

# LONGFORD County Development Plan



## Volume I Written Statement

## Joint Foreword

This County Development Plan provides a clear direction and focus for development over the next six years (2021-2027), while setting the scene for ongoing growth in the context of the Region and Country as a whole. The Plan represents the culmination of an intensive two-year process that involved many sections of society in County Longford. 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 Longford in their locality.

The Development Plan is the single most important policy document for the County as it represents an agreed economic, social, cultural and environmental blueprint for the future planning, growth and development of County Longford, particularly taking account of the period of economic uncertainty as we emerge from the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The challenge for this County Development Plan is to help make Longford the best place it can be, for everyone, now and in the future. This is not an easy challenge, but something that this County Development Plan has sought to outline a framework for. The policy objectives of this plan aim to maintain and enhance the strong sense of identity in the development of the County and promote a strong and vibrant outlook for its future. Economic sustainability is an important consideration in the current climate and the wise use of resources is a recurrent theme throughout the Plan.

The Elected Members and Executive of Longford County Council will work together to realise the Vision of the Plan and secure the future vitality of the County, improve its quality of life and make Longford a better place to live, visit and do business.



Mr. Paddy Mahon  
Chief Executive



Cllr. Peggy Nolan  
Cathaoirleach

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## **Terms of Reference and Plan Layout**

All planning authorities in Ireland are obliged under the law to make a development plan for their area every six years. These plans set out how the area's resources can be managed and developed to give the people the best possible services and quality of life.

### **How is the Plan made?**

The following steps are followed in preparing a new plan:

1. A review the current Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021. Each Development Plan has a six-year life, of which the review process starts after the plan has been in place for four years. Therefore, the review of the 2015 – 2021 Development Plan began in 2019.
2. As part of the review process, a number of assessments are carried out e.g. environmental assessments, flood risk assessments etc.
3. A consultation process was carried out and there are a number of public consultation stages in the review process:
  - a. Statutory bodies in the form of prescribed bodies and non-statutory bodies in the form of relevant stakeholders (service providers, local community groups, voluntary groups) are notified about the review process.
  - b. The general public are informed about the review through newspaper advertising, website and social media notifications, and public meetings.
4. The views and comments of the relevant bodies, general public and interested groups are fed back to the elected members, who then have 10 weeks to contribute their ideas and recommendations.
5. The plan is drafted and put on public display for 10 weeks, allowing the public and interested groups to provide feedback.
6. After this second consultation process, amendments are made and reviewed by the elected members.
7. The final plan is drafted and put into effect (the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 was finalised on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and came into effect on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021).

### **Can the plan change over time?**

Yes, the plan must be in line with regional, national and European strategies and laws and could, therefore, change if the higher level policies change.

### **Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 Layout**

The Development Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Longford County and consists of a written statement and supporting maps and appendices, indicating the development objectives for the County in order to facilitate and achieve balanced and sustainable growth in the county over the plan period and beyond.

**Volume 1: Written Statement** takes account of national, regional and county level plans and other relevant guidance as required. It incorporates the national and regional strategic vision in its policy objectives in its content and Vision Statement. The Development Plan sets out policies and strategies to strengthen and develop the economic, social and cultural life of the county in a way that can be sustained to safeguard the quality of life for future generations. The County Profile Chapter sets out the key demographic and socio-economic trends. Subsequent chapters set out the issues facing the County and associated policies taking account of national and regional guidance to respond to same in relation to:

- Climate Change;
- Housing and Settlement Strategy;
- Infrastructure, Transport, Energy and Communications;
- Regeneration;
- Placemaking;
- Economic Development;
- Rural Enterprise;
- Tourism;
- Built and Cultural Heritage;
- Natural Heritage and Environment;
- Green Infrastructure;
- Landscape Character;
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Implementation;
- Development Management Standards.

**Volume 2: Appendices** consists of appendices in the form of largely mapping and visual content, with some associated written content (land use zoning, various designations). The maps which accompany this written document aim to show what the Plan facilitates. They are representative of and show in a visual and appealing way, the quality and offer that exists in Longford, the types of development that may be considered and areas of opportunity and prospect within the Town and County.

**Volume 3: Annexes** contains reference to specific reports and individual support studies (Housing Strategy, Retail Strategy, Shopfront Design Guidelines etc.) and other written support studies and material.

**Volume 4: Environmental and Flood Reports** consists of a SEA Environmental Report, Natura Impact Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

## **Maps**

The maps aim to show what the Plan facilitates. They are representative of and show in a visual way, the quality and offer that exists in Longford, the types of development that may be considered and areas of opportunity and prospect within the County and urban areas.

## **MyPlan.ie**

MyPlan.ie is an initiative of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government on behalf of the planning authorities across the country. It provides an online public information system with an interactive map viewer which provides a one-

stop shop for information about plans and provides other information which is relevant to planning decision-making. Information includes data with regard to census, heritage sites, patterns of housing developments, and land use zonings. As such MyPlan incorporates many different sets of spatial information and is innovative in its ability to overlay and analyse the data in a web browser environment. Myplan.ie should always be used in conjunction with Longford County Council's statutory Development Plans and all other Local Area Plans, which are available on the council website [www.longfordcoco.ie](http://www.longfordcoco.ie).

# Chapter 1: Introduction and Strategic Context

## 1.1 Statutory Context

Under the Planning and Development Acts 2000, (as amended), 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. These plans set out how the area's resources can be managed and developed to give the people the best possible services and quality of life. This Development Plan was prepared under the Planning and Development Acts, 2000, (as amended) and replaces the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021.

## 1.2 Vision and Aims

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

The Vision of the Plan is

*'to set out a framework for the sustainable physical development of the County, ensuring the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment, while providing in an equitable manner for all our people within the County'.*

As such the Longford County Development Plan provides for an overall strategy for the social, economic, cultural and physical development of the County. In order to achieve this, the County Development Plan has the following aims to: -

1. Implement relevant national and regional development policy provisions at a County level;
2. Strengthen and develop the economic, social and cultural life of the county in a way that can be sustained to safeguard the quality of life for future generations;
3. Provide a development framework which defines acceptable forms of development and appropriate locations.

## 1.3 Compliance with Requirements of Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) and Statement of Compliance

In terms of the Development Plan process the Office of the Planning Regulator will carry out an independent assessment of the Development Plan to ensure the following are addressed:

- Matters generally to be contained in a development plan (section 10) and in particular, s.10(2)(n) in relation to climate change;
- Consistency with the development plan and the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly;
- Ministerial guidelines and policy directives issued under section 28 (Annex 1), and;

- Such other legislative and policy matters as the Minister may communicate to the Office in writing.

This Development Plan sets out to meet the aforementioned criteria. The Development Plan policy context is primarily guided and informed by NPF and the RSES in addition to the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the relevant Ministerial guidelines. In performing its functions, Longford County Council have also taken into account the objective of contributing to proper planning and sustainable development and the optimal functioning of planning under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

### **Statement of Compliance with Ministerial Guidelines**

In accordance with section 28 (1B) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as revised), the Planning Authority has made and will continue to make every reasonable effort to implement the policies and objectives of the Minister in the relevant guidelines.

Where this is not possible, because of the nature and characteristics of the area or part of the area of the development plan, to implement certain policies and objectives of the Minister contained in the guidelines, this has been highlighted in the relevant section and the justification and reasoning for same indicated.

### **1.4 Review Process**

Under the Planning and Development Acts 2000, (as amended), 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 2015-2021 County Development Plan began in September 2019 when extensive notification of the review process was given, and notice was published and forwarded to the relevant bodies.

### **1.5 Consultation**

Prior to the preparation of this Development Plan, notification of the review process was issued to all statutory prescribed bodies, and also to local community and voluntary groups, associations, societies, and relevant service providers. The general public were consulted through a campaign of newspaper advertisements and public meetings. Three public consultation meetings were held in Longford Town, Granard and Ballymahon. Submissions were invited on the development of the County from all interested persons, bodies and organisations.

Following this preliminary consultation phase, the Chief Executive's Report on all submissions received during the preliminary consultation phase was submitted to the elected members of the County Council in January 2020. 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.

Following the consideration of this Chief Executive's Report the elected members had 10 weeks (which was subsequently extended as a result of the Ministerial Order relating to the COVID-19 pandemic) in order to issue directions regarding the preparation of the Draft Plan. In issuing directions, elected members were restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. No Strategic Directions were received within the consultation stage, following which the Draft Plan was prepared.

### **1.6 Draft Development Plan Public Display and Adoption of Final Plan**

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 parties. Following this phase, a Chief Executive's Report on all submissions received during the public consultation phase was prepared for the Elected Members. The Elected Members then considered the report of the Chief Executive and subsequently material amendments of the Draft Plan were placed on display for further public consultation. A final Chief Executive's Report, with respect to submissions received regarding the proposed material amendments, was prepared and circulated to the members for their consideration. The Elected Members considered the report of the Chief Executive and the Plan was subsequently be made.

### **1.7 Development Plan Supporting Documents**

The preparation of the County Longford Development Plan is supported by a number of detailed support studies, which were developed in tandem with the preparation of the Development Plan. These relate to the following: -

#### **1.7.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt it. SEA is being undertaken for the Plan in order to comply with the 2001 SEA Directive, as transposed into Irish Regulations that have been in force since 2004. The SEA and County Development Plan process run in tandem with each other, sharing public consultation phases.

A Scoping Report was prepared at the initial stages of the process to identify the main environmental issues and the level of detail to be included in the full SEA Environmental Report which is available alongside the County Development Plan. The Environmental Report details the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan. An SEA Statement prepared following adoption of the Plan details how environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan.

#### **1.7.2 Appropriate Assessment**

The European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as "The Habitats Directive", provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU wide network of sites known as Natura

2000 or European Sites; namely Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect European Sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA):

*‘Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives....’*

Accordingly, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been undertaken alongside the Development Plan Review which assesses the implications of the Plan alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of European Sites in view of their conservation objectives. The AA conclusion of the AA is that the Development Plan will not affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 network of European Sites. The findings of the AA have informed both the Plan and the SEA and all recommendations made by the AA were integrated into the Development Plan.

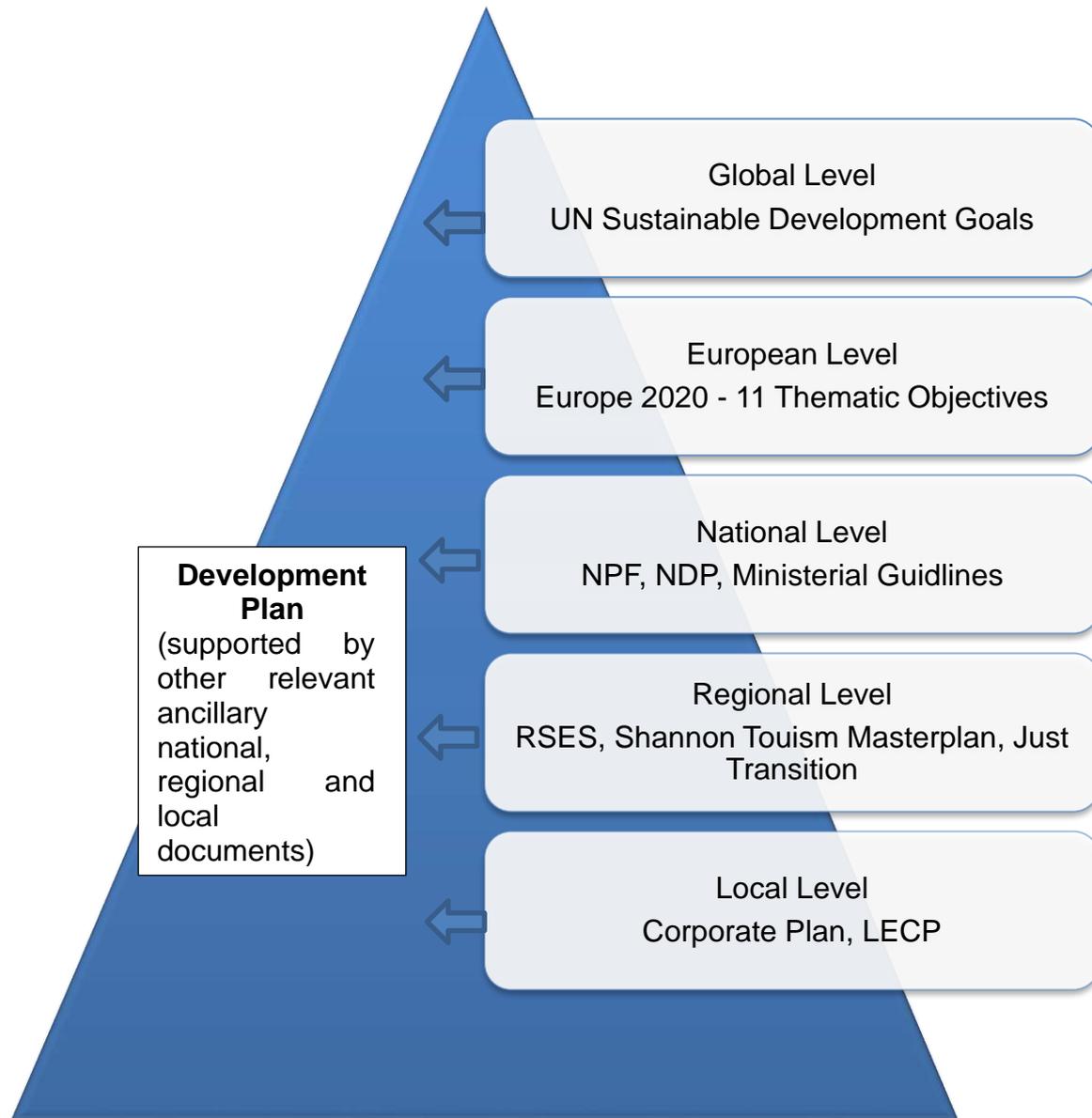
### **1.7.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) of the Plan has been undertaken in order to integrate flood considerations into the Plan, ensuring that it is consistent with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities. The findings of the SFRA have informed both the Plan and the SEA. Various recommendations were made by the SFRA, which have accordingly been integrated into the Development Plan.

## 1.8 Planning Context

This plan should be read in the hierarchical context of legislation and plans that exist at International, National and Regional level (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1: Strategic Policy Inputs into the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027**



The UN Sustainable Development Goals, the EU thematic objectives and national and regional policy contain significant policy alignment in order to embed a coherent policy hierarchy and to ensure that future investment is targeted towards identified policy recommendations and goals. In developing the Vision and key policy parameters for the County Development Plan a number of policy documents were considered from Global to Local level. These include *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF)* and the National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP), along with

Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025, namely *Enterprise 2025: Innovative, Agile, Connected*. At a regional level, key policy parameters for the County Development Plan are set by the *Eastern and Midland RSES*, the *Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan (MREP) to 2020*, the *Shannon Tourism Masterplan* and the *Just Transition report*, along with a number of other reports (see Annex 2). The preparation of the County Development Plan has thus been directly informed by *Project Ireland 2040* and associated National Policy Objectives (NPO's), along with the RSES and associated Regional Policy Objectives (RPO's).

In developing the Vision and key policy parameters for the County Development Plan the key policy documents which were considered from global to local level (see Annex 2) are outlined accordingly.

## 1.9 Global Level

### 1.9.1 UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages countries to develop national responses to the 17 no. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see Figure 1.2) and incorporate them into planning and policy.

Figure 1.2: UN Sustainable Development Goals



Subsequently Ireland prepared a *Sustainable Development Goal National Implementation Plan 2018-2020* which provides a framework for how Ireland will achieve the 17 no. SDGs domestically by 2030 and support their global implementation. It reflects Ireland's 'whole-of-government' approach to the SDGs, which will see the mainstreaming of the SDGs across national policies. Many of the measures through which Ireland will achieve the SDGs will take place within the context of *Project Ireland 2040* (made up of the *National Planning Framework to*

2040 and the *National Development Plan 2018-2027*), which is the Government's overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all people. These in turn filter down into regional and accordingly Development Plan policy.

## 1.10 European Level

### 1.10.1 Europe 2020

European spatial planning is closely interlinked with a number of trans-national, regional, economic and environmental policies and programmes. The European Union's cohesion policy is currently divided into 11 no. Thematic Objectives (TO) (see Figure 1.3), aimed at reducing disparities in the development of its territories and to contribute to the priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth envisaged by the Strategy '*Europe 2020*'.

**Figure 1.3: 11 EU Thematic Objectives**



*Europe 2020* Strategy is the European Union's (EU) agenda for growth and jobs, emphasising smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as a way to overcome the structural weaknesses in Europe's economy, improve its competitiveness and productivity and underpin a sustainable social market economy. The next EU programming period 2021-2027 is under development, and there is an emerging convergence of territorial and cohesion policy in this process, which will give greater focus on the delivery of national and regional spatial policy. The European Commission has proposed a new framework for the future Regional Development and Cohesion Policy that identifies 5 no. main objectives:

1. A smarter Europe (innovative and smart economic transformation);
2. A greener, low-carbon Europe (including energy transition, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk management);
3. A more connected Europe (mobility and ICT connectivity);
4. A more social Europe (European Pillar of Social Rights);
5. A Europe closer to citizens (sustainable development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives).

These will be translated into County Development Plan policy as appropriate. By ensuring good policy alignment, the Development Plan can drive investment that is targeted towards identified priorities at European, national, regional and local scale, assisting in identifying partnership opportunities and leveraging funding from EU Regional Operational Programmes.

### **1.11 National Planning Context - *Project Ireland 2040***

*Project Ireland 2040* aims to guide the future development of Ireland to 2040 and to influence the spatial patterns of a projected 1 million increase in population. It consists of 2 components; The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP), both of which have been developed in conjunction with each other in order to link spatial planning policy and infrastructure capital investment to support the potential in all regions.

#### **1.11.1 National Planning Framework (NPF)**

The NPF is closely linked to the UN Sustainable Goals. One of the key drivers for the NPF is the promotion of effective regional development that manages more balanced regional growth. While it is recognised that Dublin is at the forefront of international competition for investment, the NPF encourages significant regional concentration towards the second-tier cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford and some regionally important larger settlements, such as Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda. The NPF sets out a number of key national objectives which include enhanced regional accessibility, strengthened rural economies and communities, and enhanced amenities and heritage.

The NPF places specific emphasis on the regeneration and rejuvenation of towns through the promotion of compact growth and the consolidation of future development within and close to the existing footprint of built-up areas. This is to be achieved through infill and brownfield development rather than an overreliance on greenfield, edge-of-town development. Investment in towns and villages is to be targeted through regeneration, public realm improvements and the appropriate adaptation and re-use of built heritage. There is also a focus on placemaking and upon securing improvements to quality of life. The NPF also places a great emphasis on addressing the issues associated with Climate Change.

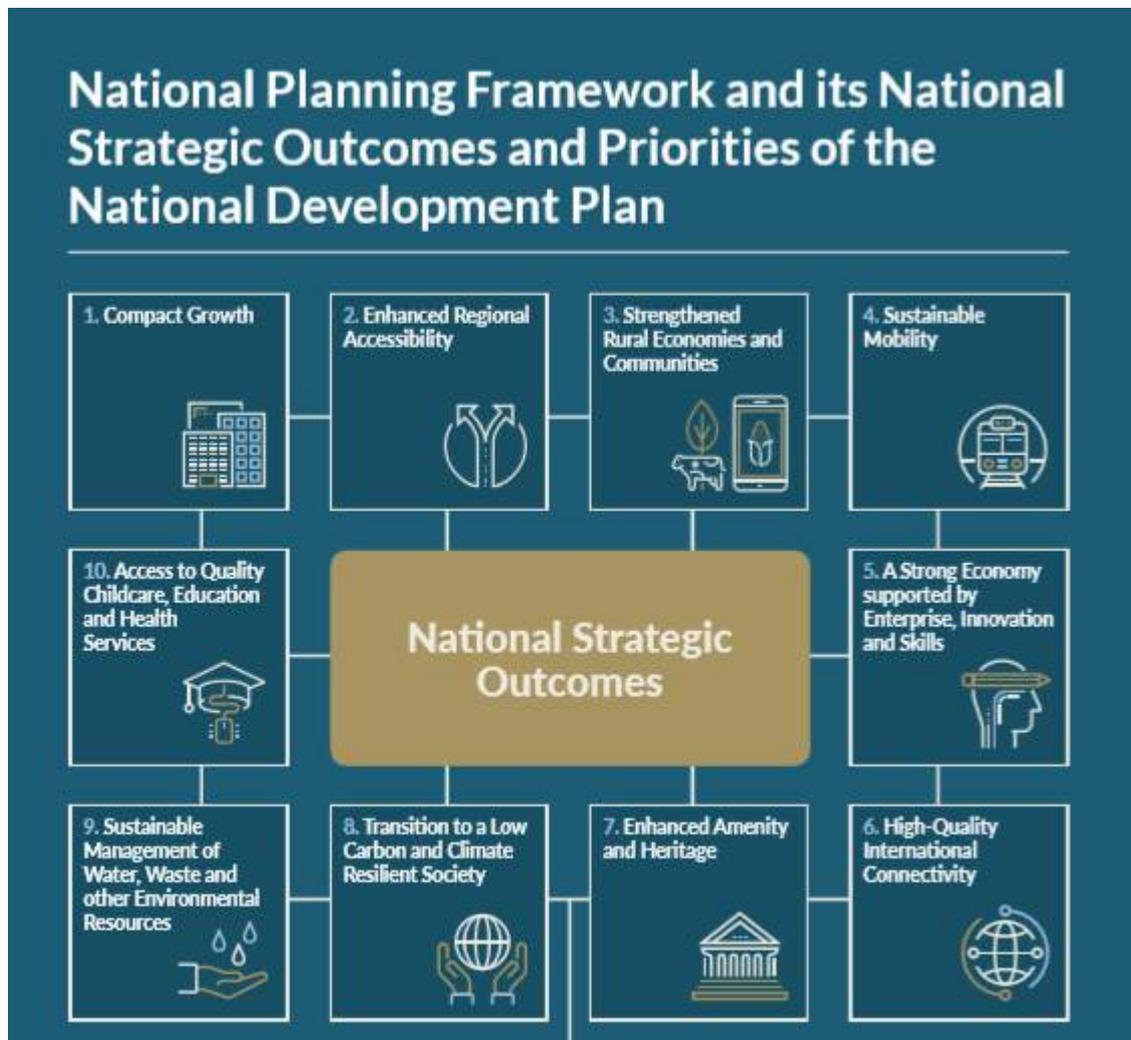
The key elements of the growth strategy identified in the NPF at the national level, which set the parameters for the development of the County Development Plan growth strategy include:

- A focus on contained growth and reduced sprawl by targeting infill and brownfield lands in existing built-up areas;
- Sequential provision of infrastructure with some critical infrastructure in place to promote investment;
- A comprehensive approach to rural fabric supporting sustainable growth and reversing decline.

### National Strategic Outcomes

The NPF also contains 10 no. National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's) which underpin the overarching vision for the country and serve as shared goals, as depicted in Figure 1.4.

**Figure 1.4: NPF National Strategic Outcomes (Source: NPF, P13)**



These are further developed into 75 no. National Priority Objectives (NPO's), of which cognisance to those of relevance has been given in the preparation of this Development Plan.

### 1.11.2 National Development Plan (NDP) 2018- 2027

The publication of the NPF is underpinned by capital investment in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018- 2027. The NDP sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the successful implementation of the new NPF (Figure 1.5). This will guide national, regional and local planning and investment decisions in Ireland over the next two decades, to cater for an expected population increase of over 1 million people.

**Figure 1.5: Strategic Investment Priorities of the NDP (NPF, p13)**

Specifically, in terms of County Longford the following are identified in the NDP: -

1. The N4 from Mullingar to Longford, as a section of the national road network which will be progressed through pre-appraisal and early planning during 2018, to prioritise projects which are proceeding to construction in the National Development Plan.
2. In terms of rural development opportunities and the application of the Rural Regeneration Development Fund:
  - The visitor resort project near Ballymahon, Longford, intended to create new tourism and visitor experiences in conjunction with bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and Waterways Ireland.
  - Plans advancing in the Midlands to convert former Bord na Móna peat railways and trackways into cross-country walking, cycling and peatway routes, coupled with strengthening nearby towns and villages as hubs for tourism activity and local businesses.

These projects of relevance to County Longford which are identified in the NDP will be translated into County Development Plan policy.

## 1.12 Regional Planning Context

Global, EU and particularly national policy have been distilled to a regional level through the preparation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

### 1.12.1 Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which relates to County Longford, sets out at a regional level to support the implementation of *Project Ireland 2040* and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Eastern and Midland Region. This in turn further guides policy making decisions at a local level through the County Development Plan.

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) covers nine counties containing twelve Local Authorities namely – Longford, Westmeath, Offaly, Laois, Louth, Meath, Kildare, Wicklow, Fingal, South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils and Dublin City Council. In terms of particular characteristics, the Region contains some of the fastest growing communities in the country and the long-term trend is for residential development moving further outwards from Dublin, with significant growth in many of the small towns and villages in the peri-urban area surrounding the city, leading to an increase in car-based long-distance commuting. At the same time an overall lack of adequate housing supply to meet a growing population has resulted in affordability issues and increasing homelessness, with a resulting negative impact on quality of life and regional competitiveness. One of the key challenges identified as facing the Region is the need for better alignment between population growth, location of residential development and employment to create healthy and attractive places, and this is reflected in the Vision Statement:

*‘To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all’.*

At its core, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) sets out a settlement and economic growth strategy that seeks to ensure that the needs of the Region’s citizens such as access to employment opportunities and services, ease of travel and overall well-being are met. The RSES seeks to promote smart specialisation and clustering underpinned by an orderly settlement strategy and investment in ‘placemaking’. The RSES also sets out Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) to provide a competitive and resilient economic base and develop our skills, innovation and technology capacity, recognising the key roles played by the enterprise agencies (IDA, EI, LEOs, SFI), and to support the implementation of Regional Action Plans for Jobs (RAPJs) and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs).

The EMRA RSES includes a:

- *Spatial Strategy* – to manage future growth and ensure the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, study, visit and invest in.
- *Economic Strategy* – that builds on our strengths to sustain a strong economy and support the creation of quality jobs that ensure a good living standard for all.
- *Metropolitan Plan* – to ensure a supply of strategic development areas for the sustainable growth and continued success and competitiveness of the Dublin metropolitan area.
- *Investment Framework* – to prioritise the delivery of key enabling infrastructure and services by government and state agencies.
- *Climate Action Strategy* – to accelerate climate action, ensure a clean and healthy environment and to promote sustainable transport and strategic green infrastructure.
- *Economic Strategy* – identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures along with funding and investment priorities for the region.

