health or amenity of nearby communities;
- b) Be visually and environmentally acceptable.
- c) Require minimum further construction to link readily into existing transmission lines.

WD 3:

In assessing an application for a wind farm the following shall be taken into consideration:-

- a) Visual impact - both on site and over extensive areas. Applications may be required to include

²⁸ Irish Energy Centre, Renewable Energy Information Office, 2000, *Planning Update - An Update on Renewable Energy for Local Authorities*, [Online], August 2000, No. 3. Available at: <http://www.sei.ie/uploadedfiles/RenewableEnergy/PlanningUpdate20001.pdf>. [Accessed 8 November 2007].

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. Ideally they should be sited against a backdrop of a hill or elevated area. Non linear type layouts are favourable. Windfarms should not be intervisible from one another.

- 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 should be used throughout the windfarm, which should be of 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. Consideration should be given to the potential landscape impacts in the context of grid connections taking into account technical feasibility and economic

viability, particularly in environmentally sensitive locations. 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 - 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 communications 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, Special Areas of Conservation, Archaeological site, biodiversity, protected structures, national monuments etc. Wind farm developments should not be located within 100 metres 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. 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. Longford have granted permission for one hydro scheme on the River Shannon just beyond the settlement of Clondra, which is yet to become operational. 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" (DCMNR).

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 and potential negative impacts on protected flora and fauna.
- 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 County Council will pursue the provision of Natural Gas as an energy resource for the major settlements of the County 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 in order 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 County. According to Forfas, Broadband access not only facilitates enterprise development, but also creates societal benefits including acting as an enabler for economic and social inclusion in small, rural and remote communities²⁹. Longford County Council's approach to telecommunications infrastructure is underpinned by the following aims;

- **To secure the best possible communications infrastructure for County Longford in line with**

²⁹ Forfas, 2006, *Overview of Ireland's Broadband Performance, Nov 2006*, [Online] Available at: http://www.forfas.com/publications/forfas061130a/webopt/forfas061130_broadband_benchmarking_report_webopt.pdf. [Accessed 18 September 2007]

the requirements of the National Development Plan and in the interests of social and economic progress, while having regard to the protection of the County's residential, recreational and visual amenities, and areas of cultural, artistic, historical, architectural and archaeological character.

- Longford County Council shall support and encourage the provision of an improved communications network in the County, in order to facilitate the industrial, economic and social growth of Longford in a national context.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

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.

TEL 2:

Applications for Telecommunications structures shall be considered having regard to 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 3:

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

TEL 4:

The facilitation of telecommunications infrastructure, including broadband, shall be encouraged in line with the Settlement Strategy and land use proposals.

TEL 5:

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 6:

Proposals for telecommunication 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 7:

Longford County 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 8:

It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage the provision of a sufficient level of broadband communications, internet, cable and broadcasting technology while protecting the landscape character and amenities of the County.

TEL 9:

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

TEL 10:

In general, there will be a requirement to provide the necessary infrastructure in new developments that will facilitate future telecommunications access, including MAN broadband services.

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 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 (S174 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 policy of the Council to have regard to the following in assessing applications for new developments (including extensions);

- **The Major Accidents Directive (Seveso II - 96/082/EEC).**
- **The potential effects on public health and safety.**
- **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.



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ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND AMENITIES

6.1 CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment that makes up Longford, both natural and man-made, is one of the key factors that determine the physical character of the County and create a sense of place. Promoting growth and development within the County 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 environment of the County. Accordingly this section is underpinned by the following aims;

- **To Conserve and Protect the Natural and Man-Made Environment of the County.**
- **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 Character Assessment

The Council has undertaken a Landscape Character Assessment of the County (see Annex 4), as an essential landscape management tool, in accordance with the Department of the Environment and Local Government Guidelines.

Through the Landscape Assessment, 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.

In addition to the material contained within the Landscape Character Assessment, the Council’s policy and objectives are as follows;

LCA 1:

It is the policy of the Council to protect and enhance the County’s landscape, by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the existing local landscape. Proposed developments, where located within or adjacent to sensitive landscapes (as defined in the assessment), may be required to provide a landscape report detailing how the proposal will impact on the landscape and mitigation measures to be taken where necessary to address negative impacts. Proposed developments which have a detrimental impact on the landscape will not normally be permitted.

LCA 2:

Longford County Council recognises the diverse and unique landscape character of the County, and as such, landscape conservation areas may be designated in order to achieve its objective of

protecting and enhancing the County’s landscape. Physical development shall not adversely impact on areas designated as visually important/sensitive under this section.

LCA 3:

It is the policy of the Council to preserve views and prospects as illustrated on the accompanying map as part of Appendix 7 and as listed in the following tables. Views are divided into full and intermittent in order to differentiate areas where scenic views may be partial or absent along a particular route. The following table lists the routes (as numbered on the map) and lists the townlands through which they pass for identification purposes.