The Eastern and Midland RSES identifies 3 no. key principles for growth:

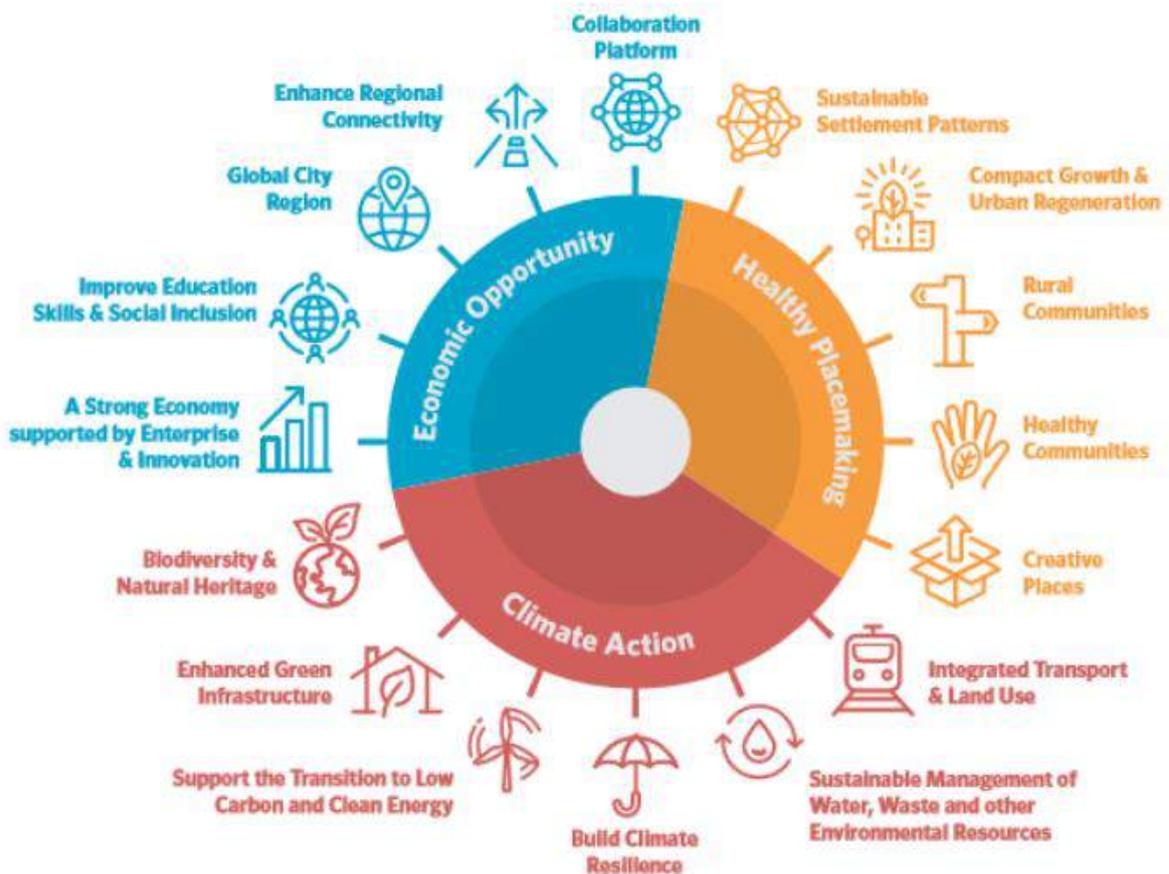
1. *Healthy Placemaking* - To promote people’s quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in.
2. *Economic Opportunity* - To create the right conditions and opportunities for the region to realise sustained economic growth and employment that ensures good living standards for all.
3. *Climate Action* - The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon economy, recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

These principles are in turn underpinned by Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs).

*Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs)*

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) seeks to determine at a regional scale how best to achieve the shared higher-level goals. It sets out 16 no. Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), in the areas of economic opportunity, healthy placemaking and climate action (Figure 1.6), which are aligned with international, EU and national policy, and which in turn set the framework for the County Development Plan. Thus, the RSES can assist local authorities in aligning with EU priorities in order to better leverage funding and partnership opportunities.

**Figure 1.6: Regional Strategic Outcomes (Source EMRA RSES, p24).**



The 16 no. Regional Strategic Outcomes relate to the following: -

<p><b>1. Sustainable Settlement Patterns</b> Better manage the sustainable and compact growth of Dublin as a city of international scale and develop Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda and a number of key complementary growth settlements of sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth.</p>
<p><b>2. Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration</b> Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region's citizens.</p>
<p><b>3. Rural Communities</b> Support sustainable rural development and strengthen rural networks, economies and communities. Manage urban generated growth in areas under strong urban influence and encourage sustainable growth in areas that have experienced decline or stagnation.</p>
<p><b>4. Healthy Communities</b> Protect and enhance the quality of our built and natural environment to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling, ensure clean air and water for all and quality healthcare and services that support human health.</p>
<p><b>5. Creative Places</b> Enhance, integrate and protect our arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration.</p>
<p><b>6. Integrated Transport and Land Use</b> Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning.</p>
<p><b>7. Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources</b> Conserve and enhance our water resources to ensure clean water supply, adequate waste water treatment and greater resource efficiency to realise the benefits of the circular economy.</p>
<p><b>8. Build Climate Resilience</b> Ensure the long-term management of flood risk and build resilience to increased risks of extreme weather events, changes in sea level and patterns of coastal erosion to protect property, critical infrastructure and food security in the Region.</p>
<p><b>9. Support the Transition to Low Carbon and Clean Energy</b> Pursue climate mitigation in line with global and national targets and harness the potential for a more distributed renewables-focussed energy system to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050.</p>
<p><b>10. Enhanced Green Infrastructure</b> Identify, protect and enhance Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services in the Region and promote the sustainable management of strategic natural assets such as our coastlines, farmlands, peatlands, uplands woodlands and wetlands.</p>
<p><b>11. Biodiversity and Natural Heritage</b> Promote co-ordinated spatial planning to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of our protected habitats and species including landscape and heritage protection.</p>

**12. A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise and Innovation**

To build a resilient economic base and promote innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems that support smart specialisation, cluster development and sustained economic growth.

**13. Improve Education Skills and Social Inclusion**

To improve education and develop the right skills to attract employers and retain talent and promote social inclusion to ensure opportunities for quality jobs across the Region.

**14. Global City Region**

Promote Dublin as a global city region and protect and enhance international connectivity, including ports and airports and promote the Region as a gateway to Ireland.

**15. Enhanced Strategic Connectivity**

Protect and enhance international connectivity and regional accessibility to support economic development, build economic resilience and support strengthened rural communities and economies including the blue-green economy and tourism.

**16. Collaboration Platform**

Provide a regional framework for collaboration and partnerships and to support local and regional bodies in leveraging funding and partnership opportunities.

The County Development Plan has been aligned to the relevant Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) and associated relevant Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs).

**1.13 Other Relevant National and Regional Guidelines, Plans and Strategies**

A large number of other national and regional plans and strategies have also been taken into consideration in the preparation of the Development Plan (see Annex 2). Of those the following are of particular significance: -

**1.13.1 National Ministerial Guidelines**

In making Development Plans, Planning Authorities are required to have regard to any guidelines issued by the Minister. Accordingly, Guidelines issued to Planning Authorities regarding their functions under the Planning Acts have been considered in the making of this Plan in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) (See Annex 1).

**1.13.2 Irish Water National Plans**

Under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the transfer occurred from the Local Authority to Irish Water of a range of statutory water and waste water functions. Irish Water is thus responsible for the provision of public water supply, wastewater collection and treatment services. It is an objective of Irish Water to provide both drinking water and wastewater capacity to facilitate growth in accordance with core strategies at county level, and with national and regional planning policies and objectives (subject to the constraints of the Irish Water Capital Investment Programme). Longford County Council retains its role in facilitating the provision of adequate water services, in conjunction with Irish Water, at a local level, through Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

As such strategic planning for investment in water services will be provided for by a Water Services Strategic Plan prepared by Irish Water that will be translated into Capital Investment Plans. These Plans will be shaped by wider policy requirements including spatial planning and the contents of the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and County Development Plans. The following Irish Water Plans are of particular note: -

#### **1.13.2.1 Water Services Strategic Plan**

In 2015 Irish Water published its Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP), which sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over a 25-year period and sets a context for investment and implementation plans. This plan is reviewed every five years. Irish Water completed the 5-year review of the WSSP in October 2020, the review stated that the current WSSP is still valid and appropriate to provide strategic direction for the planning of water services by Irish Water for the next 5 years. Irish Water and Longford County Council will continue to work together to identify the water services required to support planned development in line with national and regional planning policies for inclusion in the Irish Water Capital Investment Plans.

#### **1.13.2.2 Irish Water Strategic Funding Plan 2019-2024**

The Irish Water Strategic Funding Plan sets out Irish Water's multi-annual strategic funding requirement of €11bn to 2024, comprised of a €6.1bn investment in infrastructure and assets and €4.9bn in operating costs. This funding requirement will be met through a combination of non-domestic revenue, excess usage charges, government subvention, non-domestic borrowings and capital contributions. The Plan sets out the capital and operational costs expected to be incurred by Irish Water over a multi-annual period and how these costs fall to be recovered and will ensure a shared understanding between Government and Irish Water of the broad financial parameters and investment priorities.

#### **1.13.2.3 Irish Water Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024**

The Capital Investment Programme (CIP) of Irish Water outlines the indicative priorities and investments in water services infrastructure over the plan period. This CIP aims to deliver improvements in drinking water quality, leakage, wastewater compliance, business efficiencies and customer service. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) review and approve the CIP, the next programme will cover the period from 2020 – 2024.

Irish Water Investment Plan (Revenue Control Period 3) 2020 to 2024 Irish Water's Investment Plan is the budgetary plan for the five-year period from 2020 to 2024 inclusive, in line with our strategic objectives as detailed in the Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP). It sets out where we are continuing to invest and prioritise where we can deliver the most urgently needed improvements to drinking water quality, leakage, water availability, wastewater compliance, efficiencies and customer service. In providing these services we play a central role in enabling economic growth, protecting both the environment and the health and safety of our customers and the public.

The list of projects and programmes included in our Investment Plan is continuously being refined and is subject to budget, technical and environmental constraints, as well as statutory approvals. Further information on the current plan submitted can be found on the CRU Website [www.cru.ie](http://www.cru.ie)

#### **1.13.2.4 National Water Resources Plan (due for completion in 2021)**

Irish Water is preparing for the future by developing the National Water Resources Plan (NWRP). The strategic plan for water services will outline how we move towards a sustainable, secure and reliable public drinking water supply over the next 25 years, whilst safeguarding our environment. The NWRP will outline how Irish Water intends to maintain the balance between our supply from water sources around the country and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long-term. This will allow preparation for the future and ensure the provision of sufficient safe, clean drinking water to facilitate the social and economic growth of our country.

The National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) is carrying out a review of all Water Resource Zones in the country, to determine projects to resolve deficits on a nationwide scale. The NWRP will be published in two distinct stages, the combination of which will form our overall National Water Resource Plan.

Phase 1 is the National Water Resources Plan — Framework Plan which will be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. Phase 1 includes: the methodologies for assessing need (including how the hazards identified in the DWSPs are incorporated into the strategic plan); the methodologies for developing strategic plans for each supply as part of the Regional Water Resources Plans and, a summary assessment of need across all water supplies. The Framework Plan will highlight the vulnerability of our water supplies particularly during severe weather conditions (storms and droughts), including our largest supply, the Greater Dublin Area.

Phase 2 is made up of 4 Regional Water Resources Plans each of which will be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. The Regional Water Resources Plans will develop the strategic plan for each water supply, including short, medium and long-term options to address risk across our supplies.

The Regional Water Resources Plan for the Eastern and Midlands Region will include the strategic Plan for the Louth, including an assessment of all potential options to resolve needs in the area, and how these have been assessed to develop a Preferred Approach, including short, medium and long term investment requirements and operational improvements. Phase 2 follows after the adoption of the NWRP Framework Plan. Phase 1 and 2 combined will form the overall National Water Resource Plan

The models and intelligence relating to our existing water sources and asset base, that have been developed as part of our water resources planning process, have also been used to inform the operation of our supplies particularly during critical drought

periods. Public Consultation information can be found on the IW website at <https://www.water.ie/projectsplans/our-plans/nwrp/>

### **1.13.3 Action Plan for Rural Development: Realising our Rural Potential (Gol, 2018)**

The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development aims to unlock the enormous potential of Ireland's rural communities, to improve the lives of those living and working in rural areas. The Action Plan sets out a framework of supports at national and local level that aims to ensure that people who live in rural areas have increased opportunities for employment locally, and access to public services and social networks that support a high quality of life. The key objectives are to:

1. Support sustainable and vibrant rural communities,
2. Support enterprise and employment;
3. Maximise rural tourism and recreation potential;
4. Foster culture and creativity in rural communities; and
5. Improve rural infrastructure and connectivity.

These 5 no. key pillars are underpinned by 270 supportive actions, the delivery of which is supported by funding streams. These objectives and actions have been incorporated and translated into the Development Plan where appropriate.

### **1.13.4 Enterprise 2025 Renewed**

This aims to embed resilience in our enterprises, contributing to strong economic performance over the longer term, through a number of key policy priorities. These include:

- An increased emphasis on developing our Irish owned enterprises – enhancing productivity and delivering quality jobs – and helping companies to navigate Brexit;
- Exploiting the potential offered by collaboration and clustering within our distinctive foreign and Irish owned enterprise mix;
- Placing a spotlight on innovation (including disruptive technologies) and talent development, so that more enterprises are developing new products, services and solutions, and are more competitive internationally;
- Realising the full potential of our regions – developing places that are attractive for business investment and for people to live and work; and
- Raising Ireland's visibility internationally, protecting Ireland's reputation, and providing opportunities for our enterprises supported by the *Global Footprint 2025 Initiative*.

These strategic objectives are underpinned by supportive actions and have been incorporated and translated into the Development Plan where appropriate.

### **1.13.5 Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan (MREP) to 2020**

The MREP aims to build on positive regional collaboration and to take account of the changed and improved economic circumstances nationally, the emergence of new challenges to enterprise development and competitiveness both domestically and internationally in origin, including Brexit, and the persistence of uneven economic

progress across the regions in Ireland. The MREP provides perspective and ideas from the ‘ground-up’ and is informed by an understanding of unique local strengths and assets and has the potential to enable more effective translation of national policy into regional and local impact. It focuses on leveraging the added value from regional and local actors working collaboratively, and in so doing, aims to complement and build on the existing activities being undertaken by the Enterprise Agencies, the LEO and the wider range of state bodies directly involved in supporting enterprise development in the region.

The MREP contains 7 no. Strategic Objectives as follows:

1. Ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy;
2. Leverage opportunities in Big Data & Data Analytics from Ilofar;
3. Position and support the Midlands as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence;
4. Enhance the collective offering of the Midlands as a place to live, work, and invest in;
5. Strengthen the attractiveness of the Midlands as a destination to visit;
6. Harness the potential of the food and beverage industry in the Midlands;
7. Ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the Region’s economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

These strategic objectives are underpinned by supportive actions and have been incorporated and translated into the Development Plan where appropriate.

#### **1.13.6 The Just Transition Progress Report (Mulvey Report, 2020)**

This report calls for €25m to be spent over the next year to help the midlands support employment. In the first review to help midlands communities’ transition from fossil to carbon neutral fuels, it recommends the extra money to come from the carbon tax. This report makes a series of interim and innovative recommendations, providing opportunities and processes for securing employment in the Midlands, including for ESB and Bord na Móna workers, in relation to:

- the Just Transition Fund;
- infrastructure;
- land and facilities;
- tourism,
- heritage and leisure;
- planning,
- licensing and regulation;
- a centre for climate change and just transition;
- incentivising green and allied enterprises to locate in the Midlands;
- renewable energy potential;
- carbon tax;
- electric vehicle charging; and
- loss of rates income.

The first part of such a plan is to receive and evaluate employment projects in the Midlands that have green enterprise and other employment/tourism potential and to

finalise the critical pathways for the retention of employment in Bord na Mona and ESB, give certainty around the future structure of the workforce and to establish further employment opportunities in the region.

### **1.13.7 Government Response and launch of Just Transition Fund:**

In May 2020 the Minister launched a first call for proposals for funding from the €11m Just Transition Fund. The fund will have 5 no. key priorities as follows: -

#### 1. Governance arrangements:

The report notes the importance of effective governance in the Midlands to deliver a just transition. The required structures, fully informed by the report's recommendations, will have to be put in place, which will be done in the context of the detailed implementation plan. The Department will continue to work with the relevant local authorities in the Midlands, other Government Departments and State agencies and the Midlands Regional Transition Team to ensure this happens.

#### 2. Use of State Agency Lands in the Midlands for Green Energy Projects:

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment will write to State agencies and enterprises to identify land and facilities which could be of use for such projects.

#### 3. Study on Energy Hub in the Midlands:

The Department and ESB will commission a study to examine the potential for using the existing infrastructure in the West Offaly and Lough Ree power plants as an Energy Hub in the Midlands.

#### 4. Electric Vehicle Charging:

The Minister has asked for an evaluation study on the potential to further expand the EV charging infrastructure nationally, including the enhancement of the charging network in the Midlands region, to commence immediately.

#### 5. Digital Hubs for Remote Working:

Under the National Broadband Plan, 91 no. Broadband Connection Points will be provided in the Midlands over the coming months. These will provide the necessary infrastructure including high-speed broadband to support remote working in the Midlands. It is planned to grow the existing Midlands Network of Co-working facilities, through development of additional facilities/hubs through the region.

The Minister has asked that urgent action be taken on foot of the report's publication. A detailed implementation plan will be completed as soon as possible, with certain, high priority measures implemented before then. The recommendations of the *Just Transition Report* and the Governments chosen actions have been incorporated and translated into the Development Plan where appropriate.

### **1.13.8 The Shannon Mighty River of Ireland: A Tourism Masterplan (2020-2030)**

The overall aim of the Shannon Tourism Masterplan to grow tourism in *Ireland's Hidden Heartlands* aligns with national rural development policy to drive rural

development through tourism. The Development Plan will set out to translate and incorporate this Plan where appropriate.

#### **1.14 Local Level Policy**

A large number of county level plans and strategies have been taken into consideration in the preparation of the Development Plan (see Annex 1). Of those the following are of particular significance: -

##### **1.14.1 Longford County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024**

The Corporate Plan provides the strategic document identifying how the Council is structured and managed to deliver key services throughout the County. The Plan includes a Corporate Vision

*‘to make Longford a prosperous County that seeks to support: a vibrant economy; rural quality of life; active and safe communities, diversity, culture and heritage; a healthy and sustainable natural environment; and; a sense of community pride and place’.*

The Corporate Plan also contains a number of objectives and supporting strategies which have been incorporated into the Development Plan where appropriate. Some of the objectives of relevance are as follows:

##### Longford – A thriving County

- Continue to grow and transform our county’s economy;
- Lead and support the regeneration of our county towns and villages;
- Develop new and existing business districts and encourage the growth of a skilled workforce;
- Improve connectivity and accessibility, both infrastructural and digital, to attract and support business community and our people;
- Strive to develop a Public Service Centre of Excellence.

##### Longford – A Greener County

- Lead and provide a planned and coherent response to the effects of climate change;
- Support the transition to a low carbon economy and ensure that policies and practices lead towards low carbon pathways and put in place processes for carbon proofing major decisions, programmes and projects, moving over time to a near zero carbon investment strategy;
- Protect our natural and built environment.

##### Longford – A Safer County

- Safeguard, protect and enhance the environment in the interests of quality of life, economic development and regulatory compliance;
- Address safety and security issues and concerns for our communities;
- Partner with other principal response agencies to plan and respond to emergencies.

*Longford – A County for Everyone*

- Develop connected, sustainable and prosperous communities with access to housing, education, work, healthcare and leisure;
- Enhance, celebrate and support our rich culture, heritage, diversity, sport and creativity;
- Advocate social inclusion through respect and promotion of equality and human rights and be guided in all our work by public sector duty principles;
- Support and strengthen local democracy.

These Corporate Plan objectives are to be delivered by a number of identified supporting strategies, which have been incorporated into the Development Plan where appropriate.

**1.14.2 Longford Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022**

The Development Plan and the LECP are strategically aligned, with the LECP providing a framework for the economic development and local community development of the County and the County Development Plan identifying and providing an overarching strategy and statutory policy support for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County at a spatial level. The Vision of the LECP is to create *'a regenerated economically sustainable County which values equality of opportunity, excellent quality of life, collaborative community and rural development, sense of place and where the wellbeing of all residents and future generations is central to everything we do'*. This is supported by 6 high level goals and associated actions. The high-level goals relate to the following:

1. HLG 1: *Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support pathways to educational attainment*
2. HLG 2: *Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community;*
3. HLG 3: *Improve prosperity, health/wellbeing and quality of life of the community;*
4. HLG 4: *Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit work and transact business;*
5. HLG 5: *Improve the level and quality of community identity, solidarity, civic pride and participation;*
6. HLG 6: *Utilise the natural, cultural and built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.*

The Development Plan aims to recognise relevant LECP goals and associated actions.

**1.14.3 Longford Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019**

It is recognised that policy responses are required in terms of both mitigating the causes of climate change and in adapting to the now inevitable consequences and that action at local level is vitally important to help reduce the economic, environmental and social impacts of climate change across communities. This strategy is an attempt to assemble the existing body of knowledge on climate change effects at County Longford level and address hazards, risks, impacts and opportunities that may be associated with these through specific actions that will be implemented primarily

through established mechanisms within Longford County Council. The strategy also aims to increase awareness of climate change at a local level and illustrate its relevance to the functions and operations of the organisation.

The Development Plan aims to recognise relevant goals and associated actions of the Longford Climate Adaptation Strategy. Accordingly, the issue of Climate Change is dealt with in detail in Chapter 3 of this Plan, which outlines the Development Plan Climate Change Strategy. In addition, each policy chapter of the Development Plan contains specific actions, which act as a climate check to proof the area of activity in terms of climate implications.

### **1.15 Longford County Development Plan 2021-2017 Layout**

Taking account of the aforementioned national, regional and county level plans and other relevant guidance as required, this Development Plan sets out policies and strategies to strengthen and develop the economic, social and cultural life of the county in a way that can be sustained to safeguard the quality of life for future generations.

The preceding chapter will set out the County Profile in terms of key demographic and socio-economic trends. Subsequent chapters in this plan will set out the issues facing the County and associated policies taking account of national and regional guidance to respond to same in relation to:

- Climate Change;
- Housing and Settlement Strategy;
- Infrastructure, Transport, Energy and Communications;
- Regeneration;
- Placemaking;
- Economic Development;
- Rural Enterprise;
- Tourism;
- Built and Cultural Heritage;
- Natural Heritage and Environment;
- Green Infrastructure;
- Landscape Character.

Each chapter starts with reference to statutory context, followed by reference to national, regional and other relevant policy and guidance documents. Many of the chapters and sections contain overlapping content. Accordingly, every effort has been made to co-ordinate and cross-reference sections, where relevant, in order to provide a comprehensive and easy to read guide for developers and the public. Cognisance has been given to the development of policy in terms of linking to higher level regional and national policy where possible. At the end of each chapter, are a number of climate actions which indicate specific climate actions to be undertaken in relation to the chapter content. The climate actions have been indicated in box format and are colour coded for ease of reference.

In addition to this written statement (Volume 1), the Plan also contains separate volumes which contain important support information. Volume 2 consists of appendices in the form of largely mapping and visual content, with some associated written content (land use zoning, various designations). The maps which accompany

this written document aim to show what the Plan facilitates. They are representative of and show in a visual and appealing way, the quality and offer that exists in Longford, the types of development that may be considered and areas of opportunity and prospect within the Town and County.

Volume 3 is an Annex which contains reference to specific reports and individual support studies (Housing Strategy, Retail Strategy, Shopfront Design Guidelines etc.) and other written support studies and material.

Volume 4 consists of a SEA Environmental Report, Natura Impact Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

## Chapter 2: County Profile

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a socioeconomic profile of County Longford in order to provide an understanding of the socio-economic and demographic datasets, and provides assessment and commentary, mapping and data visualisation to assist with the review of the Longford County Development Plan. As such, this profile should be read with cognisance of the hierarchical context of the relevant legislation, policy, plans and the settlement hierarchy.

The 2016 Census is the primary source of data that has been illustrated within this profile, however other relevant data sources have been used and referenced as appropriate. The socio-economic profile for County Longford has been described at the county level for the purpose of supporting the development of the Longford County Development Plan, however further information for each of the 3 no. Municipal Districts is available in Annex: 3 for additional context.

### 2.2 Geographic and Administrative Context

County Longford itself is relatively small and bordered by County Westmeath, Cavan, Leitrim and Roscommon. The north of the county is generally hilly and dominated by drumlin landscapes with River Erne and Lough Gowna to the northeast. Lough Ree, Lough Forbes and the River Shannon are located towards the west with extensive areas of raised boglands towards the south and east. These boglands are in relatively pristine condition and they represent an important habitat for biodiversity which forms part of the ecological corridor of the Midlands. Aquatic habitats are also numerous and County Longford has a wealth of attractions including its wonderful lakes, rivers and canals, making it an ideal destination for fishing and water-based recreation.

Longford County is in the Midlands of Ireland within the administrative boundary of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, Longford is divided into 3 no. Municipal Districts under the jurisdiction of Longford County Council. These Municipal Districts were revised in 2018 and the information as presented herein and in Annex 3 reflects the latest boundary change (which saw the Electoral Districts of Breanrisk, Cloonee and Corboy transfer from the Granard Municipal District into the Longford Municipal District).

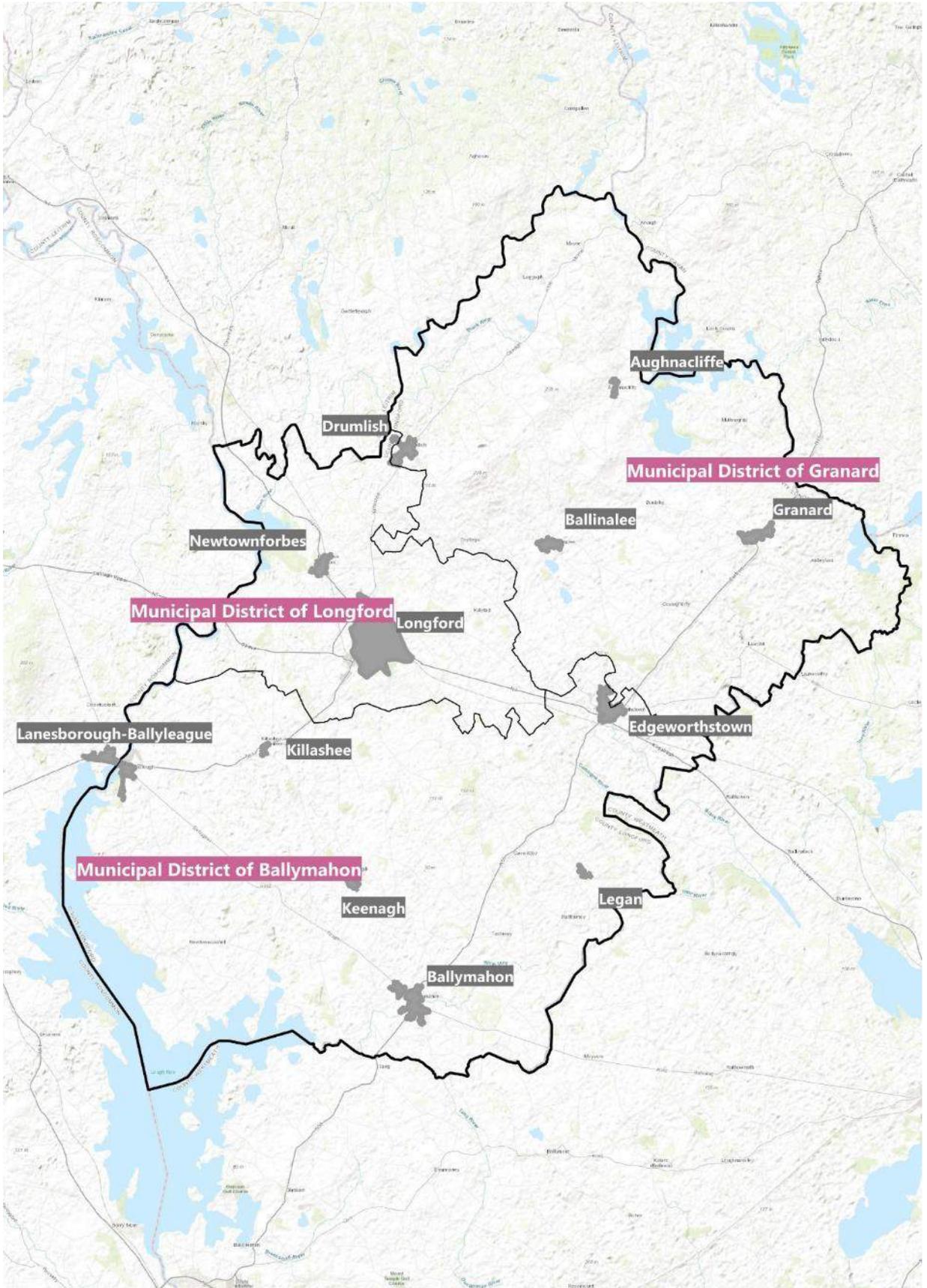


Figure 2.1: Overview of County Longford including the Municipal Districts

### 2.3 Historical Settlement Context

Historic settlements within County Longford evolved in a similar manner to the rest of the country, predominantly along key transport routes including roads, railway and waterways (mostly the River Shannon and associated tributaries in the case of County Longford). As such, the historical development of settlements has been characterised by the landscape and geographic context which has dictated the movement of people, agriculture, industry and associated settlements over time.