Landscape in North Longford

FULL SCENIC ROUTES

ROUTE NO.	TOWNLANDS	CLASSIFICATION
F.S-1	Clontumper, Esker South, Drumnacooha, Derrynacross, Cornafunshin, Lettergonnell, Aghadowry, Glenmore (Longford By), Fostragh, Rathmore (Granard By).	Full
F.S-2	Clontumper, Corneddan, Esker South, Drumnacooha.	Full
F.S-3	Soran, Drumnacooha.	Full
F.S-4	Derrynacross, Cornafunshin, Kilmahon, Lettergeeragh, Crowdrumman.	Full
F.S-5	Lettergeeragh.	Full
F.S-6	Drumhalry, Rosduff, Enaghan, Lisraherty, Smear, Cleenrah, Rathmore (Granard By), Aghnacliff, Carrickadorrish, Aghacordrinan, Aghakeeran, Molly, Gelshagh, Aghagreagh, Lislea (Granard By).	Full
F.S-7	Aghnacliff, Aghakine, Culray.	Full
F.S-8	Aghakine, Sonnagh, Aghakeeran, Molly.	Full
F.S-9	Culray, Ballinrooey, Ballinulty Lower, Dring, Derrycassan, Mullinroe, Larkfield, Cloonagh (Granard By), Kilmore.	Full
F.S-10	Aghanoran, Cloonagh (Granard By).	Ful
F.S-11	Larkfield.	Full
F.S-12	Derrycassan.	Full
F.S-13	Tober, Coolcor, Ballymore.	Full
F.S-14	Moatfield, Granardkill, Ballybrien, Ballymacroly.	Full
F.S-15	Ballywillin, Springtown, Tonymore North.	Full
F.S-16	Aghabrack, Robinstown, Rincoolagh.	Full
F.S-17	Druming, Cartrongarrow, Lisduff (Montgomery), Bawn Mountain, Barroe, Castlerea Mountain, Castlerea, Keeloge, Commock, Curraghmore, Abbeyderg, Loughan, Glenmore (Moydow By), Lislea (Moydow By), Cartronbrack.	Full
F.S-18	Rathcline, Carrowroe, Bleanavoher, Agharanagh (Rathcline Ed).	Full
F.S-19	Cullentragh, Fortwilliam, Carrickmorán.	Full
F.S-20	Cashel, Loughfarm, Elfeet (Adamson), Leab, Carrowbeg.	Full
F.S-21	Tipper (Rathcline By), Corrool (Kenny), Corrool (Fox).	Full
F.S-22	Drumnee, Saints Island	Full

INTERMITTENT SCENIC ROUTES

ROUTE NO.	TOWNLANDS	CLASSIFICATION
I.S-1	Gaigue, Tawnagh, Camagh (Longfod By), Corrinagh, Annagh (Longford By), Aghamore Lower, Leggagh, Moyne, Aghagah, Fihoragh.	Intermittent
I.S-2	Enaghan, Lisraherty.	Intermittent
I.S-3	Drumard.	Intermittent
I.S-4	Ballyduffy, Moyne, Birrinagh, Crott, Smear.	Intermittent
I.S-5	Smear, Carrickmaguirk, Aghamore Lower.	Intermittent
I.S-6	Leggagh, Aghamore Lower, Annaghdaniel, Cloonback, Cuingareen, Rathmore (Granard By), Donegal (Granary By).	Intermittent
I.S-7	Edenmore, Fostragh.	Intermittent
I.S-8	Aghadowry, Carrickateane, Drumderg.	Intermittent
I.S-9	Lettergonnell, Carrowlinan, Kiltyclogh.	Intermittent
I.S-10	Cartrongolan, Dooroc, Derrynacross, Derryheelan.	Intermittent
I.S-11	Cartrongolan, Oghil, Clontumper, Esker South.	Intermittent
I.S-12	Feraghfad, Ballymakeegan, Farnagh, Glebe (Ed. Longford Rural), Townparks (Ardagh By), Farranyoogan, Aghafad, Cartrongeeragh.	Intermittent
I.S-13	Druming, Ballycloghan, Aghnasillagh, Garrycam, Keel (Moydow By), Castlerea Mountain, Bawn Mountain.	Intermittent
I.S-14	Cornadowagh, Ballyrevagh, Carrowbeg.	Intermittent
I.S-15	Drumnee, Claras, Corrool (Fox).	Intermittent
I.S-16	Portanure, Lismagawley, Pollagh.	Intermittent
I.S-17	Collum, Derrydarragh, Carrowrory, Ballagh (Rathcline By)	Intermittent
I.S-18	Forgeny, Newcastle, Clooncallow, Cloonkeen (Rathcline By).	Intermittent

6.1.2 Prevention of Pollution

In sustaining the environment of the County, 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.

ENV 1:

To encourage and promote environmental awareness and environmentally friendly practices, particularly in 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 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 5:

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.

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. The implementation of the WFD will have significant impacts on the management of the Country's 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 Country. Longford County is primarily located within the Shannon (International) RBD, while a small portion of the County to the North drains to the North Western IRBD.

Policy with regard to the Council's obligations under this directive is as follows

ENV 6:

The Council shall seek to protect ground and surface water resources 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 shall be protected. Development of a potentially pollutant nature in these areas and any future areas identified shall be prohibited.

ENV 7:

It is the policy of Longford County Council to encourage and promote compliance with the recommendations contained in the Shannon and North South Share River Basin Management Plans.

ENV 8:

The Council, where possible, in tandem with the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) will support the development and implementation of a Groundwater Protection Scheme.

ENV 9:

The Council shall incorporate the recommendations contained within any future River Basin District/River Basin Management Plan for the Shannon International River Basin District and the North Western River Basin District, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

ENV 10:

The Council, where appropriate, shall seek to control and manage any potential point and/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 unsewered properties, forestry activities and the use and discharge of dangerous substances.

ENV 11:

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. Where appropriate, proposals shall be screened for Appropriate Assessment in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other appropriate interest groups.

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. However, as in 2002, the upper and lower reaches continue to be affected by marked eutrophication. The report also identified that the Fallan River, a

tributary of the Camlin, has seen a slight deterioration in River Quality since 2002 with agriculture suspected as the main cause of widespread over enrichment and heavy siltation.

The report identified that the River Inny was in a more unsatisfactory condition in 2005. This is mainly a result of activity surrounding the Inny in other counties. There was a major fish kill upstream of Lough Sheelin in 2005 that was attributed to a sewage treatment plant malfunction. Species of mayfly and stonefly nymph which had previously been widespread throughout the river are no longer found, while weed and/or algal growths have become very well developed generally. This has been attributed to a variety of causes including bog development, forestry, agriculture, sewage, and dredging.

Lake Water Quality

Thirteen lakes in Ireland were classified as hypertrophic i.e. the most enriched status, within the EPA publication *Water Quality in Ireland 2005: Key Indicators of the Aquatic Environment*. Included within the lakes classified as hypertrophic was Lough Gowna, which straddles the border with Cavan. No other lakes within the County were included within this category.

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 surface water 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. Policy WS 9 aims to secure this in Co.Longford and in addition aquifer protection zones for the known water sources in the County are shown in **Appendix 5**.

6.1.2.2 Air Quality

County Longford fortunately enjoys quite a high standard of air quality as there are no major or significant contributors that would greatly affect the air quality. However, increased use in 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 County Council is as follows;

ENV 12:

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 13:

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 14:

The Council, in accordance with the recommendations of the Land Use and Transportation Study, shall promote alternative and sustainable transport methods in order to maintain good air quality.

6.1.3 Soils

Soil types have an extensive influence on the environment of the County, dictating the land cover and land use and the extent and intensity of both. All aspects of life are influenced either directly or indirectly by soil types, including settlement patterns, transport routes, communications infrastructure, location of archaeological deposits and economic activity. Soils represent an important and non-renewable natural resource.

The Council's approach to the protection of soils is therefore underpinned by the following aims;

- **To recognise and protect fertile agricultural soils the County, an important non-renewable natural resource.**

- **To identify areas of poorer soil in the County and respect their limitations, particularly in terms of their assimilative properties to prevent pollution.**

The Council's policy is as follows;

ENV 15:

The Council shall protect soils identified as agriculturally important in the Landscape Assessment through the prevention of inappropriate use through the development management process.

ENV 16:

The Council shall aim to prevent pollution in areas of poor soils through the implementation of relevant EPA and Department of Agriculture guidance and regulations in the percolation and/or spreading of domestic and agricultural effluent to land.

ENV 17:

The Council shall investigate the potential uses of cutaway bogs in the County and shall particularly consider the development of sustainable and renewable energy projects. Proposals to flood these areas shall be discouraged.

6.2 Heritage

"National Heritage" is defined in the Heritage Act, 1995 as including monuments, archaeological objects, architectural objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways.

Our Heritage includes many aspects of the world around us. For example, the landscape, the hedgerows and field systems, lakes & 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 County. 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 County, bearing in mind the basic needs and requirements of its population, the social, economic and cultural growth of the County 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 County has a unique heritage and it is an aim of the**

County 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 County Development Plan:**
 - **Avoid harm to 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 and seek to provide positive benefits for heritage.**

General Heritage Policies and Objectives

HER 1:

The Planning Authority shall promote the protection and conservation of heritage sites, artifacts and monuments and the integrity of their setting, as listed and illustrated in the Record of Monuments and Places (see Appendix 8).

HER 2:

It is the policy of the Council to update the Heritage

Plan over the lifetime of the Development Plan. The Landscape Character Assessment shall be reviewed on an on-going basis and updated where necessary.

HER 3:

Applications for housing developments shall include provision for the naming of estates in recognition of the cultural heritage of the area in which they are situated.

HER 4:

The Planning Authority shall endeavour to identify important landscapes and habitats and the importance of local character, identity and distinctiveness, in both the natural and built heritage of the County. 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 5:

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. In particular, the unique historical, mythological and cultural significance of Ardagh Mountain shall be recognised. Developments which materially impinge on the character of the mountain will not be permitted.

6.2.1 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological Sites and Monuments are distinctive features of the historic landscape of County Longford that have been identified through research and fortuitous discovery. Such remains provide important evidence of the people and settlements that made up the County 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 County and adds meaning to our understanding of the environment.



Ringfort at Tully td. near Coolagherty, Co. Longford

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

Over 1700 archaeological sites and monuments are recorded in County Longford under the Record of Monuments and Places, protected under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. These are illustrated on the Map included as part of **Appendix 8**. There are also almost certainly a number of unknown sites that have not yet been discovered within the County.

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 County. In this regard, development in the vicinity of recorded monuments shall be referred to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Development Applications Unit for comment and these considered in the assessment of any application for development. In general, development within a 20m radius of a recorded monument will not be permitted and proposed development within 75 metres discouraged (subject to other policies contained within this Plan).

ARC 2:

It is an objective of the Council to protect the integrity of the settings of archaeological areas, sites, structures, monuments and objects in the County.

ARC 3:

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

ARC 4:

It is an objective of the Council to encourage and promote access to and understanding of the archaeological heritage of the County.

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 County. The approach will be favoured in these circumstances as the most appropriate means of protecting the heritage of the County, in accordance with government policy.

ARC 6:

It is the policy of the Council to strictly control

development proposals on unzoned lands which may be detrimental to any area, site, structure, monument or object of archaeological significance, or detract from, its interpretation and setting. In this regard, the Planning Authority shall seek an assessment - to be carried out by a licensed archaeologist - of developments which may impact on a national or recorded monument, the designated zone of archaeological importance surrounding any monument or other site of archaeological significance within the County. Development will only be permitted where the Council, in consultation with the DoEHLG, considers it acceptable as per the assessment and subject to any necessary mitigation measures proposed to prevent adverse impact on the monument and/or its settings.

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:

It is the policy of the Council to investigate and promote the provision of improved access to important archaeological sites such as those National Monuments in State ownership or guardianship listed below:

Site	Description Nat.	Mon. No.	Status
Inchcleraun	Early monastery	91	State Ownership
Larkfield	Ringfort	640	State Ownership
Sonnagh	Ringfort	598	State Ownership
Aghaward	Ringfort	630	State Ownership
Granard	Motte	263	State Guardianship
Corlea	Bog Trackway	677	State Ownership

ARC 9:

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 10:

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

ARC 11:

It is policy of the Council to protect the National Monuments as outlined in the table entitled 'Monuments protected under Preservation Orders' (see table overleaf).

ARC 12:

It is policy of the Council to protect the monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest as outlined in the table of the same name (see overleaf), and illustrated on the Map included as part of **Appendix 8**.

MONUMENTS PROTECTED UNDER PRESERVATION

NO. OF ORDER	MONUMENT	TOWNLAND	O.S. MAP	DATE OF ORDER
10	Dolmen and associated standing stones	Aughnaccliffe	6	05/01/33
1/64	Ringfort	Dring	6	13/02/64
6/73	Deserted Town Site	Granardkill 10:12/11	05/73	
2/78	Ringfort	Bawn, Killoe	9:5	22/06/78
3/79	Monastic enclosure	Aghafad	13:12	08/03/79
5/81	Monastic cashel	Inchcleraun	21:14	30/10/81
4/83	Stone circle	Cloughchurnel	11	27/04/83
4/85	Ringfort	Feraghfad	14:9:5	02/04/85
5/85	Ringfort	Feraghfad	14:9:5	02/04/85
6/85	Ringfort	Feraghfad	14:8:6	02/04/85

MONUMENTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INTEREST ORDERS

(Map refers to the location of the site on the map included as Appendix 8 and grade, where applicable, refers to the archaeological interest and condition of the site.)