There is evidence of historical transport routes including the Slighe Assail which facilitated the establishment of Anglo-Norman settlements and ecclesiastical facilities (including Longford town, Granard, Abbeylara and Ardagh for instance). Meanwhile Lanesborough was established during the same era due to its strategic location on the River Shannon.

During the 1400's Longford and Granard developed as market settlements owing to their location and positioning near central crossroads and thus the town became well established and thus the county was named after it. During the 1600s, the impact of the Cromwellian plantations was evident and some further towns were developed including Ballinalee whilst the estate villages such as Newtownforbes as well as landlord villages were established therefore in the eighteenth century including Ballymahon, Keenagh and Edgeworthstown. The construction of the Royal Canal and industrialisation facilitated the development of industrial villages such as Cloondara and Abbeysrule.

## 2.4 Demographic Profile

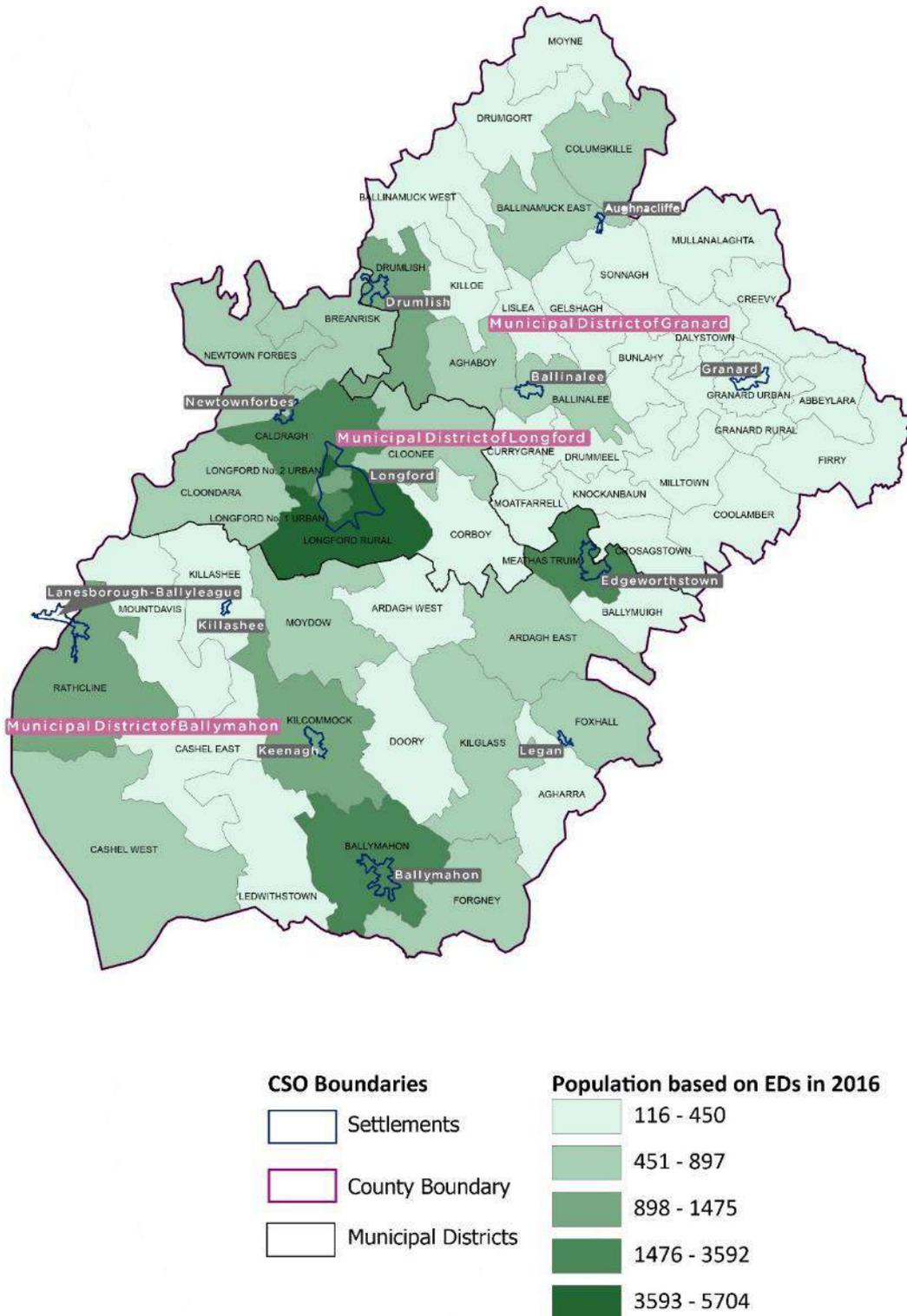
### 2.4.1 Population Distribution

Ireland's population stood at 4,761,865 in April 2016. There were 200 urban settlements across the country, which accommodated 63% of Ireland's population. County Longford is located within the Midlands region within the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area which is the most populous region with over 2.3 million people, of which 40,873 lived in County Longford. An overview of the population distribution within County Longford is provided in Figure 2.2.

Further detail is provided for each of the Municipal Districts in Annex 3, however it is considered that the population was relatively well distributed across each with 16,046 people within Longford MD, 10,674 within Granard MD and 14,153 within Ballymahon MD with relatively higher concentrations around the larger towns of Longford Town, Ballymahon, Granard, Lanesborough and Edgeworthstown.

Overall, the population distribution within County Longford has remained relatively consistent over time. According to the Census, a total of 13,957 people (34.2%) were living in urban settlements<sup>1</sup> in Longford in 2016 whilst 26,916 (65.85%) were living in smaller towns and villages, as well as in the rural remainder of the county. According

to the 2011 Census, the urban and rural population divide within County Longford was 33.1% and 66.9% respectively. As such, the marginal increase (+ 1%) in urban living in County Longford was broadly aligned with the national trends towards urbanisation.



**Figure 2.2: Overview of the distribution and density of population in County Longford based on Electoral Districts (Source: CSO)**

## 2.4.2 Population Growth and Change

### 2.4.2.1 Historic Change

Ireland's population stood at 4,761,865 in April 2016 which was an increase of 173,613 people (3.8%) since April 2011. This was driven by natural increase during that time period and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area exhibited particularly high growth during that time.

With County Longford, the population increased by 4.8% (or 1,873 persons) between 2011 and 2016, as the population from 39,000 in 2011. As set out in Table 2.1, the rate of population change varied between towns. Longford Town itself experienced a rate of growth broadly consistent with the county average during that time, whilst Ballymahon, Aughnacliffe, Edgeworthstown and Keenagh exhibited very high rates of population growth (20.09%, 19.59%, 18.81% and 16.67% respectively) that was significantly higher than the county rate of change (4.8%).

An illustration of the population growth within County Longford by ED is provided in Figure 2.3.

**Table 2.1: Population Growth in County Longford during 2011 – 2016 (Source: CSO)**

County	Population 2011	Population 2016	Growth Rate (2011-2016)	Growth Rate % (2011-2016)
<b>County Longford</b>	39,000	40,873	1,873	4.80%
<b>Settlements</b>				
Longford Town	9,601	10,008	407	4.24%
Granard <sup>2</sup>	1,021	1,096	75	6.8%
Edgeworthstown	1,744	2,072	328	18.81%
Ballymahon	1,563	1,877	314	20.09%
Lanesborough <sup>3</sup>	727	757	30	4.0%
Aughnacliffe	148	177	29	19.59%
Ballinalee	308	347	39	12.66%
Drumlish	835	931	96	11.5%
Keenagh	498	581	83	16.67%
Legan	199	215	16	8.04%
Newtownforbes	759	778	19	2.50%

<sup>2</sup> CSO changed the settlement boundary between 2011-2016. For consistency, the 2011 boundaries have been used here and it should be noted that the change in boundary results in a population of 816 within Granard in 2016.

<sup>3</sup> County Longford population for Lanesborough derived through analysis of CSO Census 'Small Area' data – This estimate therefore excludes the Ballyleague portion of the settlement from the CSO settlement boundary.

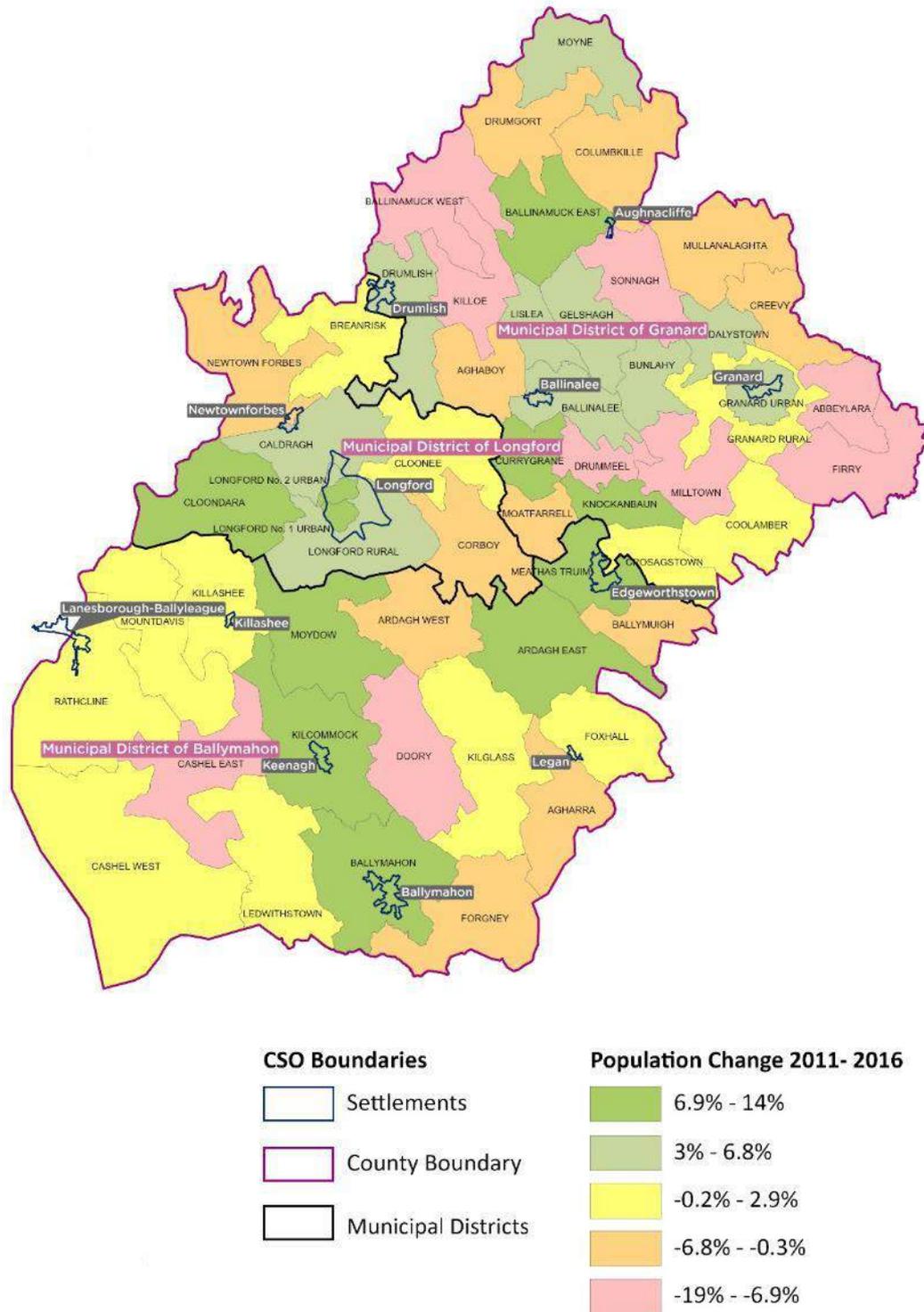


Figure 2.3: Population growth in County Longford during 2011 – 2016 based on Electoral Districts (Source: CSO)

The intercensal growth in population since 1981 has been set out in Table 2.2 which demonstrates the population growth trends attributable to the overall growth of County Longford. This illustrates that the population of County Longford has grown from 31,410 in 1981 to 40,873 in 2016. The majority of areas grew within that timeframe and that is in alignment with the overall national trend of population growth, albeit different rates with some significant variability in the quantum of population growth are evident within individual EDs.

**Table 2.2: Population Growth in County Longford per ED 1981 – 2016 (Source: CSO)**

Electoral District	1981	1986	1991	1996	2002	2006	2011	2016
Longford Rural	3280	3676	3685	3576	4317	5046	5492	5704
Longford No.1 Urban	3295	2982	2887	2989	2841	3133	3163	3592
Ballymahon	1637	1689	1617	1559	1548	1802	2327	2674
Meathas Truim	1016	1146	1130	1046	1098	1544	2008	2335
Caldragh	721	857	917	1127	1269	1598	2061	2172
Drumlisk	765	773	771	799	828	935	1387	1475
Rathcline	1310	1372	1306	1248	1268	1289	1428	1443
Granard Urban	1285	1338	1221	1173	1013	933	1021	1096
Kilcommock	602	625	591	598	581	595	953	1062
Longford No.2 Urban	703	666	649	709	711	800	943	1029
Newtown Forbes	645	728	723	768	847	892	902	897
Breanrisk	643	656	601	604	642	711	816	839
Cloonee	562	566	565	599	618	679	727	738
Moydow	510	538	549	566	557	589	668	730
Kilglass	656	580	549	555	588	617	707	709
Cloondara	578	571	560	552	549	575	616	687
Aghaboy	535	509	488	492	509	596	684	681
Ardagh East	586	614	575	529	529	568	613	670
Ballinalee	391	404	360	357	376	453	598	625
Ballinamuck East	549	577	539	485	464	474	546	599
Columbkille	673	682	645	596	596	605	597	592
Cashel West	633	630	572	565	538	547	572	589
Foxhall	409	394	352	373	431	510	525	528
Forgney	418	421	383	380	393	446	497	491
Ardagh West	372	340	333	343	397	439	460	450
Agharra	382	360	322	358	331	357	456	444
Killashee	254	249	239	235	234	284	432	437
Ballinamuck West	503	479	460	453	459	441	501	437
Doory	325	346	331	345	358	416	457	424

Drumgort	539	511	447	430	416	435	428	422
Corboy	347	355	350	361	395	381	399	388
Coolamber	296	276	261	261	263	321	371	382
Ledwithstown	307	325	295	269	258	285	356	363
Gelshagh	367	341	298	284	322	319	338	351
Milltown	335	343	329	329	323	351	377	344
Moyne	390	382	341	319	321	305	315	326
Creevy	382	347	349	313	289	344	313	308
Cashel East	377	386	400	372	324	312	323	302
Granard Rural	294	300	264	261	256	300	296	301
Mullanalaghta	309	304	287	301	292	295	299	298
Abbeylara	279	274	285	280	245	314	340	298
Killoe	378	334	323	306	284	302	293	274
Mountdavis	194	208	195	185	197	204	250	252
Ballymuigh	260	272	257	256	255	246	252	250
Crosagstown	205	205	219	208	226	217	241	247
Sonnagh	341	324	306	281	281	286	285	245
Moatfarrell	152	167	131	124	158	187	218	217
Dalystown	186	174	185	175	170	175	188	196
Firry/Newgrove	199	173	188	199	209	221	217	196
Bunlahy	177	172	148	166	167	167	188	195
Knockanbaun	152	153	136	124	132	146	151	169
Lislea	171	166	158	163	142	152	139	145
Currygrane	127	101	116	109	126	125	128	139
Drummeel	138	135	108	111	127	127	138	116

#### 2.4.2.2 Future Change

Modelling has been undertaken to project the population change in County Longford throughout the plan period and a number of different scenarios were analysed. As described in detail in the Core Strategy, it was determined that an interpolation of the targets that have been set out in the NPF to 2040 are appropriate and thus an indicative representation of projected population growth within County Longford during the plan period.

The population within County Longford is therefore projected to grow from 40,873 in 2016 to 43,187 by 2021 (i.e. the start of the plan period) to 45,800 by 2027 (i.e. the end of the plan period). This represents an increase of 4,927 people during 2016 – 2027, of which 2,614 is projected to occur during the plan period. The rate of population change within each ED during 2016 -2027 is illustrated in Figure 2. 4.

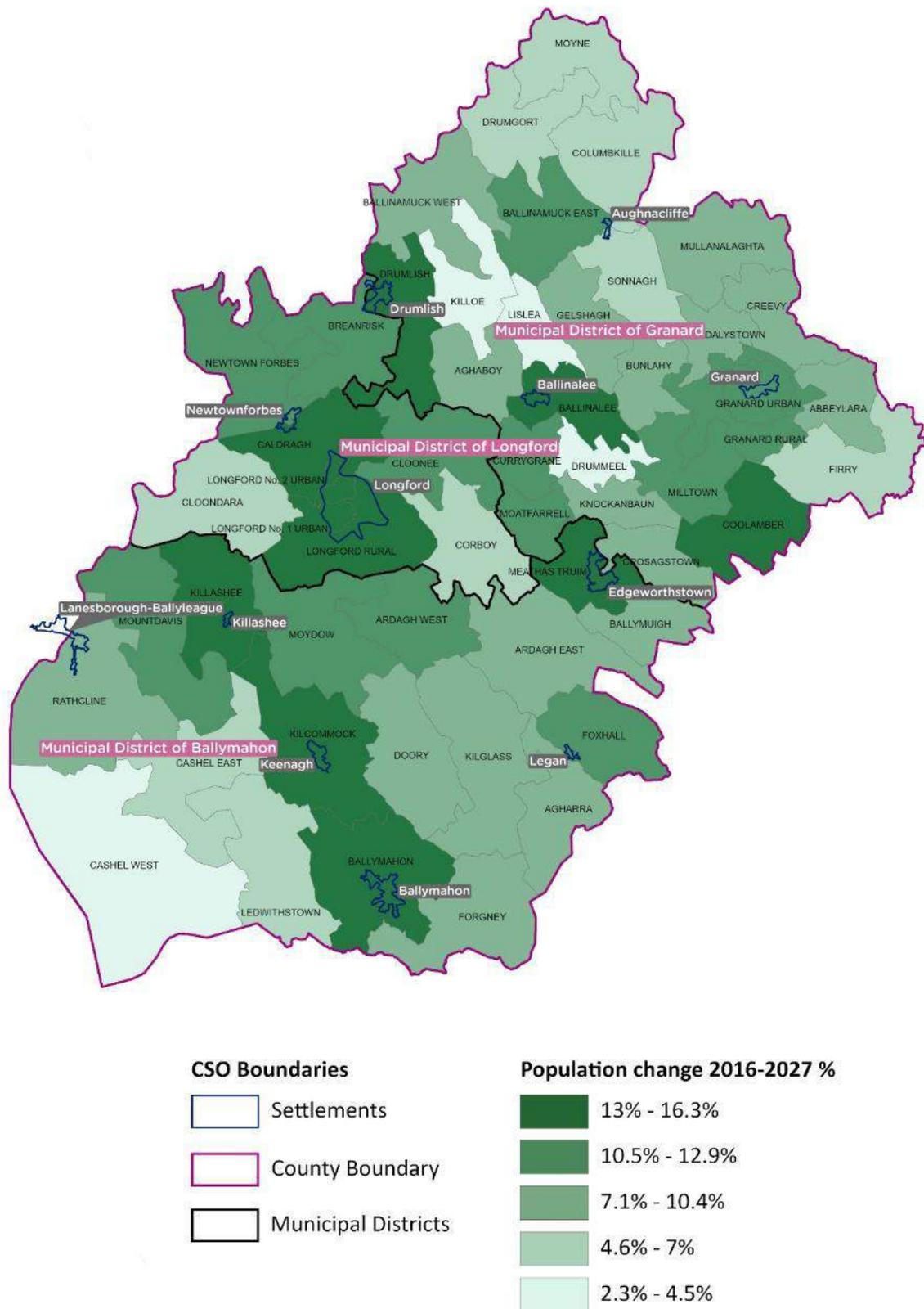


Figure 2.4: Projected population change in County Longford per ED during 2016-2027

### 2.4.3 Structure and Age Profile

The average age in County Longford was slightly below the national average (36.8 and 37.4 years respectively), and this is generally reflective of the slightly younger age profile within the broader Eastern and Midlands region. An extended age profile of County Longford is presented in Figure 2.5 with the age dependency ratios defined in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3: Age dependency ratios in County Longford (Source: CSO)**

	0-14 years	15-64 Years	Over 65 years	Young Age Ratio (%)	Old Age Ratio (%)	Total Dependency Ratio (%)
<b>County Longford</b>	9,508	25,541	5,824	23.30%	14%	37.50%
<b>MD</b>						
MD Ballymahon	3,244	8,915	1,994	22.9%	14.1%	37.00%
MD Granard	2,430	6,569	1,675	22.8%	15.7%	38.50%
MD Longford	3,384	10,057	2,155	23.9%	13.4%	37.3%

Dependency ratios are used to give a useful indication of the age structure of a population with young (0-14) and old (65+) shown as a percentage of the population of working age (i.e. 15-64). In County Longford, approximately 62.5% of the population within County Longford are therefore of working age (i.e. 15 – 64 years) with 51.2% of prime working age (defined as the 25-64 age cohorts). Specifically, 27.2% of Longford's population are between 25 – 44 years old with a further 24.2% between 45 – 64 years old.

Specifically, 29.7% of the county population was under 19 years of age with the number of children of pre-school age (i.e. 0-4 years) in County Longford was 3,051 (7.5%) whilst 5,205 (12.7%) are of primary school going age (i.e. 5-12 years). A further 3,432 (8.4%) are of secondary school going age (13-18 years).

14.2% of the population are over 65 years (i.e. older persons), of which just 5.7 % of the population is older than 75 years of age. This reflects the national trend as Census 2016 show that Ireland's population has been getting steadily older since the 1980s. 13.4% of the state's population were over 65 in 2016 and as the RSES notes, by 2031 there will be a significant increase in the regional population aged over 65. There is therefore a need to plan for adequate healthcare, accommodation and services to enable independent living for as long as possible, encourage active lifestyles and address isolation for older residents.

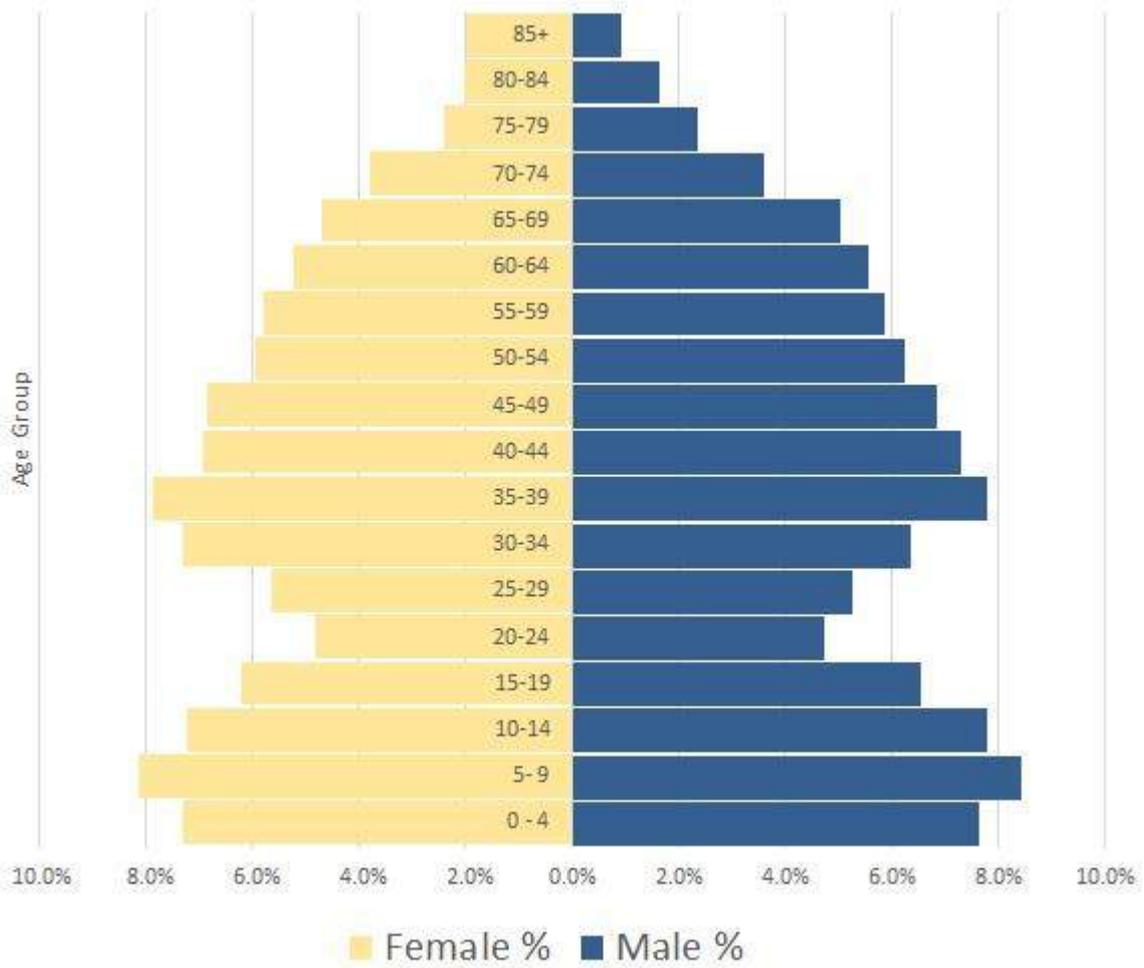


Figure 2.5: Population Age Pyramid for County Longford (Source: CSO)

#### 2.4.4 Ethnicity

County Longford is a diverse county with many nationalities living therein which contribute to the local population and vibrant community. Approximately 19.5% of the population were born overseas and 16.4% of the population are not of Irish nationality as demonstrated in Figure 2.6 and Table 2.4. The British, Polish and Lithuanian communities are the largest groups of non-nationals with pockets of high concentrations of Polish evident in Granard, Ballymahon and Longford town and Lithuanians in Longford town, Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown. Generally, higher concentrations of non-Irish nationals were evident in and around the settlements as illustrated in Figure 2.6.

**Table 2.4: Usually resident population in County Longford by place of birth and nationality (Source: CSO)**

Location	Birthplace	Nationality	Birthplace %	Nationality %
Ireland	32,732	34,000	81%	84%
UK	2,507	1,155	6%	3%
Poland	1,774	1,903	4%	5%
Lithuania	493	540	1%	1%
Other EU 28	1,407	1,483	3%	4%
Rest of World	1,742	917	4%	2%
Not stated	0	657	0%	2%
<b>Total</b>	40,655	40,655	100%	100%

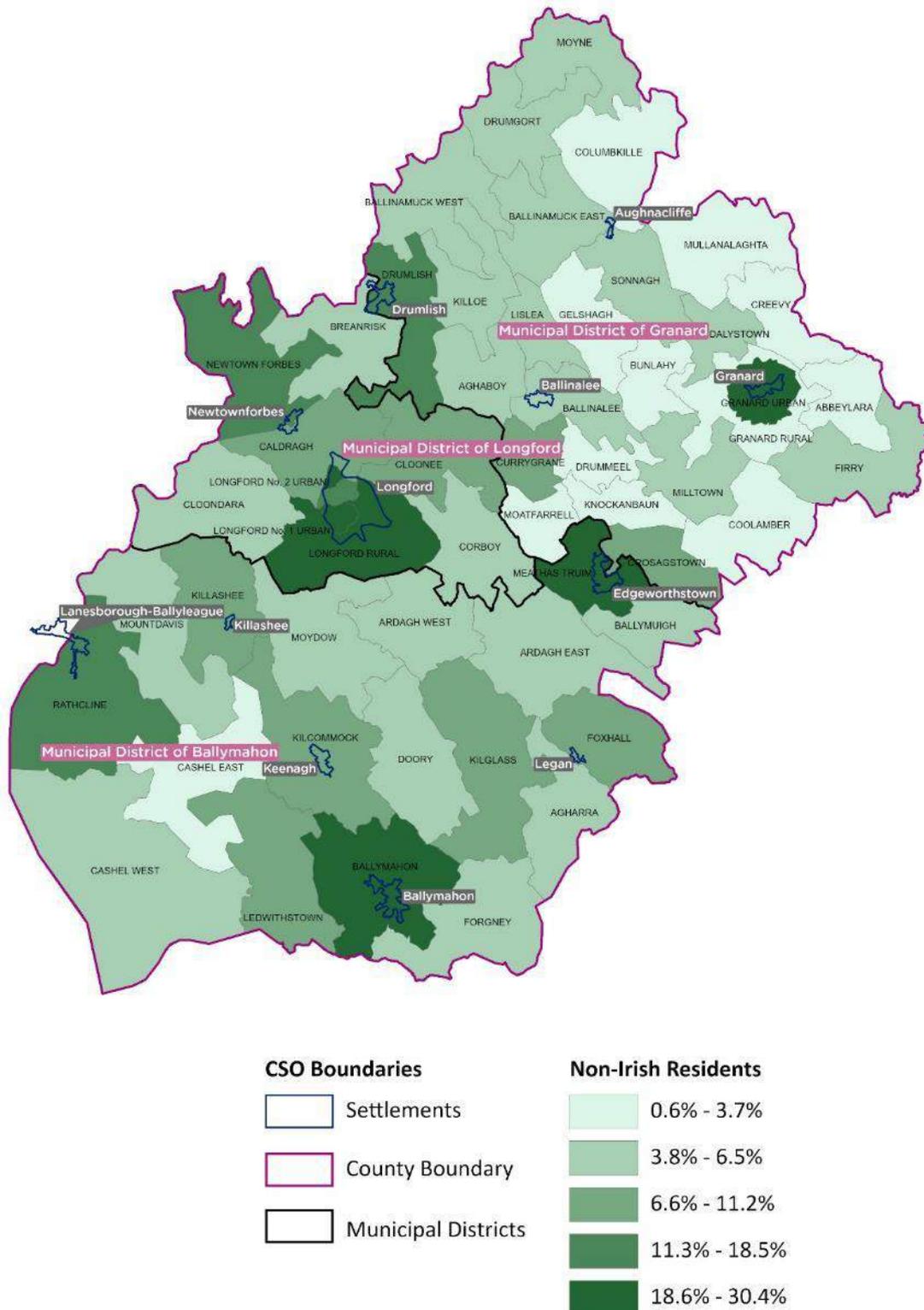


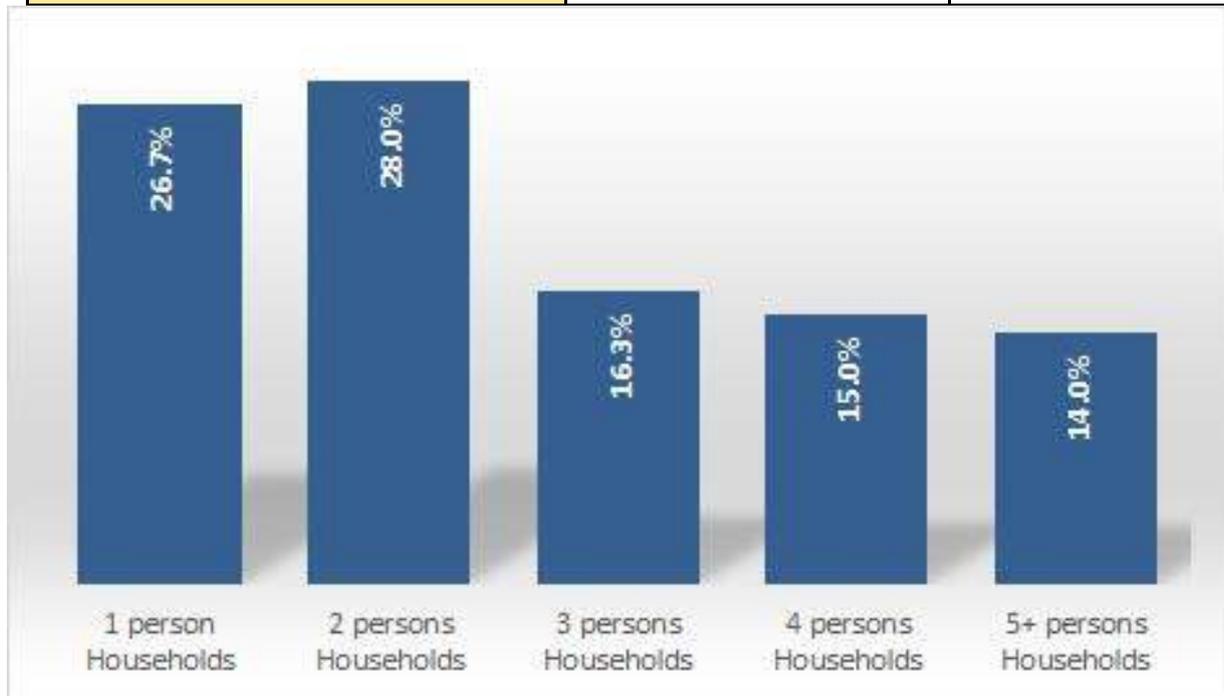
Figure 2.6: Non-Irish residents in County Longford (Source: CSO)

### 2.4.5 Households

Within County Longford, the average household size was 2.7 persons. A breakdown of private households by size for County Longford provided in Table 2.5 and Figure 2.7 which illustrates the relatively high proportion of one and two person households within the county.

**Table 2.5: Private households by size in County Longford (Source: CSO)**

Size of household	Households	Persons
1 person	4,035	4,035
2 persons	4,233	8,466
3 persons	2,466	7,398
4 persons	2,274	9,096
5 persons	1,320	6,600
6 persons	552	3,312
7 persons	149	1,043
8 or more persons	93	825
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,122</b>	<b>40,775</b>



**Figure 2.7: Private households by size in County Longford (Source: CSO)**

16.7% of the housing stock in County Longford were vacant during the most recent Census, of which 278 were unoccupied holiday homes and 2,824 were other vacant dwellings. The distribution of vacant households during 2016 is illustrated in Figure 2.8. In order to reflect the latest data in relation to vacant households, a review of the Geodirectory data from the first quarter of 2019 has been reviewed in addition to the information from the 2016 Census. Vacant households were still present across County Longford with higher concentrations present in the vicinity of the settlements in the county as illustrated in Figure 2.9.

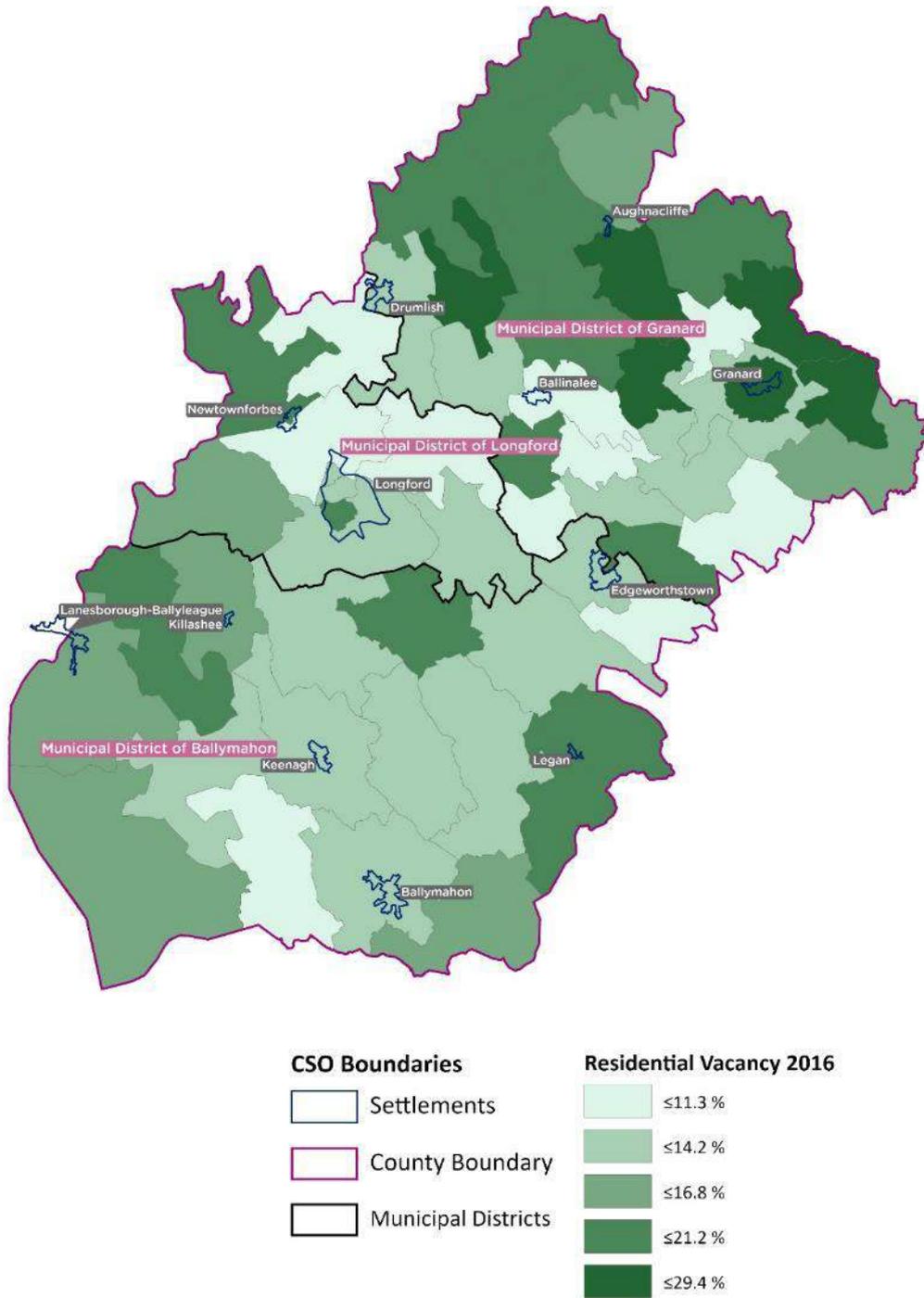
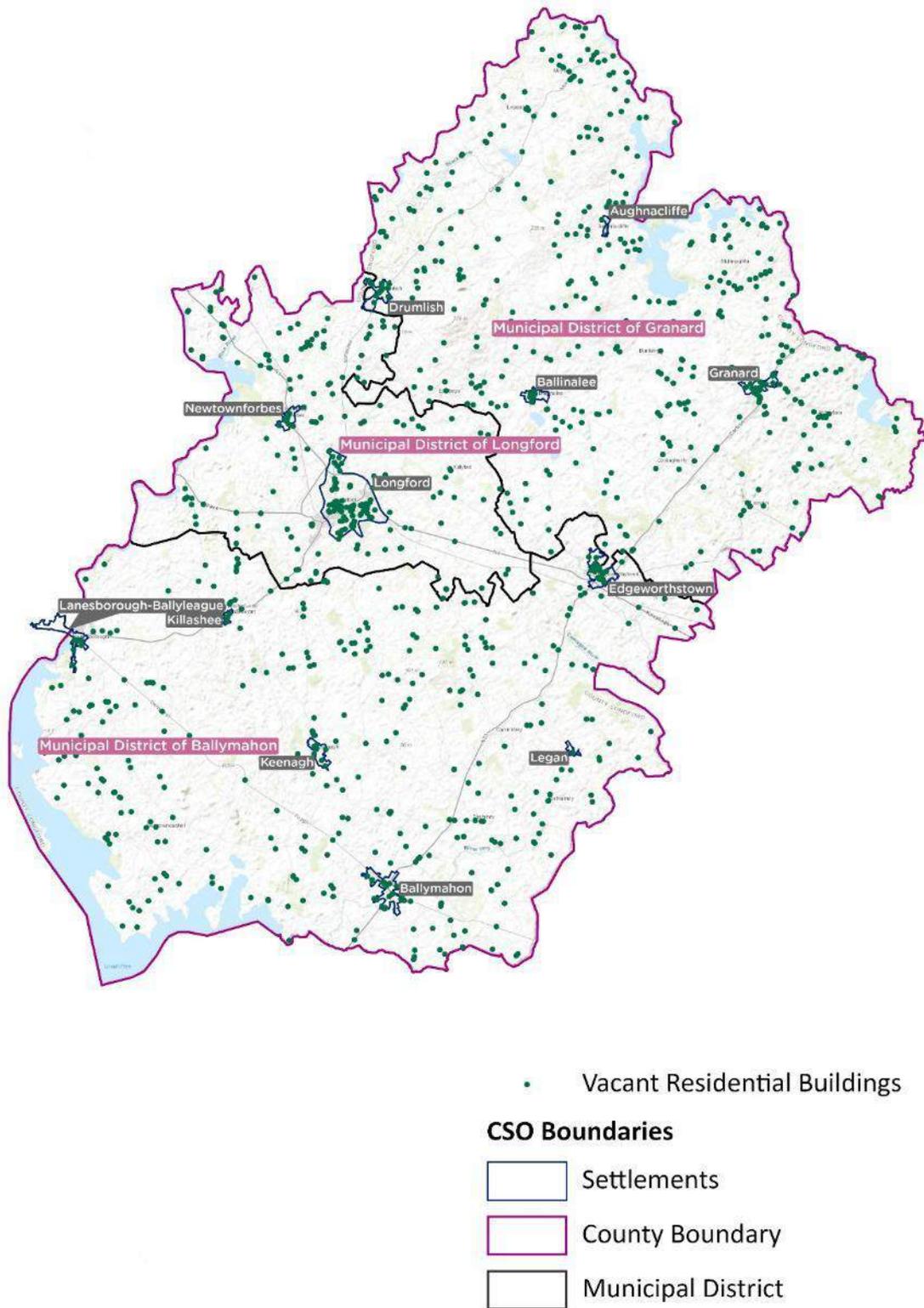


Figure 2.8: Proportion of residential vacancies per ED in County Longford (Source: CSO)



**Figure 2.9: Vacant residential properties in County Longford in 2019 (Source: Geodirectory)**

## 2.5 Socio-economic Profile

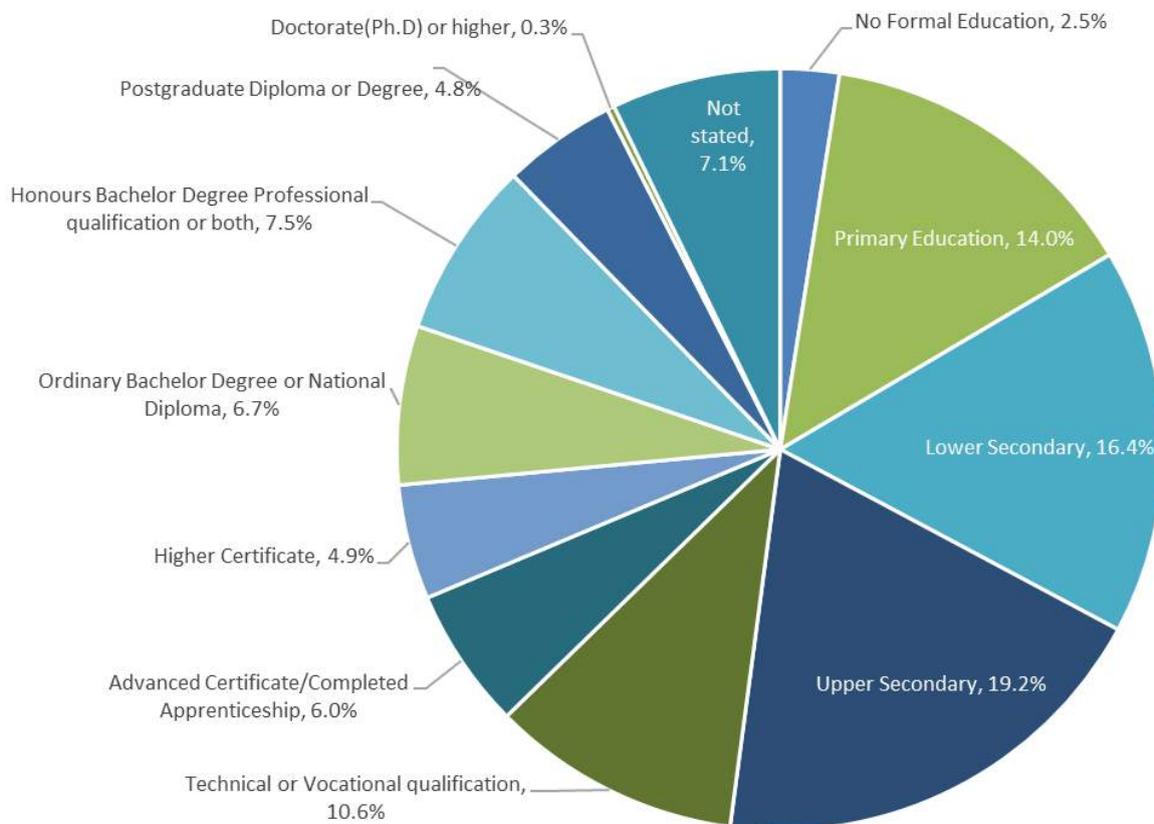
### 2.5.1 Education

County Longford has varying levels of educational attainment and as demonstrated in Table 2.6, 52.1% of the population above 15 years had completed their Leaving Certificate whilst 30.2% had completed Third Level education (i.e. to at least Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications [NFQ]). A breakdown of the educational attainment within County Longford is provided in Figure 2.10.

**Table 2.6: Educational attainment in the population over 15 years in County Longford (Source: CSO)**

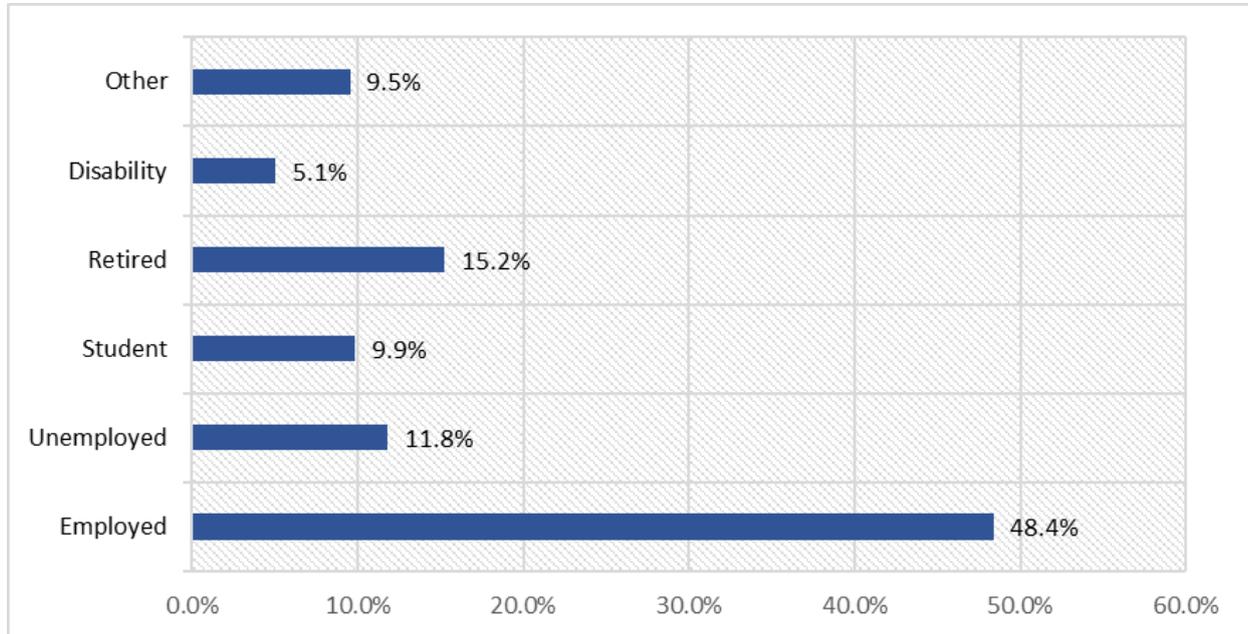
Proportion	Number of persons	% of persons
Third Level (Level 7+)	5,063	19.40%
Third Level (Level 6+)	7,903	30.20%
Up to Leaving Cert	13,627	52.10%
Primary or Less	4,304	16.50%
Masters of Higher	1,332	5.10%

**Figure 2.10: Education by highest level achieved within County Longford (Source: CSO)**



### 2.5.2 Employment

Employment levels in County Longford (48.4%) were lower than the national average (53.4%) and unemployment at the county level (11.8%) was higher than the national average (9.1%) in April 2016 as demonstrated in Figure 2.11.



**Figure 2.11: Population aged 15 years and over by principal economic status in County Longford (Source: CSO)**

As illustrated in Figure 2.12, pockets of relatively high unemployment were evident around Newownforbes, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Longford town when compared to other areas within the county.

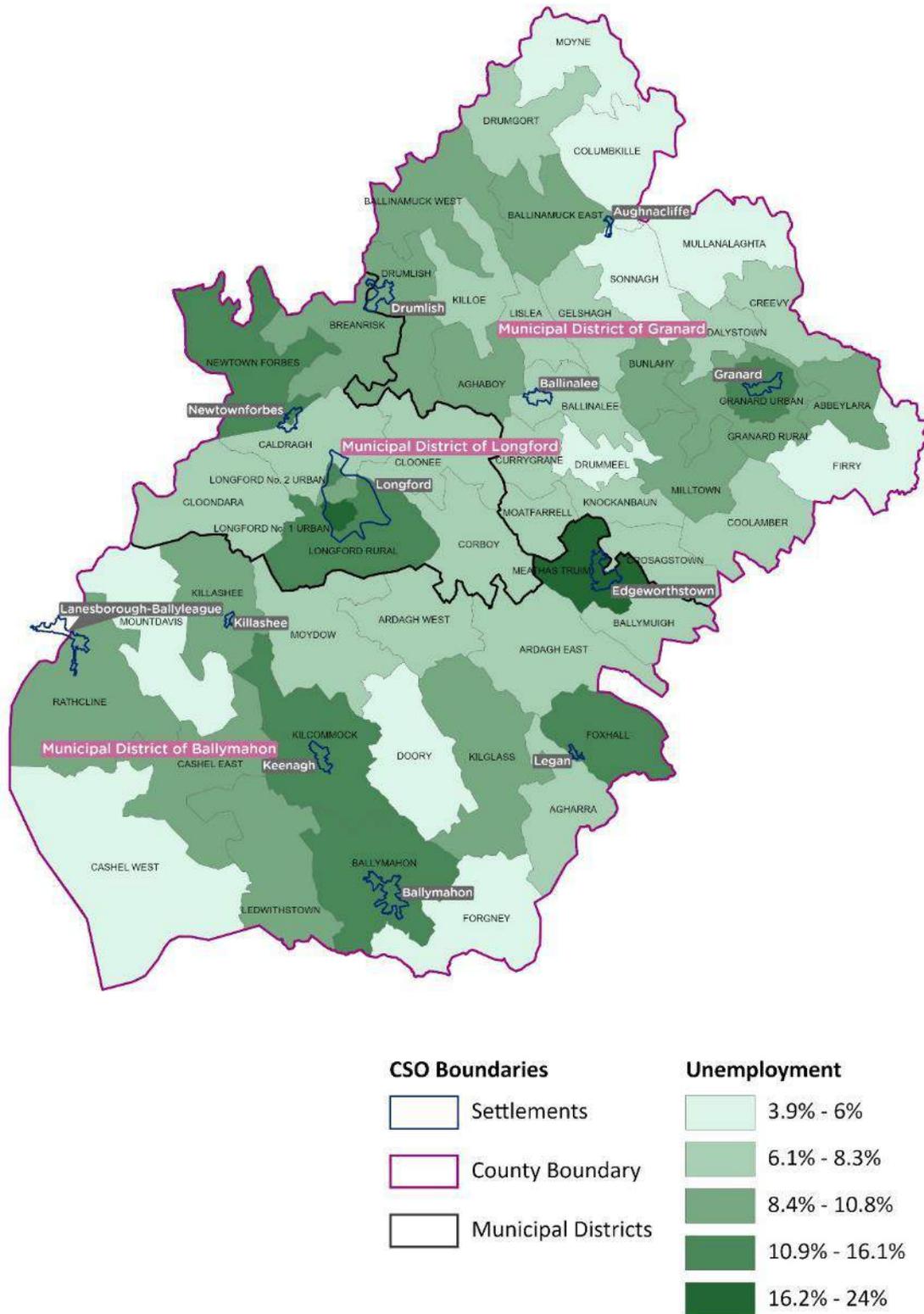


Figure 2.12: Proportion of the population unemployed in County Longford per MD (Source: CSO)

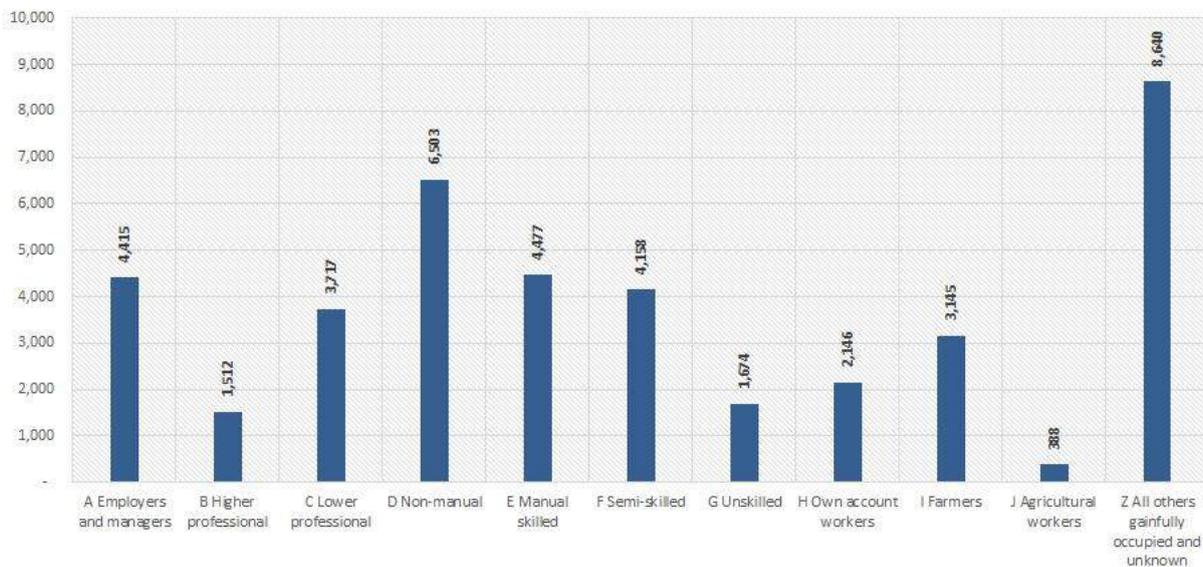
Upon further examination, a notable difference between principal economic status of the male and female portion of the population in County Longford was also evident as demonstrated in Table 2.7. Specifically, there was a lower proportion of females and work and higher proportion at home or looking after families when compared to males. Whilst in contrast, unemployment was relatively high for males.