MAP	TOWNLAND	SITE	DESCRIPTION	GRADE
1	Aughnaccliffe	Cromlech	Good Condition – preservation order no. 10/1933	A
2	Cleenrath	Diarmuid & Grainne's bed	Well preserved	A
3	Melkagh	Diarmuid & Grainne's bed	Well preserved	A
4	Cartronbore	Standing Stone		B
5	Creevy	Standing Stone		B
6	Cartronbrack	Standing Stone		A
7	Dalystown	Standing Stone		B
8	Aughnagarron	Druids Altar	Remains of Megalithic tomb	C
9	Cartronbore	Druids Circle		A
10	Cloughumal	Druids Circle		B
11	Corboy	Moated house site	Preservation order no. 7/72	A

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MAP	TOWNLAND	SITE	DESCRIPTION	GRADE
12	Breany	Ringfort	Triple rampart	A
13	Clonfin	Ringfort		B
14	Dring	Ringfort	Preservation order no. 1/1964	A
15	Toneymore North	Ringfort		A
16	Higginstown	Ringfort		B
17	Granardkille	Old Town of Granard	Site of Medieval Town	A
18	Glen	Moat		B
19	Moatfield	Moat of Granard	National Monument no. 263	A
20	Lissardowling	Moat Rampart	Allegedly O'Farrell site	A
21	Bawn Killoe	Ringfort	Preservation Order	A
22	Park Place	Doonphilip	Mound	C
23	From Lough Kinale to Lough Gowna	Dun Clai (Black Pig's Dyke)	Linear earthworks	A
24	Bawn Mountain	Mound	Raised circular area	B
25	Lisnagrish	Moataward	Possible ringfort	A
26	Ballinakill	Abbey (in ruins)	Early Church site	C
27	Killeen	Caldragh Stone	Cross in centre of ringfort	B
28	Cashel	Church (in ruins)	Early Church site	C
29	Iniscleraun (Lough Ree)	Templedermot	National monument no. 91	A
30	Inchmore (Lough Gowna)	Abbey & church (in ruins), Columbcille's Stone	Remains of early and later churches	A
31	Legan	Stone	Ballaun Stone	B
32	Legan	Lady Well Chapel (site)	Inscribed stone built into surrounding wall	
33	Abbeyshrule	Cross	Early Cross	A
34	Ardagh	Pedestal of Cross	Base of cross	C
35	Abbeyderg	Abbey (in ruins)	Circa 13th century Augustinian abbey	A
36	Abbeylara	Abbey (in ruins)	Cistercian Abbey	A

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

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MAP	TOWNLAND	SITE	DESCRIPTION	GRADE
37	Abbeyshrule	Abbey (in ruins)	13th Century Cistercian Abbey	A
38	Clondra	Abbey (in ruins)	Late medieval Church	A
39	Moatfarrell	Church (in ruins)	Medieval Church site	B
40	Saint's Island	Church (in ruins)	Site of Augustinian Church	B
41	Ballinalee	Bully's Acre	Burial Ground	C
42	Derrydarragh	Altar	Mass Rock	C
43	Derrynagallia	Altar	Mass Rock	C
44	Agharra	Burial ground		
45	Abbeyderg	Tomb	Megalithic	
46	Lisardowling	Moat		
47	Ballymahon	Courthouse		
48	Ballinalee	Forge		
49	Ballymacormack	Abbey		
50	Ballinamore	Burial Ground		
51	Gurteen	Old School Building		
52	Rathcline	Building Feature		
53	Forgney	Hill of Forgney, Forgney Church		
54	Castlerea	Castle	In Ruins	
55	Mornin	Castle	In Ruins	
56	Rathcline	Castle		
57	Ballinamuck	Battlefield site	1798	

6.2.2 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

The natural heritage and biodiversity of County Longford is a unique resource, from its upland areas and low lying peat lands, to the lakeshores that are scattered over the County, this varied landscape supports a range of biodiversity, habitats and wildlife.

While it is inevitable that our landscape will continue to change in response to the needs of our society, it is essential that a balance is reached between development and ensuring that there are no detrimental impacts to the natural heritage and biodiversity of the County.

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 County Longford is an underlying theme of the County 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 creates 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.

European and national legislation protects the important and valuable heritage areas within the County. 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 designate sites of importance such as Ramsar sites protected under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. This section should be read in accordance with the mapping contained in Appendix 9.

NHB 1:

It is an objective of the Council to protect, conserve and enhance the County'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 County'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 County.

NHB 4:

It is the policy of the Council to protect important geological or geomorphological sites in the County, including any sites proposed to be designated or 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 County.

6.2.2.1 (Proposed) Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)

The basic designation for wildlife is the Natural Heritage Area. Under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000), NHAs are legally protected from damage from the date that they are formally proposed for designation. The following is a list of NHAs within Longford;

NHA 000422 - Aghnamona Bog.

NHA 000691 - Rinn River.

NHA 000985 - Lough Kinale & Derragh Lough.

NHA 001423 - Cloonageeher Bog.

NHA 001448 - Forthill Bog.

NHA 001450 - Mount Jessop Bog.

In addition to the above mentioned NHAs, there are a number of proposed NHAs (pNHAs) within the County. These areas although protected with lesser statutory protection than NHAs are still considered important areas within the County.

pNHA 002069 - Ardagullion Bog.

pNHA 000442 - Brown Bog.

pNHA 000822 - Carrickglass Demense.

pNHA 000445 - Clooneen Bog.

pNHA 001821 - Cordara Turlough.

pNHA 001444 - Derry Lough.

pNHA 000447 - Derrymore Bog.

pNHA 000448 - Fortwilliam Turlough.

pNHA 001687 - Glen Lough.

pNHA 000449 - Lough Bannow.

pNHA 001819 - Lough Bawn.

pNHA 001818 - Lough Forbes Complex.

pNHA 000992 - Lough Gowna.

pNHA 001449 - Lough Naback.

pNHA 000440 - Lough Ree.

pNHA 001443 - Lough Slawn.

pNHA 002103 - Royal Canal.

6.2.2.2 (Candidate) Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are designated European Sites under the Habitats Directive and transposed into Irish Law through the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 as amended in 1998 and 2005. They are also termed Natura 2000 sites. The directive lists certain habitats and species that must be protected within SACs. Candidate SACs are those which are currently under consideration by the European Commission, but are still afforded full protection. The SACs in County Longford are as follows;

cSAC 000440 - Lough Ree.

cSAC 000448 - Fortwilliam Turlough.

cSAC 001818 - Lough Forbes Complex.

cSAC 002341 - Ardagullion Bog.

cSAC 002346 - Brown Bog.

cSAC 002348 - Clooneen Bog.

6.2.2.3 (Candidate) Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are European sites designated under the Birds Directive. The Directive requires the designation of important sites as SPAs that support populations of bird species including migratory birds. These sites are also Natura 2000 sites. The SPAs found in County Longford are as follows;

SPA 004061 - Lough Kinale & Derragh Lough.

SPA 004064 - Lough Ree.

SPA 004101 - Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows with relation to designated sites;

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:

- **Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive¹ (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).**
- **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.

- **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.

6.2.2.4 Recognising the Importance of Non-Designated Sites

It is clear that beyond the boundaries of the designated sites within the County are areas of wider countryside that provide important habitats for species and make up a wide network of linked spaces that contribute to the County's Natural Heritage. Some of these features by their nature are continuous such as rivers and provide an important resource and exchange of species within the County. These features include Rivers, Canals 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 the County'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 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:

It is the policy of the Council to protect the following important stands of trees identified in **Appendix 10**;

1. Avenue at Smithfield, Legan.
2. Woods at Carriglass, Castleforbes and Newcastle Demesnes.
3. Portanure Pine Woods.
4. Derrycassan Woods.
5. Culnagore Wood.
6. Rathcline Wood.
7. Trees along Regional Road R393 at Knockahaw.
8. Woodlands at Erne Head, Woodville and Golaroe.
9. Lime trees at Mosstown, Keenagh.

10. Trees at Rathsallagh.
11. Wood at Farragh, Killoe.

The Council reserve the right, through the appropriate process, to add to this list of protected trees over the period of the Development Plan.

NHB 11:

Generally, it is the policy of the Council to protect all substantial areas of deciduous or mixed forest within the County. Any person considering altering such a stand of trees for any purpose other than normal maintenance should contact the planning section of the Local Authority for advice.

NHB 12:

The Council, in co-operation with The Forest Service (Coillte) and the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources, shall encourage and promote the preparation and adoption of an Indicative Forestry Strategy for the County, as an important means of contributing to its objective of protecting and enhancing the County's biodiversity, natural resources and landscape.

6.2.2.5 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 Governments, 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 13:

It is the policy of the Council to address the findings of the national biodiversity plan where applicable and relevant within the County Development Plan.

NHB 14:

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 15:

The Council shall facilitate increased awareness of the County’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 16:

The Council shall pursue a programme of public awareness on the spread of invasive species and noxious weeds. The Council shall encourage measures to control the spread of such species in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Food and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources as appropriate.

NHB 17:

It is the policy of the Council to design, develop and maintain areas of the public realm within its control with regard to enhancing biodiversity value, through the adoption of appropriate landscaping methods, maintenance regimes and planting schemes utilising native and/or semi-native species.

NHB 18:

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 19:

The Council will seek to enhance the County’s biodiversity and natural heritage, including its landscape, by promoting appropriate recreational and amenity schemes.

NHB 20:

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 21:

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.

6.2.2.6 Geological Sites

The Geological Survey 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 designation 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 (CGSs) within Longford that may eventually become designated sites. These sites are as follows and are as illustrated on the map contained as part of Appendix 9.

COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITES WITHIN LONGFORD

SITE NAME	EASTING	NORTHING	PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS CRITICAL FEATURE(S) KEY WORDS	TOWNLAND(S) DISTRICT
Mullawornia	213000	259000	Waulsortian complex: palaeontology	Ballymahon
Mullawornia	213000	259000	Waulsortian: Lower Carboniferous stratigraphy	Mullawornia
Ardnacassagh Quarry	215200	275400	Carboniferous stratigraphy	Ardnacassagh
Esker North townland	216400	288700	Structural importance: truncated slump fold	Esker North Td
Keel	217530	266550	Mineralogy: honey sphalerite	Keel
Keel and Garrycam [site: Zn, Pb, Ba]	218500	266500	Economic geology: zinc	Garrycam
Carrickboy Quarry	220800	264700	Waulsortian: Lower Carboniferous stratigraphy, palaeontology	Carrickboy
Glen Lodge Stream	223000	282300	Youngest Silurian rocks in Longford -Down succession: palaeontology	Kiltyclogh Td
Glen Lodge Stream	223000	282300	Youngest Silurian rocks in Longford- Down succession: Silurian stratigraphy	Kiltyclogh Td
Cleenrah	225700	290600	Economic Geology: mined haematitic-Mn shale	Cleenrah
Kilcoursey Quarry	227600	276200	Carbonate mudmound, post- Waulsortian	Edgeworthstown
Enaghan, near Arva	228500	294500	Historic Iron mine.	Arvagh
Ardagullion Quarry	230400	276700	Carboniferous stratigraphy	Ardagullion

Accordingly the policy of the Council is as follows;

GEO 1:

It is policy of the Council to protect sites of geological importance within the County, as listed in the table (left), from inappropriate development that may result in the deterioration of the geological feature.

6.2.2.7 Inland Lakes and Waterways

The inland lakes and waterways of the County are important natural assets and provide a potential tourism resource as well as an essential natural corridor for biodiversity within the County. This section should be read in accordance with Section 6.1.2 of this plan which aims to reduce adverse impacts on the County's lakes and waterways.