**Table 2.7: Population aged 15 years and over by principal economic status in County Longford (Source: CSO)**

Principal Economic Status	Male	Female	Total	Male %	Female %
At work	8,461	6,711	15,172	54.00%	42.80%
Looking for first regular job	197	177	374	1.30%	1.10%
Unemployed having lost or given up previous job	1,932	1,395	3,327	12.30%	8.90%
Student	1,513	1,549	3,062	9.70%	9.90%
Looking after home/family	178	2,695	2,873	1.10%	17.20%
Retired	2,468	2,314	4,782	15.70%	14.70%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	861	796	1,657	5.50%	5.10%
Other	63	55	118	0.40%	0.40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,673</b>	<b>15,692</b>	<b>31,365</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### 2.5.3 Economy

In addition to principal economic status, information on economic activity and employment by industry is useful in providing an understanding of industries and socio-economic circumstances within County Longford. The proportion employed in the three highest professional socio-economic groups (i.e. as employers, managers and/or professionals – Categories A, B and C as identified in Figure 2.13) was relatively low in county Longford (23.7%) when compared to the State (34.2%). Further, the proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled workers is higher in County Longford (14.3%) when compared to the national figures 12.2%). This may be associated with relatively high levels of education and the impact on incomes and affluence is discussed in further detail in Section 2.5.4 and Section 2.5.5 respectively.



**Figure 2.13: Socio-economic groups by reference person in County Longford (Source: CSO)**

There are a range of industries present throughout the County Longford that support the local, regional and national economy. Table 2.8 illustrates the industries that people are employed in and illustrates that 'Professional Services', 'Commerce and Trade', 'Manufacturing' and 'Other' industries are the most dominant industries with over three quarters of the population employed in those sectors.

**Table 2.8: Persons at work by industry and gender in County Longford (Source: CSO)**

Industry	Male	Female	Total	Total %
Agriculture forestry and fishing	1,075	84	1,159	7.60%
Building and construction	792	49	841	5.50%
Manufacturing industries	1,868	698	2,566	16.90%
Commerce and trade	1,578	1,530	3,108	20.50%
Transport and communications	618	138	756	5.00%
Public administration	446	483	929	6.10%
Professional services	793	2,521	3,314	21.80%
Other	1,291	1,208	2,499	16.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,461</b>	<b>6,711</b>	<b>15,172</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### 2.5.4 Household Income

Disposable income is the amount of income, after tax is deducted, that is available for spending and saving. It functions as an important measure of the ability of a household to purchase their own home (i.e. housing affordability). The weekly and annual disposable incomes at national level from the CSO's Household Budget Survey (from 2015-2016) have been adjusted to county level based on application of "inflater/deflator" rate.

Table 2.9 indicates that in 2016 (i.e. the same baseline as the 2016 Census) after taxes, about one third of the households in Longford (i.e. the first three deciles) have an average annual disposable income of €20,921.

**Table 2.9: Calculation and Distribution of Average Annual Disposable Income per decile in County Longford in 2016**

Income Range	Average Weekly Disposable Income (State) (€) (2015-2016)	Adjusted Average Weekly Disposable Income (State) (€)	Percentage of Households in Each Category (State)	Average Annual Disposable Income (State) (€)	Longford County Deflator	Longford Average Annual Disposable Income (€)
1st Decile	197	199	9.8%	10,357	<b>0.850</b>	<b>8,803</b>
2nd Decile	324	329	10.6%	17,131	<b>0.850</b>	<b>14,561</b>
3rd Decile	466	473	10.5%	24,613	<b>0.850</b>	<b>20,921</b>
4th Decile	594	603	10.4%	31,364	<b>0.850</b>	<b>26,659</b>
5th Decile	726	738	10.3%	38,380	<b>0.850</b>	<b>32,622</b>
6th Decile	866	880	9.9%	45,736	<b>0.850</b>	<b>38,875</b>
7th Decile	1,026	1,038	9.6%	53,974	<b>0.850</b>	<b>45,877</b>
8th Decile	1,216	1,222	9.7%	63,547	<b>0.850</b>	<b>54,014</b>
9th Decile	1,473	1,473	9.6%	76,615	<b>0.850</b>	<b>65,122</b>
10th Decile	2,229	2,217	9.6%	115,300	<b>0.850</b>	<b>98,003</b>

### 2.5.5 Affluence and Deprivation

The Pobal HP deprivation Index provides a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area using data compiled from various censuses. It is a recognised resource for identifying affluence and disadvantage, by providing local analysis of relevant metrics such as unemployment, educational attainment and population change for example.

Figure 2.14 illustrates deprivation levels from the Pobal Index (by Electoral Divisions) within the County Longford and indicates that the affluence and deprivation is variable throughout the different parts of the county. Overall, the majority of County Longford is marginally below average with few areas disadvantaged and a few others marginally above average.

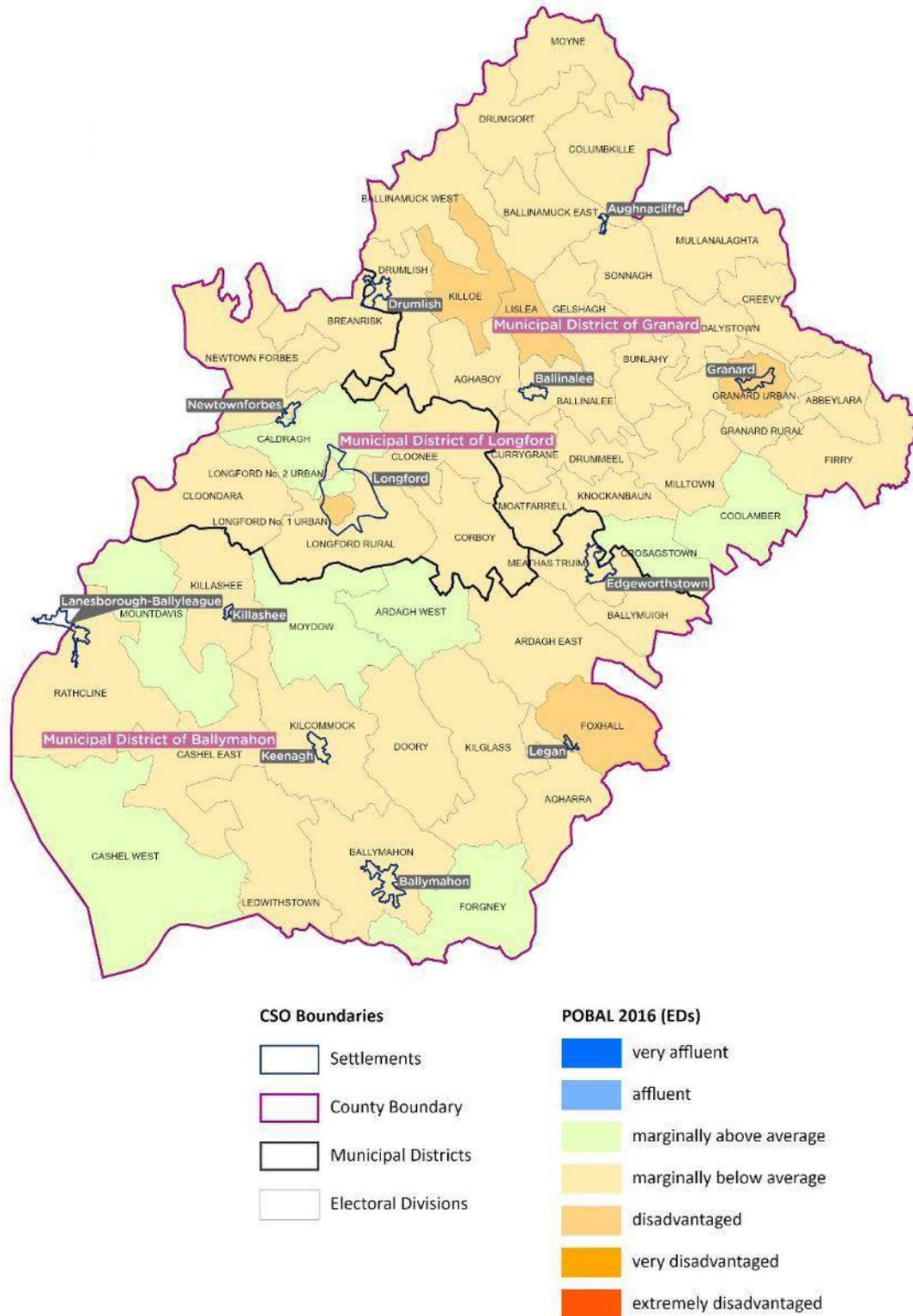


Figure 2.14: Pobal HP Deprivation Index Score across County Longford by ED (Source: Pobal)

## 2.6 Development Profile

### 2.6.1 Infrastructure and Investment Trends

There are various towns and villages distributed throughout as well as important national, regional and local infrastructure including the Royal Canal, the N4 (between Sligo and Dublin) and the N5 (between Castlebar/Westport and Longford). Significant public and private investment to support development and improve infrastructure has been evident in recent years, including the following major projects:

- N4/M4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Upgrade – Longford County Council is working in association with Westmeath County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland to upgrade 52km of this single carriageway road. The N4/M4 national primary route is 198km in length and connects Dublin (M50) to Sligo and this portion of the road which will be upgraded passes through the settlements of Ballinalack, Rathowen, Edgeworthstown, Longford and Newtownforbes.
- Derryadd Wind Farm – In June 2020, Bord an Móna Powergen Ltd were granted consent by An Bord Pleanála for a new wind farm comprising 24 turbines, a 110kV substation and associated infrastructure works.
- The Royal Canal Way – The 16.5km Cloondara Greenway forms part of the extended Royal Canal Way which provides an off-road trackway between Longford – Kiltashee and along the Royal Canal towards Cloondara Harbour. This provides a multi-purpose active transport route that connects to the ongoing improvements to the Royal Canal Way which extends to Dublin.
- Center Parcs in Longford Forest – Following an estimated investment of over €230million by Center Parcs, the Longford Forest resort was opened in the Newcastle Forest adjacent to Ballymahon in July 2019. This holiday village represents a significant contributor to local employment (with an estimated 700-1,000 employees) and it provides accommodation for up to 2,500 guests as well as a dedicated tropical pool, spa facilities along with indoor and outdoor guest activities. In addition to the village itself, ancillary works including local road improvements and upgrade to the gas supply infrastructure also occurred to accommodate the development.
- Ballymahon Gas Pipeline – An extension to the Gas Networks Ireland infrastructure (i.e. gas pipeline) from Athlone to Ballymahon town centre and the nearby Center Parcs resort. This extension was delivered in two phases (Rathmore to Center Parcs and Ories to Rathmore) during 2018-2019. This infrastructure therefore facilitates the provision of natural gas to the area to ensure a more resilient and robust energy supply for the local community as well as Center Parcs itself.
- Just Transition - The Just Transition for the Midlands continues to have an important and central relevance to all stakeholders across the counties affected, including County Longford which will be severely impacted by the closure of ESB Power Station in Lanesborough and cessation of the Bord na

Mona peat harvesting operations. In October 2018, Bord na Móna initiated plans to decarbonise and shift from traditional peat harvesting operations and in response, a Transition Team was established by Offaly County Council to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the acceleration of Bord na Móna's "Brown to Green" decarbonisation strategy. Other impacted Local Authorities also joined the Midlands Regional Transition Team with representation from Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath, Roscommon and Kildare and regional stakeholders. This Team aims to pursue funding opportunities and actions to mitigate the impact of the Bord na Móna job losses on the individuals concerned, and on the local and regional economy. Additionally, the ESB's peat-fired power station in Lanesborough (also known as the Lough Ree Power Station) will also close and be demolished at the end of 2020.

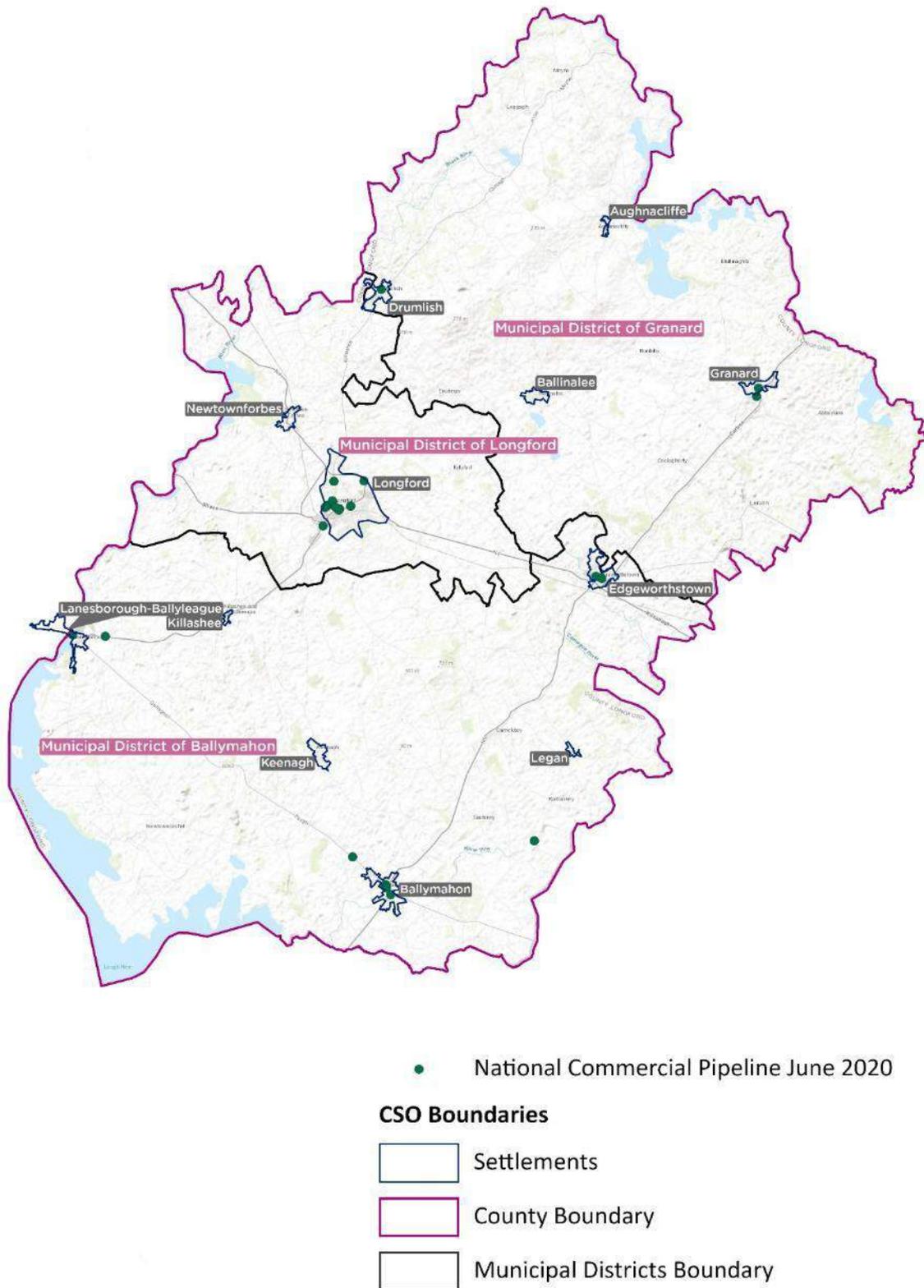
- In May 2020, the Government launched the first call for proposals for funding from the €11m Just Transition Fund which has five key priorities, including retraining workers and proposals to generate sustainable employment in green enterprise in the region. The Just Transition Fund will be of particular relevance to the community of Lanesborough as they examine existing natural and economic assets to determine possible employment creating opportunities associated with the closure of the power plant and shift in local industry. For example, Longford County Council have been working with Bord na Mona, Fáilte Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development amongst others to plan the shape and structure of a wetlands habitat that might facilitate economic based projects based around renewable technologies, recreation and amenity in particular.

### **2.6.2 Retail**

Analysis of development in trends in retail indicate that 25 no. planning applications have been granted for commercial properties in County Longford over the last five years. These were mostly associated with smaller mixed use or retail units, minor extensions or change of use applications within the larger settlements along with a notable trend towards petrol and service stations along the main transport routes.

As illustrated in Figure 2.15, these are mostly located within the settlements, particularly in and around Longford town where a high proportion of these are service station and minor retail type establishments such as coffee shops. Further information in this regard is provided within the Retail Strategy that has been prepared as part of the County Development Plan.

Additionally, analysis on the vacancy rate of commercial units has also been undertaken through review of the Geodirectory data from the first quarter of 2019. Figure 2.16 indicates that the majority of these properties are in the settlements, with particularly high concentrations of vacant properties in and around Longford town.



**Figure 2.15: Location of commercial applications submitted to Longford County Council (Source: MyPlan)**

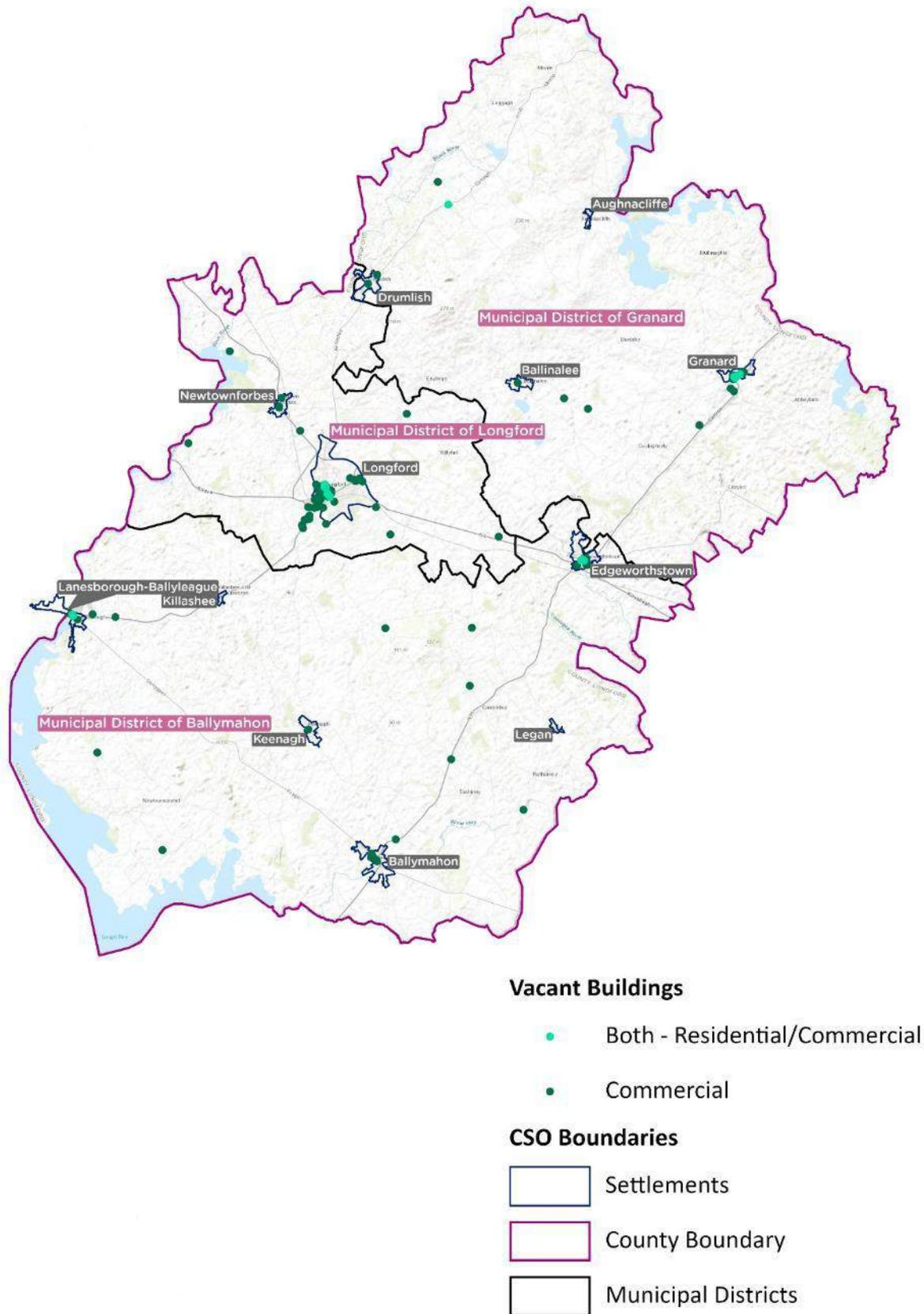


Figure 2.16: Vacant commercial properties in Co. Longford in 2019 (Source: Geodirectory)

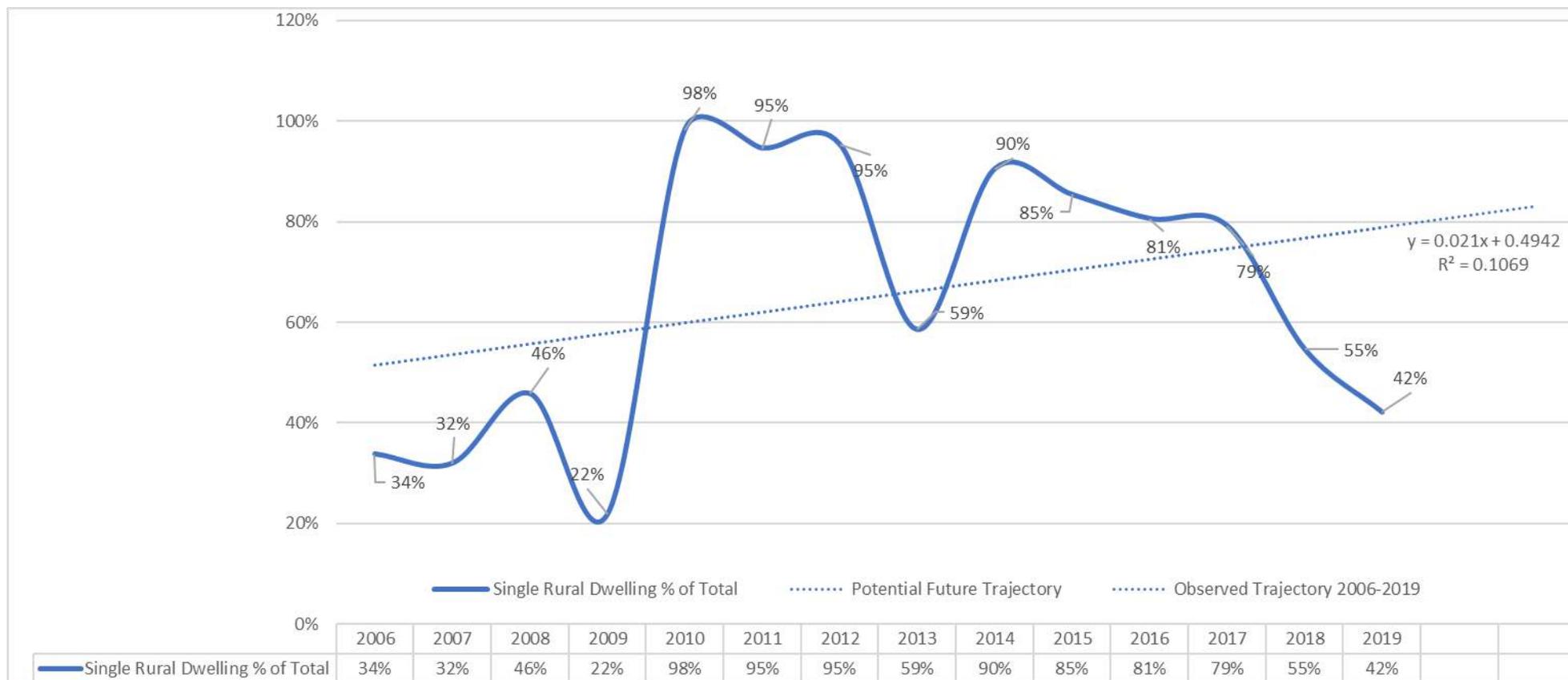
### 2.6.3 Housing

Analysis of historic information (i.e. during 2006 – 2019) on granted planning applications (by number of units) in County Longford has been undertaken. This helps understand the proportion of housing units that are single rural dwellings that have been approved during that period and provides an indication of the dynamics between the urban and rural housing market within the county.

Of the 3,283 housing units that have been granted, approximately 65.17% were for single rural dwellings whilst 34.83% were for houses or apartments. There was however peaks and troughs in terms of the quantum of applications that were granted (and indeed applied for) as well as the proportional change between those that were single rural dwellings and those that were not. An overview is provided in Table 2.10 and Figure 2.17 and further information in this regard is provided within the Housing Strategy that has been prepared as part of the County Development Plan (Annex 4).

**Table 2.10: Granted Planning Applications for Residential Units in County Longford during 2006 – 2019 (Source: CSO)**

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>% Houses and Apartments</b>	66%	68%	54%	78%	2%	5%	5%	41%	10%	15%	19%	21%	45%	58%
<b>% Single Rural Dwellings</b>	34%	32%	46%	22%	98%	95%	95%	59%	90%	85%	81%	79%	55%	42%
<b>Total Granted</b>	778	967	452	395	58	37	43	41	21	41	67	96	97	190



**Figure 2.17: Overview of granted applications for single rural dwellings as proportion of total granted applications in Co. Longford 2006 - 2019**

## Chapter 3: Climate Change

### 3.1 Introduction

Climate change can be described as a change in “*the usual weather found in a place*”<sup>1</sup> (e.g. temperature, rainfall, wind, etc), that is a direct result of increased levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the majority of which are caused by humans.<sup>2</sup> Climate change extremes experienced today are caused by ‘global warming’, a phenomenon of rising air temperatures near the earth’s surface. Global warming is caused by the ‘greenhouse effect’ whereby greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere trap in too much of the sun’s heat. Climate change has been identified as the greatest threat to human health, security and our environment and is one of the most pressing global policy challenges facing today’s governments.<sup>3</sup> It requires an immediate commitment to collective action.

This Longford County Development Plan in accordance with the *EMRA RSES* contains a Climate Strategy, which in conjunction with the *Longford County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019* sets out a vision for the future and key actions towards climate change and sustainable development.

### 3.2 Statutory Context

#### 3.2.1 Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

The Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) require development plans to include various types of objectives, including those relating to climate mitigation and adaptation. Provisions for climate change are set out within Section 10 (2) (n). This include requirements to:

- reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy; and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources;
- reduce anthropogenic (manmade) greenhouse gas emissions, and;
- address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.

It is also a statutory requirement for local authorities to incorporate the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas.

### 3.3 Policy Context

#### 3.3.1 European ‘Green Deal’ 2019

It is recognised that climate change and environmental degradation are a threat and that Europe needs a new growth strategy. The EU will be climate neutral in 2050. Reaching this target will require action by all sectors of the economy, including:

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<sup>1</sup> NASA <https://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/k-4/stories/nasa-knows/what-is-climate-change-k4.html>

<sup>2</sup> UN IPCC 5<sup>th</sup> Report <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organisation WHO: <https://www.who.int/globalchange/global-campaign/cop21/en/>

- investing in environmentally-friendly technologies;
- rolling out cleaner, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport;
- decarbonising the energy sector;
- ensuring buildings are more energy efficient;
- working with international partners to improve global environmental standards.