Accordingly the Council's policies are as follows;

ILW 1:

The Royal Canal, Rivers Shannon, Inny and Camlin and Lough Ree, Lough Gowna and the County's other rivers and lakes 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 County. Walkway development will be promoted, particularly in the vicinity of the inland waterways such as the Canal and Commons North adjacent to Lough Ree.

ILW 3:

Longford County Council shall, within its powers, protect Lough Ree from unsustainable, large-scale and high volume abstraction of water resources for use in areas external to Longford County.

ILW 4:

The Council shall, where possible and where resources permit, provide additional accesses to lake shores, 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 inland waterways, lakes, canals and rivers where planning permission is sought, conditions may be attached to any consequent grant of permission requiring the retention or creation of public access to the waterway in order to facilitate the creation or expansion of walking/cycling routes.

ILW 5:

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 6:

It is the policy of the Council to require that land adjacent to river and canal banks and lakeshores in the County be reserved for public access provision.

ILW 7:

Development will be strictly controlled in the vicinity of the inland waterways of the County 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.



The Royal Canal at Abbeyshrule

ILW 8:

The broad zones of the lakes, rivers, canals and deciduous woodlands shall be protected from inappropriate development (**see Appendix 11**), i.e. development which adversely affects high amenity and landscape quality in relation to their setting. For example, the environs of Newcastle House and Woods, particularly adjoining the River Inny Bridge.

ILW 9:

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 wildlife corridors for recreational, amenity and educational purposes and the promotion of 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 County and with a view towards the promotion of sustainable tourism projects in County Longford.

ILW 10:

The Council shall also promote and encourage the ongoing works to improve the navigability of the Royal Canal, and shall investigate the provision of mooring points on the islands within the major lakes of the County.

ILW 11:

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 12:

Development in the broad zones of the major rivers and lakes of the County, as illustrated in Appendix 11, will not normally be permitted and shall be restricted to extensions of existing dwellings, which shall be sensitively designed in terms of the individual site and materials. Intensive agricultural developments shall not normally be permitted in these areas.

ILW 13:

The Council recognises the historical, cultural and scenic importance of the Islands on the lakes and rivers within the County. These shall be protected from inappropriate development, whether on the Islands themselves or at locations that interferes with their integrity and setting.

ILW 14:

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.

Although there are no designated bathing areas within the County, it is considered that those areas used for bathing should be afforded the same protection as designated sites by the EPA.

ILW 15:

The Council shall investigate existing bathing areas within the County with a view towards the implementation of the Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008 (or subsequent update), particularly with regard to the protection of Human Health.

ILW 16:

The Council shall support measures to curtail the spread of invasive species within the Lakes and Inland Waterways and their vicinity, through the development of awareness programmes and the promotion of best practice procedures.

6.2.3 Architectural Heritage

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 relates to Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The Council shall implement Part IV (Architectural Heritage) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 on foot of the findings of the Heritage Plan, The Draft National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for County Longford, detailed consultation with landowners, architectural historians, local residents and all other major stakeholders.

The architectural heritage of the County represents a finite resource and irreplaceable asset to the County 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 and development of the county. These structures are also key repositories of traditional building skills and design techniques.

Accordingly the general policy of the Council is as follows;

ARCH 1:

It is an objective of the Council to promote the maintenance 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 County.

ARCH 2:

It is an objective and policy 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 County.

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 doors, windows, window/shopfront detailing and original 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:

It is policy of the Council that proposals for development to structures included as part of the Draft National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (DoEHLG) and any updated version, maintain and enhance the character of these structures.

6.2.3.1 Record of Protected Structures

A list of Protected Structures has been prepared and is available at Appendix 12 of this plan. This complements the already existing structures that are protected throughout the County and has been informed through the public consultation process, work carried out as part of Local Area Plans throughout the County and the Draft National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (as yet unpublished). The proposed structures chosen are representative of the diversity of architectural heritage within the County that 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:

- **Controlling development which would alter the character of protected structures and proposed protected structures.**
- **Monitoring the condition of protected structures and proposed protected structures to identify those endangered by neglect, vandalism or unauthorised development and taking appropriate action.**
- **Preventing the endangerment of protected structures in the Council's ownership.**

In this regard, the Council shall seek further funding for the upkeep of protected structures within the County.

RPS 2:

It is the policy of the Council to issue Declarations as to the type of works that would 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.

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, to its use or sale shall be considered by the Council.

RPS 5:

It is the policy of the Council that applications for development where a protected structure or its setting is likely to be materially affected, will require an assessment in accordance with provisions of Chapter 6 of the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines, issued by the DoEHLG (2004 or subsequent update). Planning Applications of this nature will be referred to the DoEHLG development applications unit and other relevant statutory bodies for comment. Any comments received from these bodies shall be taken into account in the consideration of the application.

RPS 6:

It is Council Policy to encourage the rehabilitation, renovation and reuse of existing older buildings where appropriate in preference to their demolition and redevelopment.

6.2.3.2 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

Towns and villages that contain areas of particular recognised character may be worthy of conservation in their entirety. Ardagh is a recognised heritage village within the County and great importance is attached to the preservation of the existing character and appearance of the area. Within this plan Ardagh Village is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area in line with the recommendations of the Ardagh Local Area Plan and Conservation Plan prepared in 2006. The extent of the ACA within Ardagh is illustrated in Appendix 13 of this plan. Further details as to the nature of the ACA can be found in the Ardagh Local Area Plan and Conservation Plan.

It is important that within these areas careful management of change enables the area to remain prosperous, but at the same time respects the special characteristics of the area.



Clock Tower in Ardagh

ACA 1:

It is the policy of the Council to select and manage Architectural Conservation Areas in the County, as appropriate and ensure the preservation of the character of the Architectural Conservation Area within Ardagh.

ACA 2:

The Council will only normally permit development proposals where the following criteria is met;

- 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, 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.

6.2.4 Historic Gardens, Demesnes and Designed Landscapes

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage under the remit of the DoEHLG 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 time³⁰.