The European ‘*Green Deal*’ is the roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas. The ‘*Green Deal*’ sets out key policy areas to deliver a more environmentally sustainable EU economy in terms of the following:

- *Biodiversity* - Measures to protect our fragile ecosystem.
- *From Farm to Fork* - Ways to ensure more sustainable food systems.
- *Sustainable Agriculture* - Sustainability in EU agriculture and rural areas as a result of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- *Clean Energy* - Opportunities for alternative, cleaner sources of energy.
- *Sustainable Industry* - Ways to ensure more sustainable, more environmentally-respectful production cycles.
- *Building and Renovating* - The need for a cleaner construction sector and buildings that are more energy efficient.
- *Sustainable Mobility* - Promoting more sustainable means of transport.
- *Eliminating Pollution* - Measures to cut pollution rapidly and efficiently.
- *Climate Action* - Making the EU climate neutral by 2050.

The EU will also provide financial support and technical assistance to help people, businesses and regions that are most affected by the move towards the green economy. This is called the Just Transition Mechanism and will help mobilise at least €100 billion over the period 2021-2027 in the most affected regions. In terms of Longford this is relevant in terms of the closure of the Lanesborough Power Plant and cessation of commercial peat harvesting and is dealt with in more detail in section ‘3.3.10 Midlands Just Transition 2019’ of this chapter.

### 3.3.2 National Adaptation Framework (NAF 2018)

The National Adaptation Framework (NAF 2018) specifies the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors, and by local authorities in their administrative areas, in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects that may occur. A key action under the NAF requires each local authority in the country to prepare local climate adaptation strategies.

### 3.3.3 Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines (2018)

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) developed the Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines 2018, in order to provide local authorities with support in developing their Climate Change Action Plans (CCAPs). In addition, the government has established 4 no. Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). In the case of County Longford, the Eastern and Midlands Regional Climate Change Office will be responsible for planning and actions regarding Climate Change mitigation and adaptation on a regional basis.

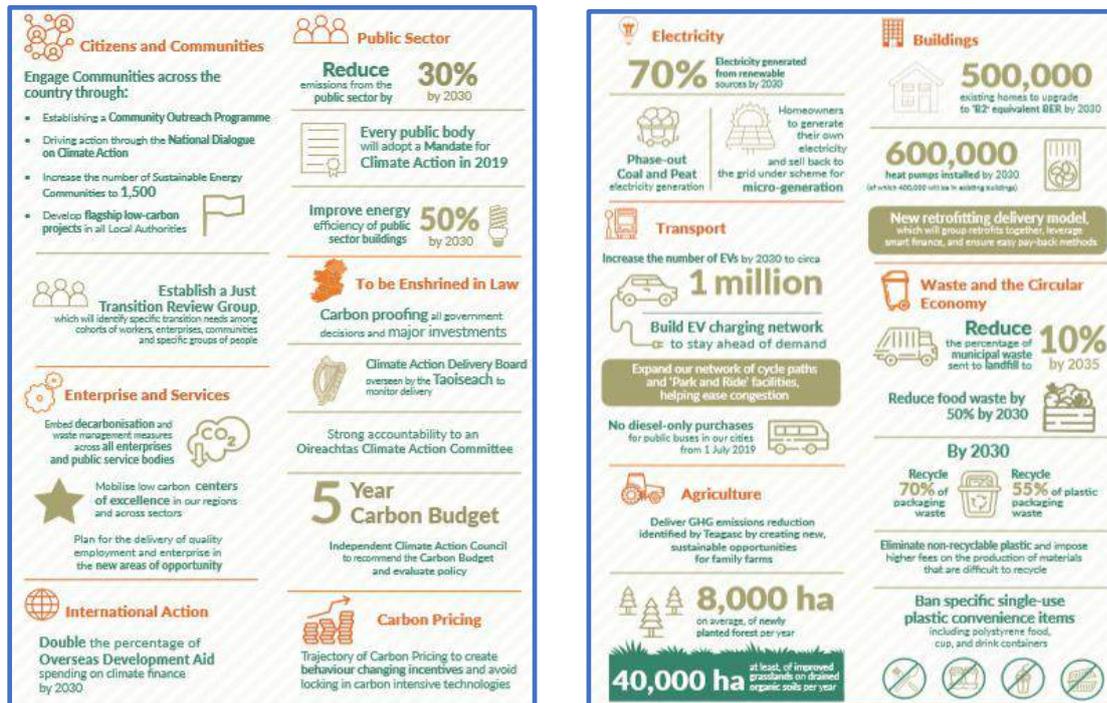
### 3.3.4 Climate Action Plan 2019

The Government’s Climate Action Plan 2019 reflects the central priority that climate change will have in Ireland’s political and administrative systems into the future, setting out governance arrangements including the carbon-proofing of government policies, the establishment of carbon budgets, the strengthening of the Climate Change Advisory Council and providing greater accountability to the Oireachtas.

The National Climate Action Plan 2019 is an all-of-Government Plan to tackle climate change, setting out an ambitious course of action over the coming years to address the diverse and wide-ranging impacts climate disruption is having on Ireland’s environment, society, economic and natural resources. The Climate Action Plan sets out clear 2030 targets for each sector with the ultimate objective of achieving a transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally sustainable society and economy by 2050.

The national targets (Figure 3.1) have influenced the Development Plan Climate Policy Objectives and associated climate actions throughout this Plan.

**Figure 3.1: Irelands Climate Change Actions (Source: Climate Action Plan 2019)**



### 3.3.5 Climate Action Charter 2019

The Climate Action Charter followed the publication of the Climate Action Plan and represented a collective agreement on the part of Local Government across the State, with all 31 no. local authorities signing an agreement to commit to actions delivering climate action in their communities, through the actions set out in the Climate Action Plan. The Charter commits local authorities to several actions that will ensure that

they play a key leadership role, both locally and nationally in delivering effective climate action. Among other commitments, all local authorities will:

- Put in place a process for carbon proofing major decisions, programmes and projects on a systematic basis, including investments in transport and energy infrastructure;
- Deliver a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030;
- Ensure all suppliers provide information on their carbon footprint and steps they plan to reduce its impact;
- Build local citizen engagement, particularly with young people;
- Partner and collaborate on climate action initiatives with local community groups, local enterprise and local schools and higher-level institutions;
- Monitor, evaluate and report annually on the implementation of activities under the Charter.

The Chief Executive signed the Climate Action Charter on the 11th December, 2019. The Climate Action Charter demonstrates Longford County Council's commitment to work in partnership with the Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment in responding to climate change, while also providing local leadership in the area of Climate Action and support to communities in addressing such an important challenge.

### 3.3.6 National Planning Framework (NPF)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out the role of the planning system in facilitating mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change while ensuring that sustainable infrastructure networks build resilience to climate change. In this regard National Strategic Outcome (NSO) no. 8 is dedicated to achieving transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society:

*'The National Climate Policy Position establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand'.*

The Council will also demonstrate compliance with National Policy Objectives (NPOs) in areas such as:

- *NPO 3 (C)* - Densification 30% brownfield, integrating transport links, increasing permeability (both pedestrian and cycling) and connection to public transport (15min walk).
- *NPO 21* – Seeks to enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.

- *NPO 54* - Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

### 3.3.7 Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Fund was established under the *National Development Plan 2018-2027* as part of *Project Ireland 2040*. The fund (totalling €500 million over the period to 2027) will support initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets in a cost-effective manner. It offers the potential for innovative interventions which, in the absence of support from the Fund, would not otherwise be developed.

The Fund will also seek to facilitate projects that contribute to other Government policy priorities including: -

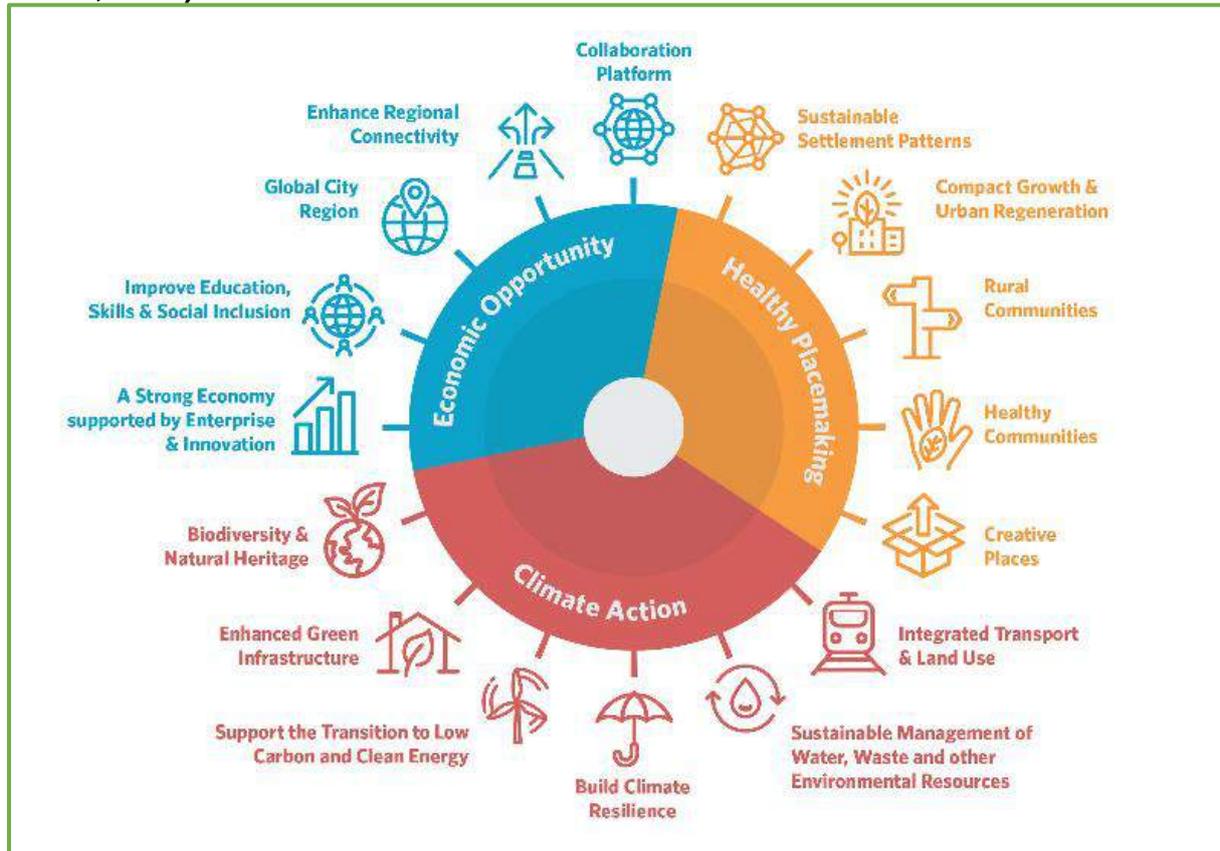
- Supporting innovation and capacity building towards the development of climate change solutions capable of being scaled and delivering benefits beyond a once-off impact;
- Generating wider socio-economic benefits such as job creation, air quality improvements, reduction in fuel poverty, bio-diversity and community resilience and development.

### 3.3.8 Eastern & Midlands Assembly – Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES)

The RSES has three key themes, one of which is specifically targeted at Climate Action and includes six connected outcomes (see Figure 3.2):

1. Integrated transport and land-use;
2. Sustainable management of water, waste and other environmental resources;
3. Build climate resilience;
4. Support the transition to low carbon and clean energy;
5. Enhanced green infrastructure;
6. Biodiversity and natural heritage.

**Figure 3.2: Regional Strategic Outcomes and Climate Actions (Source: EMRA RSES, 2019)**



The RSES provides a Climate Action Strategy ‘to accelerate climate action, ensure a clean and healthy environment and to promote sustainable transport and strategic green infrastructure’. Also, the RSES contains the following Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) of relevance to the local authority in relation to climate change:

- **RPO 3.7:** Local authorities shall have regard to environmental and sustainability considerations for meeting sustainable development targets and climate action commitments, in accordance with the National Adaptation Framework. In order to recognise the potential for impacts on the environment, local authorities shall address the proper site/route selection of any new development and examine environmental constraints including but not limited to biodiversity, flooding, landscape, cultural heritage, material assets, including the capacity of services to serve any new development.
- **RPO 7.7:** To reduce harmful emissions and achieve and maintain good air quality for all urban and rural areas in the Region and to work with local authorities and the relevant agencies to support local data collection in the development of air quality monitoring and to inform a regional air quality and greenhouse gas emissions inventory.
- **RPO 7.29:** Support collaboration between local authorities, the Bord na Móna Transition Team and relevant stakeholders and the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management that incorporate any relevant policies and strategies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats.

- *RPO 7.32:* With the assistance and support of the Climate Action Regional Offices, local authorities shall develop, adopt and implement local climate adaptation and mitigation strategies which shall address issues including local vulnerability to climate risks and identify and prioritise actions, in accordance with the Guiding Principles of the National Adaptation Framework.
- *RPO 7.35:* EMRA shall, in conjunction with local authorities in the Region, identify Strategic Energy Zones as areas suitable for larger energy generating projects, the role of community and micro energy production in urban and rural settings and the potential for renewable energy within industrial areas. The Strategic Energy Zones for the Region will ensure all environmental constraints are addressed in the analysis. A regional landscape strategy could be developed to support delivery of projects within the Strategic Energy Zones.
- *RPO 7.39:* Local authorities shall report annually on energy usage in all public buildings and will achieve a target of 33% improvement in energy efficiency in all buildings in line with the requirements of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP).

### 3.3.9 Midlands Just Transition Fund 2019

The fund announced in the budget of 2019 includes €6m carbon tax funding and a €5m contribution from the ESB. The fund has been established in recognition of the reliance on peat powered electric generation plants within the Midlands; which includes the peat generated power station at Lanesborough. The accelerated exit from peat will mean that at least 1.25 million tonnes of carbon will be saved each year and emissions reduced.

The fund is designed to retrain workers to assist local communities and businesses in the Midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition and to support proposals for sustainable employment in green enterprise. The fund includes provision for bog restoration and rehabilitation, which will restore non-Bord na Móna bogs to their natural habitat. This programme will support the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to restore 1,800 hectares of bog in 7 counties, resulting in 28 million tonnes of carbon stored over the next 5 years. It will create 70 jobs in year one, rising to 100 jobs as the programme develops.

The *Just Transition Fund* will be used to support:

- Retraining and reskilling workers to assist local communities and businesses in the Midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition;
- Proactive communications with affected communities and other stakeholders in the region and between local communities and the relevant national institutions;
- Best practice sharing networks and frameworks;
- The early development of local transition plans, with local communities at the core of plan development, based on economic analysis and local scoping of transition impacts and the opportunities it presents, acknowledging that the needs of individual areas across the Midlands will differ;
- Innovation and investment proposals to generate sustainable employment in green enterprise that do not come within the ambit of the *Project Ireland 2020* Funds or the State's other investment programmes.

The fund is closely related to the EU ‘Green Deal’ (section 3.3.1) which sets out key policy areas to deliver a more environmentally sustainable EU economy.

### 3.3.10 Longford County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 - 2024

As part of the National Climate Change Action Plan 2019, the County produced and adopted its own County Longford Climate Adaptation Strategy in 2019. This Strategy considers actions to be implemented by the Council in order to arrest the significant issues of climate change at a county level.

The Plan identifies the following high-level goal and 11 no. targeted specific objectives:

**Goal:** *Climate change adaptation considerations are mainstreamed and integrated successfully into all functions and activities of Longford County Council ensuring operational protocols, procedures and policies implement an appropriate response in addressing the diversity of impacts associated with climate change.*

- Objective 1: *Ensure that climate action awareness and adaptation responses are embedded within governance and management structures in Longford County Council.*
- Objective 2: *Incorporate climate action awareness and responses throughout Council policy.*
- Objective 3: *Ensure that structures are in place to secure continuity of service and business operations as part of adaptation mechanisms.*
- Objective 4: *Ensure/increase the resilience of infrastructural assets and inform investment decisions.*
- Objective 5: *Maintain the integrity of public infrastructure against negative climate change impacts and increase the design resilience of planned developments into the future.*
- Objective 6: *Promote a combined climate action response to infrastructure provision.*
- Objective 7: *Integrate climate action considerations into land use planning policy and influence positive behaviour.*
- Objective 8: *Manage the risk of flooding through a variety of responses and to mitigate the risk and impact of flooding.*
- Objective 9: *Provide for enhancement of natural environment to work positively towards climate action, to promote effective bio-diversity management and enhance protection of natural habitats and landscapes and to protect heritage and cultural infrastructure.*
- Objective 10: *Support climate action initiatives in line with Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) actions.*
- Objective 11: *Build capacity and resilience within communities.*

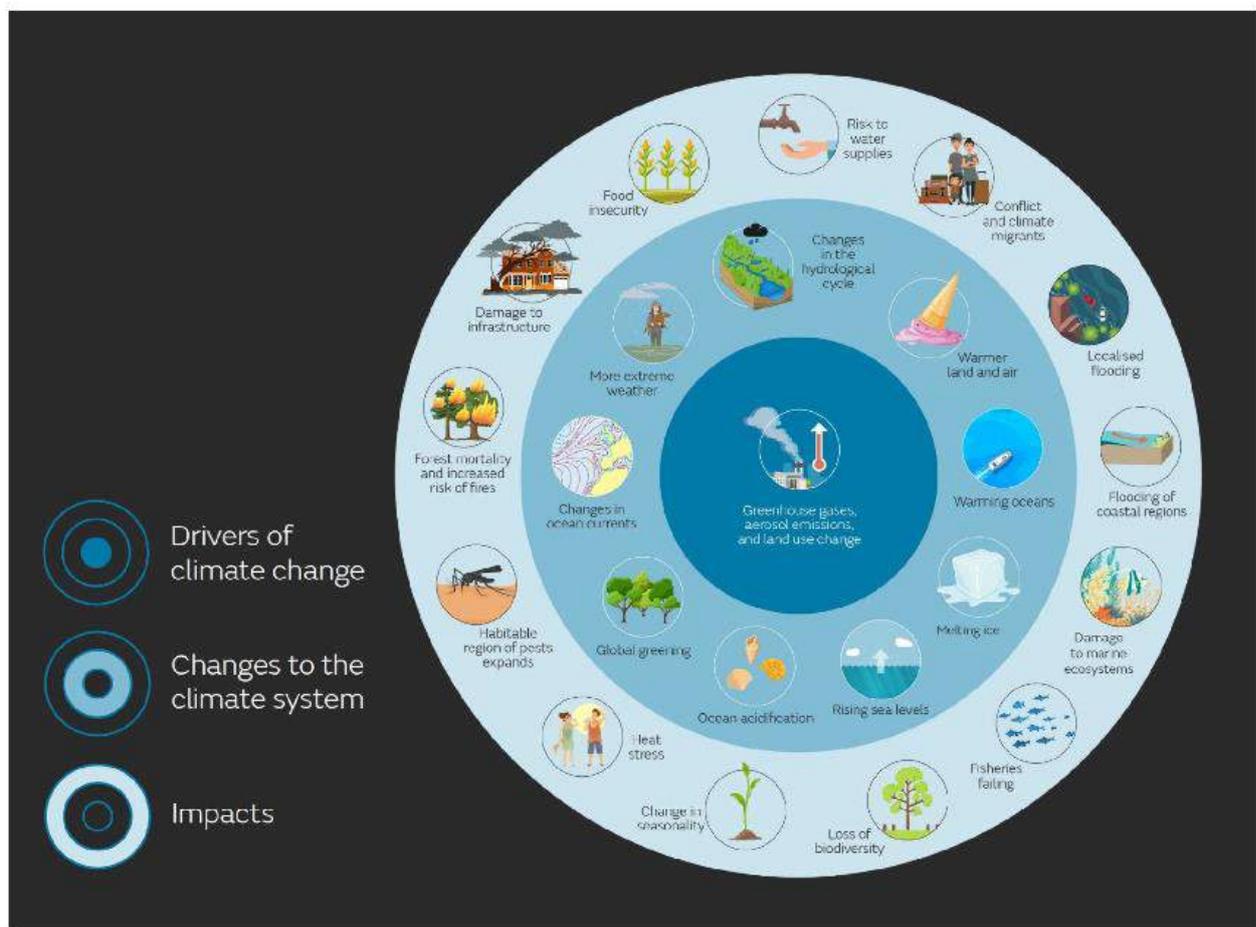
This Development Plan actively supports the implementation of these identified objectives and the associated actions identified in the Longford County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy.

### 3.4 Climate Change

Climate change encompasses not only rising average temperatures but also extreme weather events, shifting wildlife populations and habitats, rising seas, and a range of other impacts. The impacts of climate change are already been felt in Ireland and within the County including the following:

- Increases in average temperatures
- Wetter winters
- More intense and prolonged rainfall
- More flooding
- Fewer colder days
- Increase in summer droughts
- Rising sea levels
- Damage to existing ecosystems and biodiversity

Figure 3.3: The Impacts of Climate Change (Source: Met Office UK<sup>4</sup>)

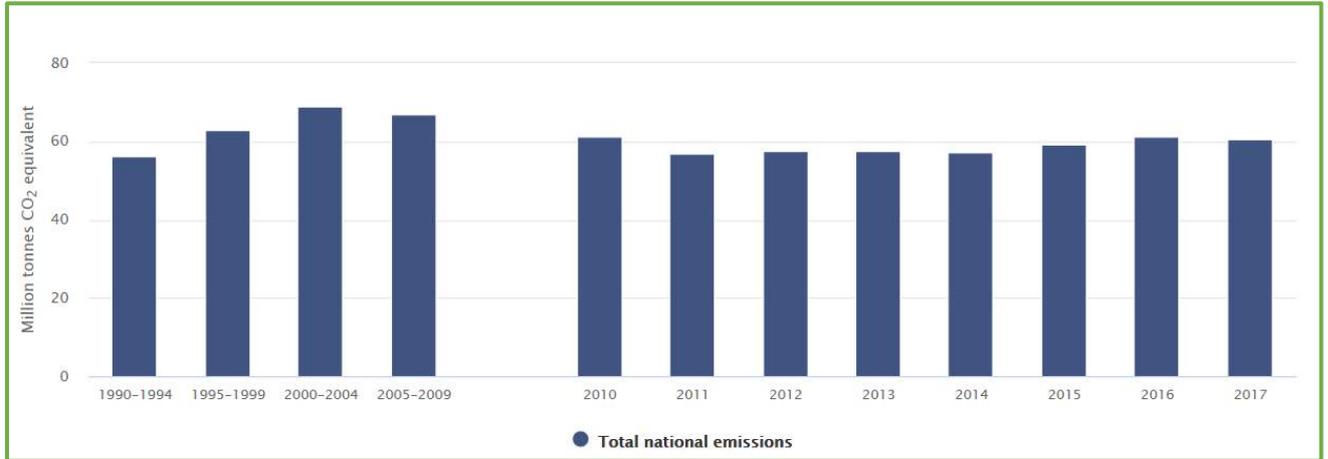


### 3.5 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In 2017, Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions were 60.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This was a reduction compared with the peak average annual emissions of 68.8 million tonnes in 2000-2004 but was 7.9% higher than the 1990-1994 average of 56.3 million tonnes (see Figure 3.4).

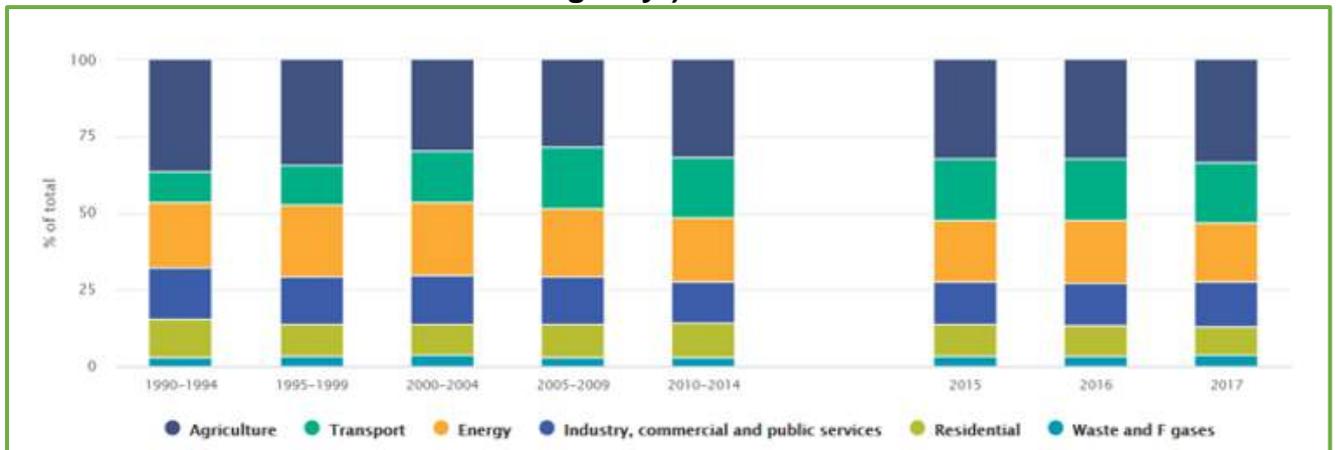
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/what-is-climate-change>

**Figure 3.4: Ireland Total greenhouse gas emissions 1990 - 2017 (Source: CSO using data from the Environmental Protection Agency<sup>5</sup>)**



At State level, the data shows that Agriculture is the largest emitter of greenhouse gasses accounting for 33% of the total. Transportation levels doubled over the period 1990 (10%) to 2017 (20%). Energy emissions also remained stable over the period 1990 to 2017, at 19% (see Figure 3.5).

**Figure 3.5: Irelands emissions by sector 1990 – 2017 (Source: CSO using data from the Environmental Protection Agency<sup>6</sup>)**



A Climate and Biodiversity Emergency was declared by Dáil Eireann in May 2019 highlighting the immediate need for urgent action. Ireland became only the second country in the world to pass such a declaration after the UK (1<sup>st</sup> May 2019).

The Chief Executive signed the Climate Action Charter on the 11th December, 2019. The Climate Action Charter demonstrates Longford County Council’s commitment to

<sup>5</sup><https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/peii/eii19/greenhousegasesandclimatechange/>

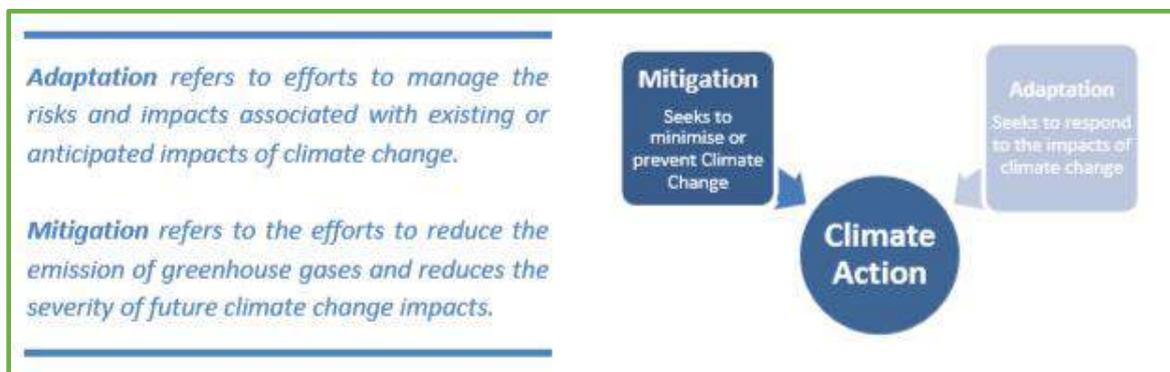
<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

work in partnership with the Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment in responding to climate change, while also providing local leadership in the area of Climate Action and support to communities in addressing such an important challenge.

### 3.6 County Longford Climate Strategy

Progressing climate action is a priority for this County Development Plan which will be done through a Climate Strategy which incorporates national and regional policy through an approach which includes mitigation and adaptation. The two components of climate action are critical in order to build resilience and adapt to the changing climate in a planned and structured way.

**Figure 3.6: Mitigation and Adaptation (Source: Longford County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019)**



Climate mitigation describes actions to reduce the likelihood of climate change occurring or to reduce the impact if it does occur. This can include reducing the causes of climate change (e.g. emissions of greenhouse gases) as well as reducing future risks associated with climate change.

Climate adaptation is a change in natural or human systems in response to the impacts of climate change. These changes moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities and can be in response to actual or expected impacts. One of the key issues relating to the Plan in the context of climate adaptation is flooding. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Development Plan that has helped to facilitate the appropriate zoning of areas that are at elevated risk of flooding.

The policies and actions in this plan seek to mitigate and reduce the severity of future climate change and adaptation to manage the risks and impacts associated with existing or anticipated impacts of climate change. Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 respectively identify the climate mitigation and adaptation measures proposed in this Plan.

**Table 3.1: Climate Mitigation Measures**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Climate Mitigation Measures</b>
<b>Buildings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support energy-efficient building design and emission reduction measures</li> <li>- Promote building of energy efficient homes/higher density appropriate to demographics and with greatest infrastructure provision</li> <li>- Promote renewable and low carbon energy</li> <li>- Create or enhance carbon sinks</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture, Land Management and Forestry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage the Agriculture Sector and our farming communities to adapt and change to produce more of our food locally in order to facilitate us all to shop local.</li> <li>- Encourage local food markets and shops to stock and sell local food produce. This will increase local employment and wealth generation as opposed to exporting it abroad.</li> <li>- Establish new community woodlands in urban/urban fringe areas</li> <li>- Support production of sustainable biofuels (farm contributions to localised energy supplies – biofuels/wind energy production)</li> <li>- Implement higher level Plan recommendations/objectives/policies</li> </ul>
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support construction of green routes/cycleways/pedestrian routes, subject to normal environmental considerations</li> <li>- Support low-car developments in suitable locations and car sharing</li> <li>- Strengthen public transportation linkages and encourage their use</li> <li>- Support localisation of jobs/ shops/services to minimise needs for most common travel patterns</li> <li>- Support electric vehicle charging points and electrification of Council fleet</li> </ul>
<b>Energy production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote energy-efficient building design</li> <li>- Promote links between developments and renewable energy resources, for instance by sourcing energy on-site (renewably or from low-carbon fuel sources)</li> <li>- Consider public lighting upgrades</li> <li>- Facilitate building retrofits</li> </ul>
<b>Minerals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Locate developments strategically (e.g. waste materials) to minimise need to travel, subject to health aspects/business needs</li> </ul>
<b>Resource Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support waste prevention and water conservation measures</li> </ul>

**Table 3.2: Climate Adaptation Measures**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Climate Adaptation Measures</b>
<b>Buildings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Land use zoning to be informed by flood risk</li> <li>- Promote the use of green roofs and natural ventilation</li> <li>- Enhance flood resilience of buildings, e.g. elevated work surfaces and storage facilities, raised sockets and electrical infrastructure, enhanced flood boards</li> <li>- Promote the use of permeable surfaces to decrease runoff rates</li> <li>- Institute grey-water recycling schemes to decrease abstraction of potable surface water resources, thus reducing water stress during periods of low rainfall</li> <li>- Maximise water conservation</li> <li>- Plant drought-resistant plants/ trees in public amenity areas to provide shade and increase green infrastructure linkages</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture, Land Management and Forestry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support diversification of rural economy to promote crop viability options etc.</li> <li>- Encourage afforestation (where environmentally appropriate) to enhance interception and infiltration of precipitation</li> <li>- Support restoration of peat bogs when turf cutting has ceased</li> <li>- Support the recommendations of the National Peatlands Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Water management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase resilience to flooding through Sustainable Drainage Systems</li> <li>- Harvest rainwater/grey water</li> <li>- Ensure adequate/appropriate water supply and drainage</li> <li>- Support Water Conservation Strategies</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure, including flood defences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure critical infrastructure and services (particularly emergency services) are resilient to new climatic conditions</li> <li>- Facilitate flood defences and flood resilient urban design</li> <li>- Coordinate emergency response plans;</li> </ul>
<b>Wildlife and biodiversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create/enhance ecological linkages and buffer zones from development</li> <li>- Create/protect ecologically resilient and varied landscapes to help support a wide range of species</li> </ul>
<b>Economy and tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support opportunities for increased tourism as a result of warmer summers, within limits of existing infrastructure and sensitive habitats</li> </ul>
<b>Human Health, Risk and Insurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide green infrastructure to provide shade in urban areas</li> <li>- Provide building methods and materials to reduce the impacts of heat stress</li> <li>- Appropriate maintenance of surface water drainage infrastructure to avoid flood risk</li> <li>- Land use zoning to be informed by flood risk</li> </ul>

Longford County Council is committed to making the transition to becoming a low carbon and climate resilient County, promoting the economic, social and environmental benefits of low carbon development, with an emphasis on the reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions. This includes a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.

In addition, supporting the relevant policy area, specific Climate Change Actions are set out at the end of each chapter of this County Development Plan.

<b>Climate Change Policies – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO 3.1	Support the implementation and achievement of European, national, regional and local objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures which have been outlined through the policy objectives in this Development Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Climate Action Plan (2019 and any subsequent versions);</i></li> <li>• <i>National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions);</i></li> <li>• Any Regional Decarbonisation Plan prepared on foot of commitments included in the <i>EMRA RSES</i>;</li> <li>• Relevant provisions of any Sectoral Adaptation Plans prepared to comply the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, including those seeking to contribute towards the National Transition Objective, to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050; and</li> <li>• <i>Longford County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024.</i></li> </ul>
CPO 3.2	Support and facilitate European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation having regard to the measures detailed in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 (these have been informed by available guidance on Climate Action and Mitigation, including that from the EPA).
CPO 3.3	Support the implementation and adoption of the <i>Longford County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy</i> and promote the County as a key driver of the transition to a low carbon economy within the Region.
CPO 3.4	Contribute towards climate mitigation and adaptation, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage).
CPO 3.5	Promote the benefits to quality of life, public health and biodiversity arising from implementation of policies promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation.

CPO 3.6	Provide for a reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions by providing for consolidated future development which supports sustainable travel patterns in line with the County Core Strategy.
CPO 3.7	Encourage innovation and facilitate the development of pilot schemes that support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, especially in the energy and agriculture sectors
CPO 3.8	Support the delivery of sustainable development projects under the European <i>Green Deal</i> and the <i>Just Transition Fund</i> .
CPO 3.9	Support collaboration between local authorities, the Midland Regional Transition Team and relevant stakeholders and the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management for a just transition that incorporates any relevant policies and strategies such as the <i>Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021</i> and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats.
CPO 3.10	Work in collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland and relevant stakeholders to deliver a number of sustainable energy communities throughout the County.
CPO 3.11	Consider the use of heat mapping to support developments which deliver energy efficiency and the recovery of energy that would otherwise be wasted.
CPO 3.12	Carry out a feasibility assessment for district heating and any subsequent Local Area Plans or other statutory planning documents shall identify local waste heat sources, where appropriate.
CPO 3.13	Seek to ensure primacy for transport options that provide for unit reductions in carbon emissions. This can most effectively be done by promoting public transport, walking and cycling, and by actively seeking to reduce car use in circumstances where alternative options are available.
CPO 3.14	Maintain existing green infrastructure and encourage and facilitate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the development of green infrastructure that recognises the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of open space amenities;</li> <li>• Sustainable management of water;</li> <li>• Protection and management of biodiversity;</li> <li>• Protection of cultural heritage; and</li> <li>• Protection of protected landscape sensitivities.</li> </ul>
CPO 3.15	Work with the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling.
CPO 3.16	Complete a detailed local survey and audit of greenhouse gas emissions for the County in order to effectively target and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a targeted approach at the County level and support the development of a Regional Inventory of GHG Emissions.

CPO 3.17	Seek the integration of positive climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in all planning applications.
CPO 3.18	Provide training on climate mitigation measures, to include the agricultural, construction, industry and transport sector.
CPO 3.19	<p>(i) Create an 'Implementation Plan' of adequate detail that will allow for continued monitoring of Local Authority actions, responsibilities and progress specifically related to Climate Action.</p> <p>(ii) Consider a variation of the development plan within a reasonable period of time, or to include such other mechanism, as may be appropriate, to ensure the Development Plan will be consistent with the approach to climate action recommended in the revised Development Plan Guidelines as adopted or any other relevant guidelines.</p>

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*Climate Change is a strategic and cross cutting theme across the County Longford Development Plan. As part of the collective need to tackle Climate Change, each chapter of this Plan concludes with a climate context and select number of associated climate actions, setting out definable and achievable targets.*

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## CHAPTER 4: CORE, SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING STRATEGIES

### 4.1 Introduction

This Core Strategy identifies the quantum, location and phasing of development in County Longford for the plan period which reflects the nationally and regionally defined population targets, settlement hierarchy and cognisant of the availability of existing services, planned investment, sequential development and environmental requirements.

The Core Strategy prepared for the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 articulates the medium to longer term evidence and quantitatively based strategy for the spatial development of County Longford, whilst demonstrating consistency with national and regional objectives as set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

The Core Strategy sets out a vision for County Longford and strategic aims required to deliver this vision. The development of this Core Strategy has been guided by the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government 'Guidance Note on Core Strategies' (2010), taking into account relevant changes brought about through the publication of the NPF and RSES. Encompassed within this are revised population targets, zoning requirements and associated policies to ensure consistency with these updated national and regional strategies. These are expressed in the Core Strategy Table (Table 4.15) and related zoning maps provided in Appendix 1 of this plan.

### 4.2 Core Strategy Statutory Context

Section 10 (1A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out the requirement for the preparation of a Core Strategy which demonstrates how the development objectives contained within this County Development Plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives. The Core Strategy must also take account of any Ministerial policies and guidance in relation to national and regional population targets. Under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), a Core Strategy focuses on:

- Defining a settlement hierarchy for the County that is consistent with the NPF and RSES.
- Transposing the prescribed NPF and RSES housing and population targets set at County level for the rural and urban centres identified within the settlement hierarchy.
- Providing an evidence-based rationale for the land proposed to be zoned for residential and mixed-use development having regard to the capacity of existing zoned land and the phasing of development taking account of the location of public transport and services.

- Demonstrating how the Planning Authority has had regard to the statutory Retail Planning Guidelines in setting out objectives for retail development

### 4.3 Core Strategy Policy Context

#### 4.3.1 *Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework*

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out the Government's high-level strategic plan for the future growth and development of the country out to the year 2040 by which time it is estimated that an extra 1 million people will be living in the country. The NPF targets 50% of overall national growth between the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. Supporting these five cities are the designated Regional Centres, of which the closest to Longford are Athlone and Sligo. Of particular relevance to the core strategy is the following National Strategic Objective (NSO), which relates to the concept of 'compact growth':

- *NSO 1: Compact Growth:* Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages in order to add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work. The NPF advocates the use of strategic, centrally located, and frequently publicly owned, lands for development as a means of realising their full potential through more efficient use of infrastructure and supporting amenities and the achievement of more effective densities and development consolidation rather than more sprawl development. This will be achieved by concentrating on delivering growth within the existing built-up footprint of settlements by focusing on the re-use of previously developed 'brownfield' land, the development of infill sites, and the re-use and redevelopment of existing sites and buildings. It is an objective that at least 30% of all new homes in settlements outside the 5 cities and suburbs will be within the existing built up footprint<sup>1</sup>.

County Longford is located within the Gateway Region, and is strategically located as an inter-regional portals to the Northern and Western Region. The Gateway Region also includes the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone, a number of large county towns, as well as smaller towns and villages which support the wider rural and agricultural area where the population is more dispersed. In terms of specific National Policy Objectives (NPOs) relevant to County Longford, there are a number of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) and associated targets aimed at growing the Eastern and Midland Region:

- *NPO 1a:* The projected level of population and employment growth in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area will be at least matched by that of the Northern and Western and Southern Regional Assembly areas combined.
- *NPO 1b:* Eastern and Midland Region: 490,000 - 540,000 additional people i.e. a population of around 2.85 million.
- *NPO 1c:* Eastern and Midland Region: around 320,000 additional people in employment i.e. 1.34 million in total.

<sup>1</sup> National Policy Objective 3c of the NPF

The NPF asserts that *‘in setting overall targets for future growth, it is a pattern of development that is being targeted, rather than precise numbers. From a long-term, national perspective, the targeted location, relative scale and proportionality of growth will assist in monitoring and assessing delivery and performance’*.

Key priorities in the NPF for the Eastern and Midland Region, and therefore relevant to County Longford, include:

- Enabling the complementary development of large and county towns in the wider Greater Dublin Area and Midland areas on the key strategic and public transport routes in a regionally co-ordinated manner, with an enhanced emphasis on measures to promote self-sustaining economic and employment-based development opportunities to match and catch-up on rapid phases of housing delivery in recent years.
- More effective strategic planning and coordination of the future development of nationally and regionally strategic locations at points that straddle boundaries between this and neighbouring regions as in the example of Athlone, which is a focal point for an area reaching into much of this and neighbouring regions in economic and employment, transport, education and public service delivery and retailing terms.
- More emphasis on consolidating the development of places that grew rapidly in the past decade or so with large scale commuter driven housing development with a particular focus on addressing local community and amenity facility provision in many of the larger commuter towns through targeted investment under the relevant NPF National Strategic Outcomes (see *Chapter 1: Introduction and Strategic Context*).
- Preparing and implementing a regional priorities programme, to shape and inform delivery of the Regeneration and Development Initiative. Part of this programme should identify significant ready-to-go city, rural town and village and rural rejuvenation priorities which could harness publicly owned land and other assets that are not being used actively at present such as former healthcare, military, transport and other complexes and combining the potential of such assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment to bring about the transformation of both urban and rural areas and places in an integrated manner.

In relation to the preparation of Core Strategies, the NPF places considerable emphasis on significant infill/brownfield growth, particularly in cities and large towns through effective linkages between the zoning of land and the availability of infrastructure. In this regard, the NPF advocates a two-tier approach to land zoning in relation to:

- *Tier 1: Serviced Zoned Land* – this zoning comprises lands that are able to connect to existing development services, i.e. road and footpath access including public lighting, foul sewer drainage, surface water drainage and water supply, for which there is service capacity available and can therefore accommodate new development. These lands will generally be positioned within the existing built-up footprint of a settlement or contiguous to existing developed lands.

- *Tier 2: Serviceable Zoned Land* – this zoning comprises lands that are not currently sufficiently serviced to support new development but have potential to become fully serviced within the life of the plan, i.e. the lands are currently constrained due to the need to deliver some or all development services required to support new development, i.e. road or footpath access, water and/or wastewater treatment infrastructure.

As part of the plan preparation process, substantial discussions were undertaken with Irish Water and local authority engineers regarding infrastructure needs. This will be augmented in accordance with national policy objective NPO 72A of the NPF which states that Planning authorities will be required to apply a standardised, tiered approach to differentiate between i) zoned land that is serviced and ii) zoned land that is serviceable within the life of the plan.’ and in accordance with the associated methodology for a tiered approach to land zoning as set out in Appendix 3 of the NPF.

In this regard an Infrastructure Assessment Report (IAR) has been used to identify the existing and projected level of infrastructure provision within settlements. This has identified lands fully serviced and available for development and other sites that are in need of more infrastructural investment prior to development. The zoning of certain sites has been altered to reflect the findings of the IAR (see Volume 2: Appendices).

The Planning Authority is committed to the preparation of detailed infrastructure assessments, consistent with NPO 72 and the methodology for a Tiered Approach to Zoning under Appendix 3 of the NPF, to inform the development strategy for future Local Area Plans in the county such as for Longford Town (policy objective CPO 4.9).

The planning authority shall finalise the IAR and implement the TAZ through the local areaplan preparation process, through the phasing and sequential development of those lands according to the availability or feasibility of delivering services.

#### 4.3.2 Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework (2018)

This Roadmap provides transitional population projections at a County scale in order to inform Development Plans for the period 2026 and 2031. The transitional population projections for County Longford are listed in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Transitional Regional and County Population Projections to 2031 for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (Source: *Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework*, p13)**

Sub-Region and Counties	2016	2026	2031
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Midlands			
Longford	41,000	44,500-45,500	46,000-47,000
Westmeath	89,000	96,500-98,500	100,000-102,500
Offaly	78,000	85,000-86,500	88,000-90,000
Laois	84,500	92,500-94,000	95,500-97,500
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>292,500</b>	<b>318,500-324,500</b>	<b>329,500-337,000</b>
Mid-East			
Kildare	222,500	249,000-254,000	259,000-266,500
Meath	195,000	216,000-221,000	225,500-231,500
Wicklow	142,500	139,000-144,500	144,000-151,500
Louth	129,000	139,000-144,500	144,000-151,500
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>689,000</b>	<b>759,000-777,000</b>	<b>789,000-813,500</b>
Dublin			
Dublin	1,347,500	1,489,000-1,517,500	1,549,500-1,590,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,329,000</b>	<b>2,566,500-2,619,000</b>	<b>2,668,000-2,740,500</b>

#### 4.3.3 *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning (2020)*

In order to strengthen the relationship between national and regional population projections and their integration into the development planning process at local authority level, the Department commissioned the ESRI to further develop work previously undertaken for the NPF. The findings of the ESRI work were published as a research paper on Structural Housing Demand at County Level in December 2020. Following publication of this, the Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, was published.

This ESRI research applies the projection model to four different development scenarios:

- Baseline – projecting a ‘business as usual’ scenario which is based on current trends and medium-term projections for the Irish economy;
- NPF 50:50 City – consistent with the NPF strategy;
- High Migration – incorporating assumptions around high international migration flows into Ireland based on higher economic growth than the baseline; and
- Low Migration – incorporating assumptions around lower international migration flows into Ireland based on lower economic growth than the baseline.

The ESRI research model is intended to enable structural household demand levels for each local authority area to be set out under the four different scenarios for each year to 2040. The Section 28 Guidelines state that ‘*the NPF 50:50 City scenario is broadly consistent with the National Planning Framework strategy and consequently, the 2018 NPF ‘Roadmap’ document*’. As such, the Section 28 Guidelines further indicate that this is the recommended housing demand scenario to be used by planning authorities in their planning functions in order to plan for the provision of housing to meet projected levels of demand in their administrative area, in accordance with the NPF strategy.

Thus, planning authorities must now demonstrate the manner in which their core strategy and other elements of the plan are consistent with the NPF 50:50 City housing demand projection scenario identified by the ESRI. Deviation from this scenario, the Guidelines state, must be evidence-based and consistent with these guidelines.

The Guidelines set a methodology for the application of population and housing projections into Local Authority plan processes.

As set out below in Table 4.2, Longford County Council have finalised the following calculation of housing demand for the plan period. Longford County Council will not pursue optional adjustments ('E' or 'F'), and therefore will pursue a total housing supply target of 2,568 units for the Longford County Development Plan over a plan period<sup>2</sup> anticipated to cover approximately Q1 2022 – Q4 2027 inclusive.

**Table 4.2: Calculation of Housing Supply Targets for County Longford over the plan period<sup>3</sup>**

Longford County Council		Annual Average Households	Total Households
<b>A</b>	ESRI NPF scenario projected new household demand 2017 to end Q4 2027	277	3,042
<b>B</b>	Actual new housing supply 2017 to end Q3 2021 (Source: CSO to Q4 2020, pro-rata of 2020 data for remainder)	103	517
<b>C</b>	Homeless households and unmet need <sup>4</sup>	-	43
<b>D</b>	<b>Plan Housing Demand = Total (A-B+C) For plan period Q1 2022 – Q4 2027 (6 years)</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>2,568</b>
<b>E</b>	Potential Adjustment 1 to end 2026 portion of plan period – <b>not pursued</b>		
<b>F</b>	Potential adjustment 2 to end 2026 portion of plan period to facilitate convergence to NPF strategy, applicable where B exceeds or is close to D (where justified) – <b>not pursued</b>		

#### 4.3.4 Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 - 2031

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) sets out a Growth Strategy for the Region in line with growth identified in the NPF and the population targets provided for the in the *Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework*. The key enablers of the Growth Strategy of the RSES that will influence future growth and development in County Longford are as follows:

<sup>2</sup> For calculation purposes, the plan period has been rounded to whole quarters.

<sup>3</sup> Following 'Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning' (DHLGH, December 2020)

<sup>4</sup> Homeless households as of January 2021, plus unmet need as of Census 2016; source: DHLGH, February 2021.

- Future growth will be predominantly directed towards key designated settlements such as Longford Town and other settlements identified as having the capacity, level and range of services and amenities to sustain and cater for future residential, employment, service and amenity requirements in a sustainable manner.
- Compact urban growth to realise targets of at least 30% of all new homes to be built within or contiguous to the existing built up urban areas.
- There will be a greater focus on sustainable growth in small-medium sized settlements including infill and brownfield development in addition to support for an improvement in the provision of amenities and services.
- Complement and support the continued growth of Athlone in its role as a Regional Growth Centre and economic driver in the centre of Ireland.
- There will be a focus on investment in rural towns and villages to address the decline of rural areas, with a focus on the identification of rural towns, villages and rural regeneration priorities to give vibrancy to these areas.
- Diversification and growth of smart specialisation of local economies with a strong focus on clustering, including sustainable farming and food production, tourism, marine, energy and renewables and bioeconomy, with a focus on publicly owned peatlands in the midlands, to support a 'Just' transition and realise the benefits of green technologies.
- Promote the Region as a key destination for tourism, leisure and recreation activities and support the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced.
- 'Catch up' investment to promote consolidation and improvement in the sustainability of those areas that have experienced significant population growth but have a weak level of services and employment for their residents.

Related to this Growth Strategy is a Settlement Strategy set out in the RSES which identifies a Settlement Hierarchy for the Region and an identification of key growth areas that will see significant development up to 2031. The Settlement Hierarchy contained within the RSES was informed by an evidence driven Settlement Typology and 'Asset-Based' approach to the identification of settlements which have the greatest capacity and potential for growth and to act as 'engines' for wider regional growth. A number of key criteria were considered in the development of the asset base as follows:

**Table 4.3: Asset Based Criteria for Compact Growth**

<b>Scale:</b>	The scale of population, growth rates and local ambition for sustainable compact growth.
<b>Function:</b>	The scale of employment provision and commuting flows, particularly sub-regional interdependencies and influence.
<b>Human Capital:</b>	The extent of local services provision i.e. administration, education particularly third level, health, retail and amenities; levels of relative affluence or deprivation.
<b>Enterprise:</b>	The availability of economic development assets and clusters.

<b>Placemaking:</b>	This is linked to ‘Functionality’ in terms of provision of suitable sites and property solutions to meet enterprise and labour force expectations.
<b>Connectivity:</b>	Transport accessibility and trip profiles, including internal trips.
<b>Environmental / Natural Capital:</b>	Environmental sensitivities, resources and assets.
<b>Infrastructure:</b>	Current and planned infrastructure capacity.

The Settlement Hierarchy in the RSES classifies Longford as located within the Gateway Region of which Table 4.4 details the RSES Settlement Hierarchy relevant.

**Table 4.4: RSES Settlement Hierarchy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Region (as relevant to County Longford)**

Settlement Typology	Description	Gateway Region
<b>Regional Growth Centres</b>	Regional Growth Centres are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.	Athlone and Dundalk
<b>Key Towns</b>	Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres.	Longford
<b>Self-Sustaining Growth Towns</b>	i) Self-Sustaining Growth Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining	Defined by Development Plan
<b>Self-Sustaining Towns</b>	ii) Self-Sustaining Towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted ‘catch up’ investment to become more self-sustaining.	Defined by Development Plan
<b>Towns and Villages</b>	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions	Defined by Development Plan
<b>Rural</b>	Villages and the wider rural region	Defined by Development Plan

In developing this Settlement Hierarchy, the RSES recognises that population and employment size are not the sole determinant of a settlement’s functional role or in the consideration of its strategic regional significance. It states that ‘*some towns with a large population base located within the catchment of Dublin have emerged mainly as*

*commuting towns, with a level of function significantly lower than their population base. Conversely, other towns have a level of function higher than their population base and play a key regional role' (EMRA RSES, p46).*

The Settlement Hierarchy identifies only one County Longford-based settlement, Longford Town, which is classified as a 'Key Town' on account of its large economic activity service and status as a county town that provides employment for its surrounding area and which is supplemented by high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as regional driver to complement the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone. In relation to lower settlement tiers within its hierarchy, the RSES advocates the use of the asset-based criteria approach to identify these settlements within the respective development plans of local authorities. This approach has also been utilised to guide the development of the Settlement Hierarchy for County Longford, as detailed in Section 4.10.4.

Within higher order settlements such as Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns, such as Longford Town, the RSES asserts that core strategies should apply higher densities in these settlements. However, the RSES further states that there should be a graded reduction in residential densities for Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns, towns and villages that are commensurate to the existing built environment.

#### **4.4 Core Strategy Relationship with other Plans and Strategies**

In addition to strategic guidance set out in the NPF and the Eastern and Midland RSES, the Development Plan and Core Strategy has also had regard to relevant national, regional and local level plans and strategies, along with a number of planning guidance documents issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (see Annex 1). In particular the *Guidance Note on Core Strategies*, DoEHLG (2010) recommends that planning authorities undertake an appropriate level of analysis to ensure that sufficient lands are zoned at suitable locations, taking account of higher level planning policies and the required physical infrastructure. The following are also of particular note:

##### **4.4.1 County Longford Housing Strategy**

In accordance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, each planning authority is required to prepare a Housing Strategy which will cover the period of its Development Plan. The Housing Strategy must have regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and must address the overall supply of housing within the administrative boundary of the local authority. Accordingly, the Planning Authority has a statutory obligation to address the need for social and affordable housing and to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for housing over the period of its Development Plan.

All aspects relating to the housing market were considered during the preparation of the Housing Strategy, including an assessment of the prevailing economic and local market conditions through detailed quantitative and qualitative assessments, which included

drawing on local auctioneer and property management expertise, to ascertain a comprehensive impression of the current and future market outlook. Whilst the evidence gathered would suggest that challenges exist within the housing market in County Longford, there is consensus that activity should gather pace within the immediate future as the economy continues to grow and, with that, the increased demand for additional housing. Set within this context, the Council has planned for the growth of the housing market in Longford, whilst recognising the need for increased levels of development within established urban settlements and the importance for fostering 'compact growth' in our settlements in the overall sustainable development of the County.

In line with the methodology employed, the population targets defined as part of the Housing Strategy are in line with the RSES population targets and support the settlement hierarchy outlined within the RSES. It should further be noted that the Housing Strategy addresses the provision of housing in the County, including social and specialist housing, demand for different house types, meeting the needs of varying households and incomes. The population projections and settlement hierarchy defined as part of this core strategy are consistent with the population projections and settlement hierarchy contained as part of the Housing Strategy.

The Housing Strategy for County Longford is included in Annex 4 of this Plan.

#### 4.4.2 County Longford Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA)

Under Section 94 (1) (a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), each planning authority:

*'shall include in any development plan a strategy for the purpose of ensuring that proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plan provides for the housing of the existing and future population of the area in the manner set out in the strategy'.*

Any such strategy must take into account of:

- existing need and the likely future need for housing;
- need to ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income;
- need to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of the different categories of households, as may be determined by the planning authority, and including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, and;
- need to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds.