The Survey has identified 96 sites in Longford that are considered to be important historic gardens, demesnes and landscapes. 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.

This section is closely related to other policy areas throughout the plan which should be consulted in relation to development in these areas. These Sections include protected structures and their setting, archaeological heritage, amenities and landscapes.

³⁰ DoEHLG, National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.buildingofireland.ie/Surveys/Gardens/> [Accessed 6 November 2007].

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 promote the intrinsic character of those within the County.

6.3 Quality and Character of Urban Areas

It is essential that the quality and character of urban areas are 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:

The Council shall aim to identify and protect the character and quality of Urban areas through the establishment and implementation of its Local Area Plan and Village Policy Statement schedule as outlined in Section 2.3.

CHAR 4:

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 proposed development into the existing streetscape and to reduce potential construction and demolition waste.

6.4 Amenities

Amenities within the County include natural and recreational amenities as well as social and community infrastructure. These facilities provide many cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits and provide a positive contribution towards quality of life within the County.

6.4.1 Natural and Recreational Amenities

The preservation and enhancement of natural amenities and recreation amenities is an integral part of the development of the County, both in terms of providing an attractive and accessible resource for the County's population and in terms of attracting inward investment from tourism and increasing the marketability of Longford as a location for industry, business and commercial activity. The Council recognises the importance of amenities and recreational amenities in the social, economic and cultural well-being of the County and aims to protect, preserve and enhance these amenities through the following policy areas.

AM 1:

It is the policy of the Council to provide, where feasible and appropriate, car-parking, lay-by facilities and access point in scenic and/or amenity areas as identified on the accompanying Scenic Routes Map (Appendix 7). These include the following areas:

- **Bleanavoher - To facilitate the provision of car parking facilities and improve access to the lake shore.**
- **Cashel - To secure and develop lands as an amenity area with car-parking provision and to establish mooring facilities at the lakeshore.**
- **Saints Island - To secure lands for public access provision.**

- **Clondra - To secure lands for the development of an amenity area.**
- **Dring/Derrycassan - to secure public access and further landscaping and upgrading of the amenity area. To acquire land to link the public car park at Dring with Derrycassan wood for public access and amenity purposes.**
- **Ardagh Mountain - to provide public access and improve the lay-by area. To develop forest walks and provide signposting.**
- **Annagh Lake - To provide for improvement of the amenity area.**
- **Derrynagalliagh - to provide for further development of the amenity area.**
- **Red Bridge - investigate the development of a mooring facility.**
- **Dunbeggan - To provide for further development of the amenity area.**
- **Enaghan - To secure and develop lands as an amenity area with parking provision and access to the lake.**
- **Kilmore - To provide for an extension to boating and bathing facilities.**

Amenities in these areas shall be provided or

improved in accordance with their protected status, where applicable, i.e. any proposals for amenity development shall be referred to the DoEHLG for comment/observations which shall be taken into account in the preparation of any plans and the carrying out of any works.

AM 2:

The Council shall investigate the possibilities of the provision of amenity facilities in other areas throughout the County over the plan period, including the provision of facilities at the following locations:

- **Carrowbeg.**
- **Garrycam.**
- **Aghakine.**
- **Smear.**
- **Molly.**
- **Harbours on Royal Canal.**

AM 3:

The Planning Authority shall control development in protected areas (scenic views and prospects, ridge lines, broad zones of the lakes, European sites etc.) which has the potential to negatively impact on the scenic, heritage and cultural assets of the County.

AM 4:

It is the policy of the Council to protect existing rights of way and investigate further provision

particularly in relation to access to the Royal Canal and the County's lakes, rivers and forests 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 County.

6.4.1.1 Parks and Public Open Spaces

AM 5:

It is the policy of the Council, through its schedule of Local Area Plans and Village Policy Statements, to assess the existing public open spaces in the settlements of the County. Any deficiencies in public open space and areas where this deficiency may be addressed, will be identified at the plan stage and provision facilitated through the zoning and development management process.

AM 6:

Developers of residential schemes may be required, as a condition on any grant of Planning Permission, to locate open spaces in such a way as to provide links to, or consolidation of, areas of public open space within a settlement. 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 7:

It is the policy of the Council to provide for native

and semi-native planting schemes in Local Authority developed parks and public spaces and to provide for the control and eradication of invasive and noxious species.

AM 8:

The Council shall investigate the preparation of a needs assessment with regard to the provision of public parks within the County.

6.4.1.2 Sports Facilities

AM 9:

It is the policy of the Council to promote the provision, improvement and expansion of sports facilities in the County, subject to normal planning criteria and the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

6.4.2 Social and Community

Social and Community services are provided by the Local Authority and other organisations in order to facilitate the educational, health, social, cultural and religious needs of the population within the County. It is essential that through the planning process adequate measures are taken to secure such development, in order to improve the quality of life experienced by people within Longford. The provision of social and community facilities will be further developed in line with the Local Area Plan and Village Policy Statement Schedule as identified in Section 2.3 of this plan.

6.4.2.1 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. In-migration 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 changed significantly over the period of the previous 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.

SC1:

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.



Cullyfad Community Centre

6.4.2.2 Schools and Education Facilities

Responsibility for the provision of National and Post Primary Schools and education in Longford County lies with the Department of Education and Science. The following Table indicates the extent of institutions in the County under the aegis of this Department.

SCHOOLS WITHIN LONGFORD

LOCATION	NAME	LEVEL/TYPE
Ballymahon	Convent of Mercy	Secondary
Granard	Cnoc Mhuire, Convent of Mercy	Secondary
Longford	St. Mel's College	Secondary
Longford	Mean Scoil Mhuire	Secondary
Ballymahon	Ballymahon Vocational School	Secondary/Vocational
Granard	Ardscoil Phadraig	Secondary/Vocational
Lanesboro	Lanesboro Community College	Secondary/Community College
Templemichael	Oliver Plunkett Vocational School	Secondary/Vocational
Moyne	Moyne Community School	Secondary/Community College
Ardagh	St. Mel's	National
Aughnacliffe	Scoil Naomh Colmcille	National
Baile Nua an Chaisil	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	National
Bunlahy	Scoil Naomh Guasachta	National
Clontumpher	Scoil Naomh Treasa	National
Ballinamuck	St Patricks	National
Ballymahon	St. Matthew' s	National
Ballycloughan	Baile an Clochain N. S.	National
Cluain da Rath	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	National
Taghshinny	Taghshinny N.S.	National
Muckerstaff	Naomh Padraig N.S.	National
Cloonagh	St. Columba's N.S.	National
Edgeworthstown	St. Mary's	National
Edgeworthstown	St. John's	National
Killasonna	Kilasonna N.S.	National
Aughnagarron	Scoil Mhuire	National
Granard	Sacred Heart	National
Cloontagh	Cloontagh N.S.	National
Lanesboro	Naomh Mhuire Boys N.S.	National

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LOCATION	NAME	LEVEL/TYPE
Lanesboro	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal	National
Fermoyle	Fermoyle N.S.	National
Lenamore	Scoil Naisunta an Leana Mor	National
Abbeylara	St. Bernards N.S.	National
Cnoc an Mharcaigh	Scoil Naisunta Cnoc an Mharcaigh	National
Ballinalee	Samhthann N.S.	National
Longford	Scoil Naomh Micheal	National
Battery Road	Longford N.S.	National
Kilashee	Noamh Earnain	National
Keenagh	Naomh Dominic N.S.	National
Colehill	Colehill N.S.	National
Stonepark	Stonepark N.S.	National
Battery Road	St. Christophers S.S.	Special School
Glen	Scoil Brid	National
Longford	St. Joseph's Convent	National
Longford	Gaelscoil an Longfoirt	National
Drumlish	St. Mary's N.S.	National
Mostrim	Scoil Naisunta An Ghleanna	National
Dromard	St. Patrick's N.S.	National
Moyvore	Forgney N.S.	National
Newtownforbes	Scoil Mhuire N.S.	National
Templemichael	St. Emer's	National

In addition, facilities such as youth reach services, adult education and literacy promotion and further education courses are on offer at centres throughout the County.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

SC 2:

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and promote the expansion and improvement of educational facilities including third level and adult education facilities, where possible, in appropriate locations.

SC 3:

Through the zoning programme under the relevant Local Area Plans, it is the policy of the Council to ensure that adequate lands are available in appropriate and accessible areas in the major settlements of the County for the provision, expansion and/or improvement of educational facilities.



St. Teresa's National School, Clontumper, Killoe, Ennysbegs

6.4.2.3 Childcare Facilities

Childcare facilities have become an increasingly important element in the County economy, enabling many people to return to the workforce and promoting social inclusion. Funding from central government has led to increased provision of facilities throughout the County over the period of the previous plan, a trend that is set 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 or guardians.

The provision of childcare facilities within the County is underpinned by the following aims;

- **To encourage and facilitate the provision of a broad range of high quality childcare facilities in appropriate areas, 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 4:

To identify appropriate locations within settlements for childcare facilities. Areas zoned Residential, Educational, Institutional and/or Commercial under the Local Area Plans will generally be considered suitable for the establishment of childcare facilities, subject to usual planning considerations (as outlined below).

SC 5:

Areas within a Light Industrial/Business Park Designation will generally be considered favourably, subject to normal planning criteria (as outlined below). 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 6:

Areas within the boundaries of settlements identified in the settlement strategy, particularly areas in the vicinity of existing educational institutions, will have a presumption towards 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.

6.4.2.4 Health Care Facilities

Responsibility for the provision of Health Care Facilities in County 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.

Through the zoning programme under the relevant Local Area Plans, it is the policy of the Council to ensure that adequate lands are available in appropriate and accessible areas in the major settlements of the County for the provision, expansion or improvement of Health Care facilities.

Accordingly the Council's Policy is as follows;

SC 11:

The Council shall consult with the HSE at the preparation stages of each Local Area Plan, in order to ascertain and include any plans for proposed physical developments in the relevant area.

SC 12:

The Council will seek 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.**

6.4.2.5 Burial Grounds

There are a large number of cemeteries in County Longford and the Council plays an important role in the management and operation of the majority of these cemeteries. There are some cemeteries in respect of which the Council does not have a direct responsibility. The Council endeavours to ensure that the cemeteries with regard to which it has a responsibility are well maintained. A programme of maintenance and improvement works is undertaken

annually. The Council is committed to ensuring that adequate cemetery provision is available throughout the county and that the cemeteries which it is responsible for are accessible and suitably serviced with regard to car parking provision. The Council is conscious of the sensitive nature of cemeteries and in this regard any proposals with regard to the development of lands in the vicinity of cemeteries will be assessed with regard to the likely impact of the proposed development on the cemetery. The Council's policy is therefore underpinned by the following aims;

- **To provide an adequate level of cemetery provision on a county wide basis, taking into account the likely future requirements. In this regard the Council will seek to ensure that the lands necessary to provide for future needs are acquired and developed in a planned manner.**
- **To ensure that the cemeteries and associated facilities for which the Council is responsible are accessible and appropriately maintained.**

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

SC 14:

It is the policy of the Council to monitor the need for cemetery provision throughout the county and to progress the development of cemetery extensions and the acquisition of lands for new cemeteries on the basis of identified needs.

SC 15:

It is the policy of the Council to manage and regulate the operation of the cemeteries in the county for which it is responsible in accordance with the relevant by-laws.

6.4.2.6 Fire Services

The Council is responsible for the provision of the Fire Service in the County. In this regard the Council has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of a network of Fire Stations. Currently there are Fire Stations in Longford, Granard, Ballymahon Edgeworthstown and Lanesboro. This network of Fire Stations is deemed at present to be appropriate having regard to the size of the county and the dispersal of those living in the County. The Council aims to ensure that the Fire Stations in the County are adequate to meet the needs of the Fire Service and to provide an appropriate level of Fire Service cover in the County.

The 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 identified as part of the inspection process. The Council recognises that businesses can suffer 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 16:

The Council shall continue to assess and evaluate applications for fire safety certificates through the Chief Fire Officer and pursue its fire prevention programme.

SC 17:

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 18:

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.