In order to ensure that the plan-making system is supported by a robust methodology to inform policies and funding initiatives around housing and associated land requirements, the NPF introduced a requirement for each local authority to develop a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA). The HNDA will support the preparation of housing

strategies and all related housing policy outputs, e.g. county development plans, local area plans, traveller accommodation plans.

The purpose of the HNDA is to:

- Assist local authorities to develop long-term strategic views of housing need across all tenures.
- Provide a robust evidence base to support decisions about new housing supply, wider investment and housing related services that inform an overall national housing profile.
- Inform policies about the proportion of social and affordable housing required, including the need for different types and sizes of provision.
- Provide evidence to inform policies related to the provision of specialist housing and housing related services.

The HNDA process complements the Core Strategy in providing the quantitative evidence base to articulate the medium to longer term spatial development strategy of the functional area of the planning authority and in so doing to demonstrate that the development plan and its objectives are consistent with national and regional development objectives. The HNDA process is elaborated and presented in greater detail in the Housing Strategy provided in Annex 4.

#### 4.4.3 County Longford Retail Strategy 2021-2027

In terms of the Core Strategy there is a particular requirement to demonstrate that regard has been had to the statutory Retail Planning in setting out objectives for retail development. In this regard the County Longford Retail Strategy reflects the important role Longford Town, identified as a Level 2 - 'County Town Centre' within the retail hierarchy for the Region, plays in the overall retailing function of the County through its position at the top of the retail hierarchy in this Plan. Similarly, the RSES retail hierarchy takes account of the retail role and function played by Granard, which is identified as a Level 3 – 'Key Service Centre'. The Retail Strategy also recognises the important retail functions other settlements within the County undertake, whilst also reinforcing their respective rural hinterlands through the provision of key services and retail choice. In order to cater for the population increases envisaged over the Plan period, it is considered that an approximate total of 2,100-3,200 sq.m of convenience floorspace; 2,000-2,650 sq.m. of comparison floorspace; and 2,200-4,850 sq.m. of additional bulky goods retail floorspace is required over the period up to 2027.

In line with the *Retail Planning Guidelines*, and having regard to the Retail Hierarchy, Longford Town is identified as being the only location within the County suitable for the provision of District Centres for the purpose of providing retailing and amenities to serve its catchment population. Accordingly, as a consequence of the retail primacy of Longford Town in the County, the importance of promoting the use of appropriate lands within Longford Town for the development of associated employment generating, industrial and mixed uses in order to enhance and contribute to the overall economy of Longford is acknowledged in the Core Strategy.

The Longford County Retail Strategy is contained in full in Volume 3: Annex 9 of this Plan, with relevant policy contained in Section 8.7.2 of this Volume.

#### **4.5 County Longford Development Plan Strategy (Core Strategy)**

The key purpose of the Longford core strategy is to ensure that the local authority identify and reserve an appropriate amount of land in the right locations to meet housing and population targets. This is done through the articulation of a medium to long term quantitative strategy for the spatial development of the area of the planning authority which is consistent with national and regional policy objectives set out in the NPF and the RSES and previously indicated.

County Longford also benefits from a strategic national road network reflecting its central location in the country. Several strategic national primary and secondary routes traverse the County from east to west; and from north to south. These include the N4 and the N5, both of which are components of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) Comprehensive Network; as well as the N55, N63 and several strategically important regionally routes, including the R392 which provides a route from Lanesborough and Ballymahon to Mullingar. Together the EU TEN-T Network and the national roads identified provide important strategic links within and through the county and region, including providing critical international connectivity.

Accordingly, this Core Strategy articulates a medium to longer term evidence and quantitatively based strategy for the spatial development of County Longford, whilst demonstrating consistency with national and regional development objectives outlined in the NPF and RSES as previously outlined. This Core Strategy identifies the quantum, location and phasing of development for the plan period that is consistent with the regionally defined population targets and settlement hierarchy, and, which reflects the availability of existing services, planned investment, sequential development and environmental requirements (i.e. an evidence-based approach in determining the suitability of lands for zoning purposes).

In accordance with statutory requirements the County Longford Core Strategy sets out to:

1. Define a settlement hierarchy for the County that is consistent with the NPF and RSES.
2. Transpose the prescribed NPF and RSES housing and population targets set at County level for the rural and urban centres identified within the settlement hierarchy.
3. Provide an evidence-based rationale for the land proposed to be zoned for residential and mixed-use development having regard to the capacity of existing zoned land and the phasing of development taking account of the location of public transport and services.
4. Demonstrate how the Planning Authority has had regard to the statutory Retail Planning Guidelines in setting out objectives for retail development.

To demonstrate consistency with statutory requirements, and national and regional development objectives outlined in the NPF and RSES, the Core Strategy contains the following:

- A written statement which outlines the strategic aims and rationale of the strategy including population targets;
- Existing and future distribution of population within a defined settlement hierarchy;
- A diagrammatic core strategy map which shows how it is envisioned the County will develop in line with the availability of infrastructure, services and amenities;
- A Core Strategy Table with the emphasis being placed on the quantum and distribution of future population and housing development lands and quantification of the requirements for zoning of lands for residential purposes;

#### 4.6 Core Strategy Strategic Aims

The 8 no. Strategic aims of the Core Strategy are as follows:

<b>Aim 1</b>	To provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Longford over the plan period.
<b>Aim 2</b>	To demonstrate that the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional policy objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and other national guidelines and policies.
<b>Aim 3</b>	To identify the appropriate quantum, location and phasing of development considered necessary to provide for future population growth over the plan period in accordance with National Planning Framework and Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
<b>Aim 4</b>	To provide alignment and integration between strategic planning and settlement policy and the prioritisation of physical infrastructure investment.
<b>Aim 5</b>	To secure future growth opportunities within County Longford through optimising the County's economic, social and physical development.
<b>Aim 6</b>	To coordinate the development of land identified in this Core Strategy in a manner that supports public transport and existing services and to prioritise sequential development of settlements, including the development of infill and brownfield lands.
<b>Aim 7</b>	To provide a framework for determining the scale, phasing and location of new development having regard to existing services and planned infrastructural investment over the coming years.
<b>Aim 8</b>	To provide a framework within which the provision of sustainable infrastructure, amenities, economic investment and development can take place to maximise the use of resources in the plan area.
<b>Aim 9</b>	To maintain the strategic function, capacity and safety of the national roads network and to ensure that the existing extensive transport networks, which have been greatly enhanced over the last two decades, are maintained to a high level to ensure quality levels of service, safety, accessibility and connectivity to transport users.

## 4.7 Core Strategy Considerations

### 4.7.1 Economic Development

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn, the economic landscape in Longford had recovered significantly in the intervening years following the national economic recession and stagnation experienced between 2007 to 2014, albeit not to the same economic or labour market activity levels evidenced in the Celtic Tiger economic era. In Longford, the CSO has recorded that since 2011, the total number of 'active enterprises' has increased from 1,862 in 2011 to 2,022 in 2017. These figures indicate an improvement on enterprise formation levels from than experienced in 2008, prior to the full effects of the economic downturn, with 1,944 active enterprises recorded in Longford in that year. However, it is also notable that the number of employees corresponding to the amount of active business was higher in 2008 (6,820) compared to the number of employees recorded in 2017 (6,341).

More recent figures for 2017 suggest that companies operating in the 'business economy' are the overwhelming major employers, with 6,341 employees. Manufacturing also plays a significant role, with its employee total reaching 1,621, making it the next largest. Longford's labour force participation rate has seen a decline of 1.3% from 2011 to 2016. The labour force for Longford in 2016 comprised of 18,873 persons, an increase of 440 persons from that recorded in 2011, and a participation rate of 60.2%. Table 4.5 provides details on the principal economic status of persons over the age of 15 years, which accounts for retirees as well as potential labour force participants.

**Table 4.5: Principal Economic Status of Persons Aged 15 and Over in County Longford (Source: CSO, Census 2016)**

Principal Economic Status	Persons Aged 15 and Over	%
At work	15,172	48.4%
Looking for first regular job	374	1.2%
Unemployed having lost or given up previous job	3,327	10.6%
Student	3,062	9.8%
Looking after home/family	2,873	9.2%
Retired	4,782	15.2%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	1,657	5.3%
Other	118	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,365</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

From analysis of the 2016 Census, the prominent employment sectors in County Longford are professional services (21.8%), commerce and trade (20.5%) and manufacturing industries (16.9%). Table 4.6 and Figure 4.1 illustrate jobs by industry sector share in County Longford with the State comparison.

**Table 4.6: Employment Numbers in County Longford by Industry Sector with State Comparison (Source: CSO, Census 2016)**

Industry	Longford Total	State Total	Longford Industry Share %	State Industry Share %
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	1,159	89,116	7.6%	4.4%
Building & Construction	841	101,849	5.5%	5.1%
Manufacturing Industries	2,566	229,548	16.9%	11.4%
Commerce & trade	3,108	480,117	20.5%	23.9%
Transport & Communications	756	171,194	5.0%	8.5%
Public Administration	929	106,797	6.1%	5.3%
Professional Services	3,314	471,656	21.8%	23.5%
Other	2,499	356,364	16.5%	17.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,172</b>	<b>2,006,641</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Figure 4.1: Bar Chart Illustrating Employment Numbers in County Longford by Industry Sector with State Comparison (Source: CSO – Census 2016)**

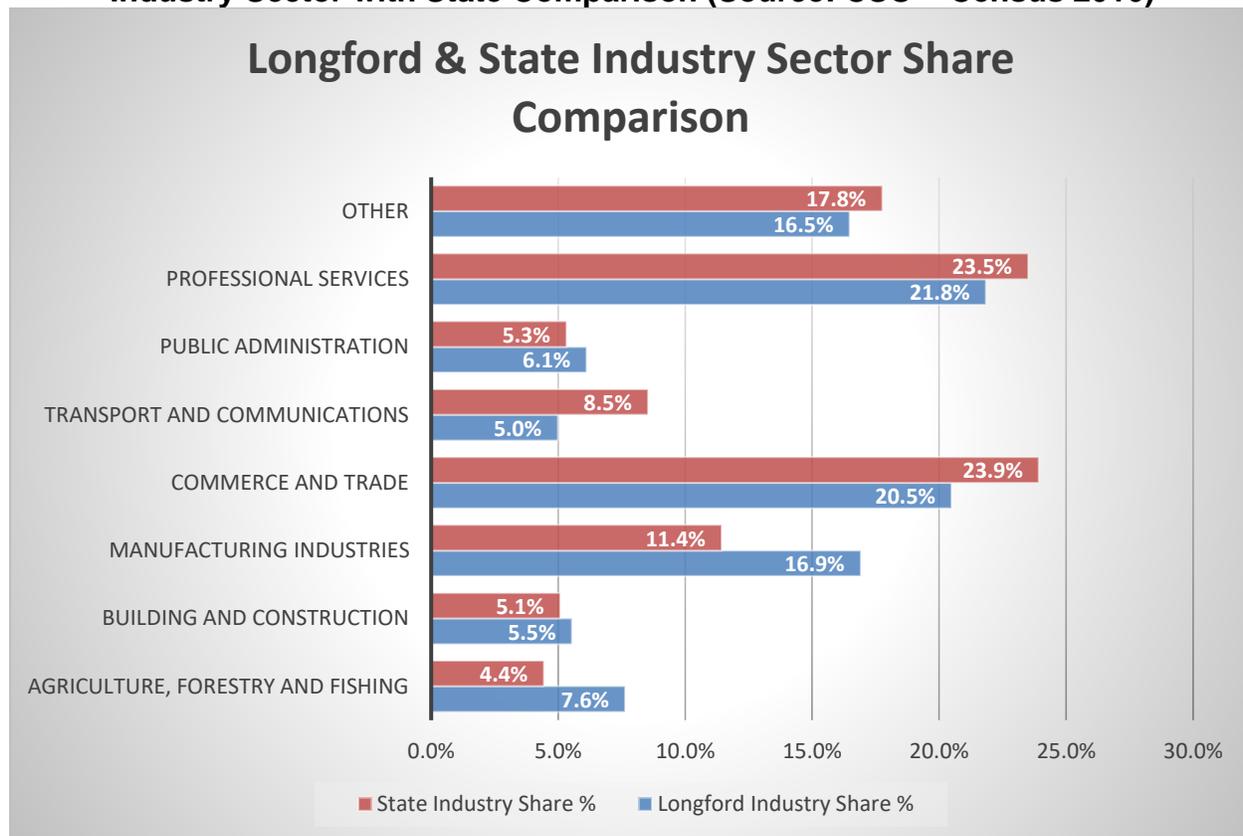


Table 4.7 details the social class of those persons aged 15 years and over at work, as recorded in the 2016 Census. It illustrates that there is a strong representation at managerial and technical and non-manual and classes. Similarly, there is a high level of manual skilled and semi-skilled reflecting the strength of the manufacturing sector in the County.

**Table 4.7: Socio-Economic Profile of Persons Aged 15 and Over at Work in County Longford (Source: CSO, Census 2016)**

Socio-Economic Class	Number of Persons aged 15 years and over at Work	% of Persons aged 15 years and over at Work
Professional workers	836	5.5%
Managerial and technical	4,024	26.5%
Non-manual	3,201	21.1%
Skilled manual	2,836	18.7%
Semi-skilled	2,483	16.4%
Unskilled	643	4.2%
All other gainfully occupied and unknown	1,149	7.6%
All social classes	15,172	100.0%

### 4.7.1 Population Trends and Targets

During the inter-censal period between 2011 and 2016, the population in County Longford grew by 4.8% (1,873 additional persons), as the population increased to 40,873 from 39,000 people. However, there are significant variances in population growth across the settlements. Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown have continued to significantly increase their populations over the 20-year period from 1996-2016, and both recorded significant population increases of 20.8% (up to 1,877 persons) and 18.8% (up to 2,072 persons) respectively between 2011 and 2016. Longford Town recorded a population increase of 407 persons (+4.24%) over the same period to yield a population of 10,008 in 2016. Other towns and villages which made significant population gains over the inter-censal period between 2011 and 2016 include Aughnaccliffe (+19%), Keenagh (+83%), Ballinalee (+12.66%) and Drumlish (+11.5%).

### 4.7.2 Population Distribution

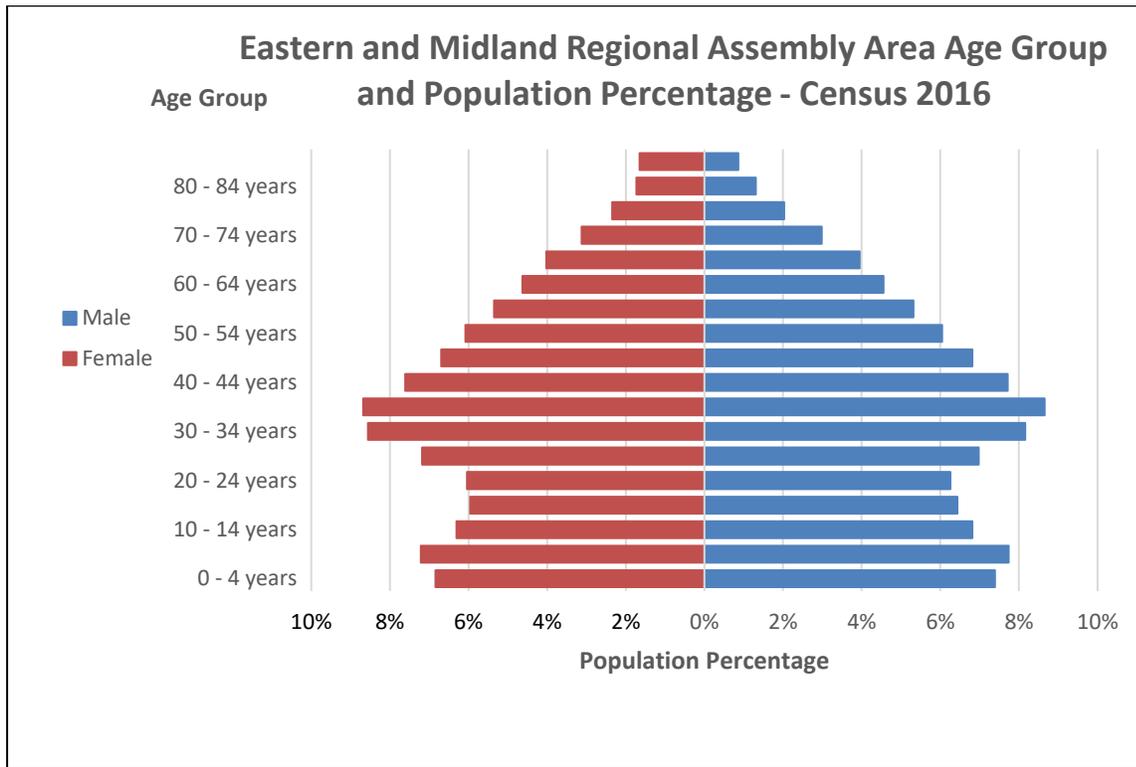
The population distribution across urban and rural areas in County Longford remained consistent between 2011 and 2016. According to the CSO, 13,957 people (34.2%) were living in urban settlements<sup>5</sup> in Longford in 2016, whilst 26,916 (65.85%) were living in smaller towns and villages, as well as in the rural remainder of the county. In 2011, census results showed a distribution between the urban and rural population as 33.1% and 66.9% respectively. Thus, the marginal increase (+ 1%) in urban living in County Longford has broadly aligned with the prevailing state-wide direction of travel of urbanisation.

### 4.7.3 Population Structure

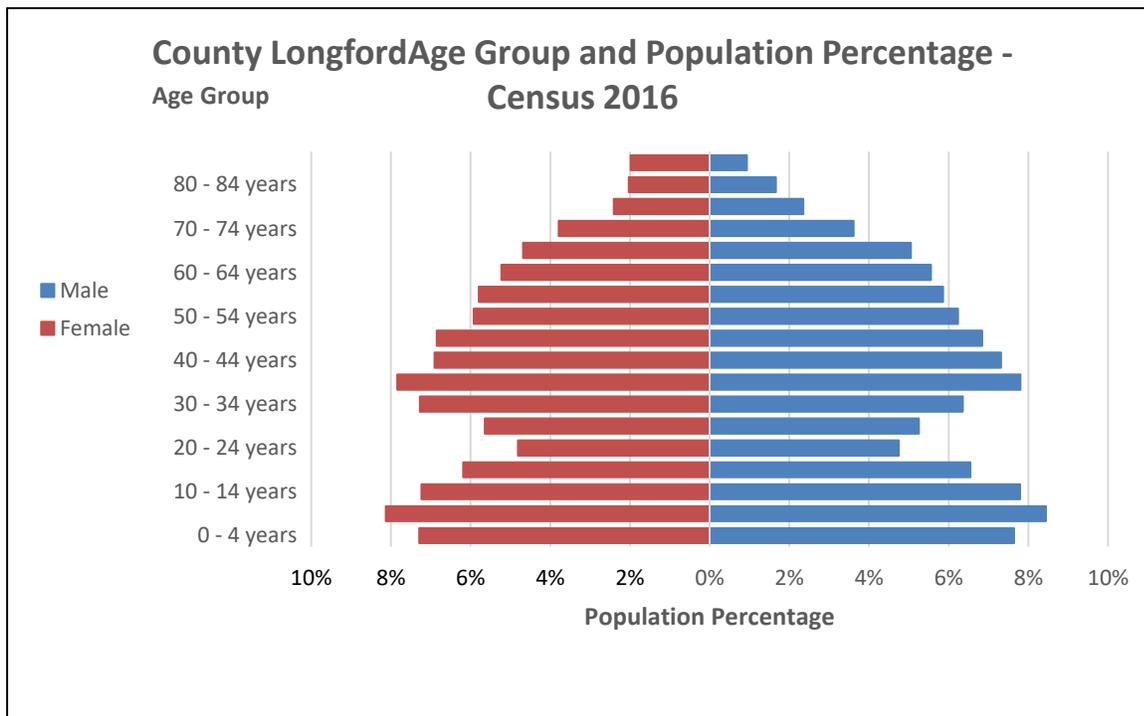
The age profile of the EMRA region in 2016 was relatively young with nearly half a million children, or approximately 1 in 5 people (22%) in the Region aged under 14 years of age. Figure 4.2 illustrates the age profile of the EMRA area, depicting this as a population pyramid according to gender and age group. In County Longford, this figure is broadly similar, standing at 23.3% as set out in Table 3.2. In total, the number of children of pre-school age (0-4 years) in Longford is 3,051 (7.5%). 5,205 (12.7%) are of primary school going age (5-12 years) and a further 3,432 (8.4%) are of secondary school going age (13-18 years). A comparative age profile of the county is presented in Figure 4.3.

<sup>5</sup> The CSO defines a settlement of more than 1,500 people as 'urban'.

**Figure 4.2: EMRA Age Profile (Source: Census 2016, CSO)**



**Figure 4.3: County Longford Age Profile (Source: Census 2016, CSO)**



Census 2016 results show that Ireland's population has been getting steadily older since the 1980's. In 2016, 37.2% of the Irish population were aged 45 and over, compared with 34.4% in 2011 and 27.6% in 1986. In 2016, 13.4% of the national population were over 65 years. As with the state, both the EMRA region and County Longford are ageing. As the RSES notes, by 2031 there will be a significant increase in the regional population aged over 65 and as such, there is a need to plan for adequate healthcare, accommodation and services to enable independent living for as long as possible, encourage active lifestyles and address isolation for older residents.

#### 4.7.4 Housing Stock

Census 2016 results record a total housing stock of 18,591 units in County Longford, which represents a marginal decrease of 232 units since 2011. The number of occupied dwellings in County Longford recorded in 2016 was 15,092<sup>6</sup>. The average occupancy rate across the county was 2.70 persons per occupied dwelling which is marginally lower than the national rate of 2.75. Over half (54.7%) of households in Longford in 2016 had just one or two persons living in that household as illustrated in Table 4.8; this generally compares to the national figures on household size cohorts. 93.9% of households comprised of a house or bungalow, while 4.2% were apartments in 2016; whereas at a national level, 12% of all occupied households were apartments.

**Table 4.8: Existing Household Size Cohorts (CSO, 2016)**

County Longford	Households	Persons	Households %	Persons %
<b>1 person</b>	4,035	4,035	26.7%	9.9%
<b>2 persons</b>	4,233	8,466	28.0%	20.8%
<b>3 persons</b>	2,466	7,398	16.3%	18.1%
<b>4 persons</b>	2,274	9,096	15.0%	22.3%
<b>5+ persons</b>	2,114	11,780	14.0%	28.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,122</b>	<b>40,775</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 4.9 provides detail of housing tenures across County Longford. Home ownership remains the dominant tenure in Longford with 63.7% of households within this category in 2016; 26% of which pay a mortgage; 17.4% of households were in the private rental market; while 14.6% (2,198) of rented properties comprise social housing, an increase of almost 3% since 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Excluding caravans and mobile homes as permanent dwellings. Source: CSO Census of Population (2016)

**Table 4.9: Household Tenure – Occupancy Type County Longford 2016**

County Longford	Owner occupied with mortgage	Owner occupied no mortgage	Rented from private landlord	Rented from Local Authority	Rented from voluntary body	Occupied free rent	Not of stated	Total
No. of Households	3,864	5,753	2,621	2,031	167	257	399	15,092
% of Households	26%	38%	17%	13%	1%	2%	3%	100%

#### 4.7.5 Area already zoned in the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021

Section 10 (2A) (c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, prescribes that a core strategy shall take account of the area in the development plan already zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses, with details on the area of such lands and the quantum of housing to be included in the area. Accordingly, from the lands already zoned under the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 for residential use, Table 4.10 below sets out the area of land zoned for residential use in the County Development Plan 2015-2021.

**Table 4.10: Quantum of lands zoned for residential use or mixture and associated housing yield as detailed in the longford county development plan 2015-2021**

Plan	Mixed Use Zoning	Residential Zoning
Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021	103Ha	163Ha

It is noted that the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 did not allocate a residential unit figure to zonings for a mixture of residential and other uses. The amount of land that was zoned mixed use (which included developed and undeveloped land) was 103 hectares.

The number of units allocated to the residential zoned figure under the County Development Plan 2015-2021 was 2,335 which equated to 163 hectares of residentially zoned land.

#### 4.8 Settlement Strategy – Overview

The network of settlements throughout the County fulfil a vital function in providing crucial services, infrastructure, amenities and the necessary level of critical mass to cater for immediate settlement populations as well as sustaining surrounding rural hinterland populations. This Plan recognises the roles of all towns, villages and rural areas as components of a balanced Settlement Strategy for the County. Both the Core Strategy and associated Settlement Hierarchy provide the geographic framework to guide the location and scale of new development for the plan period, taking cognisance of the

regional settlement, retail hierarchies and the guiding principles on the preparation of Core Strategies provided in the RSES.

This Settlement Strategy is underpinned by national, regional and local planning policy which encourages new developments to locate within existing towns and villages, where social and infrastructural services are in place and where such services may be provided or developed in the future. By placing an increased emphasis on the future development of existing settlements within the county, this plan seeks to foster sustainable live-work patterns which reinforces existing urban centres. This will also encourage enhanced commercial and employment opportunities and provide an increased range of social and recreational facilities, whilst safeguarding the agricultural sector and rural areas from urban generated development pressures.

Accordingly, this Settlement Strategy addresses a range of settlement scales within urban and rural contexts that provide for a variety of levels of employment, services and housing choice commensurate with their position in the Settlement Hierarchy, and in recognition of their capacity to facilitate the long-term sustainability of rural communities.

#### 4.8.1 Settlement Strategy - Key Principles

Strong, vibrant and sustainable settlements are the catalysts for overall development within the County. Such settlements provide for a range of jobs, services, amenities and housing choice, which support and foster economies and communities within their respective settlement boundaries. In developing this Settlement Strategy, the following key principles were used to inform its preparation and to facilitate delivery on a strategic level:

<b>Key Principle 1</b>	Support the strengthening of the town and village network and rural communities throughout the county in accordance with the hierarchy outlined in the following sections and supported by the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and Ministerial guidance issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development act 2000, as amended, particularly the <i>Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas</i> or their replacement guidance.
<b>Key Principle 2</b>	Create vibrant and thriving urban and rural communities, underpinned in the principles of sustainability and the development of environments which retain and foster a high quality of life.
<b>Key Principle 3</b>	Support and facilitate the transition towards a low carbon society.
<b>Key Principle 4</b>	Align future development with existing and planned investment in infrastructure within settlements.
<b>Key Principle 5</b>	Give effect to the principle of 'compact growth' by targeting at least 30% of all new residential development to occur within the existing

	built-up footprints <sup>7</sup> of towns and villages within the county, with a focus on infill and brownfield land development, rather than peripheral development patterns.
<b>Key Principle 6</b>	Focus on the need for more balanced development amongst the network of higher order towns in the Settlement Hierarchy to support the role and function of Longford Town as the principal economic driver and focus of investment for the county.
<b>Key Principle 7</b>	Consolidate and enhance the self-sustaining attributes of settlements in the county in terms of housing and service provisions, infrastructure, environmental carrying capacity, amenity value, and other relevant criteria.
<b>Key Principle 8</b>	Protect key environmental and ecological assets by preserving the quality of the landscape, open space, recreational resources, biodiversity, architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage and material assets in the county.
<b>Key Principle 9</b>	Support and promote sustainable economic development and enterprise activity within urban and rural economies.
<b>Key Principle 10</b>	Manage urban generated growth in rural areas under strong urban influence and stronger rural areas and reverse the decline or stagnation of many rural communities.
<b>Key Principle 11</b>	Promote development within Rural Settlement Clusters as a viable alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, particularly in rural areas under strong urban influence.
<b>Key Principle 12</b>	Identify targeted renewal and regeneration schemes within settlements to address areas of decline and to act as catalysts for future investment and development within specific settlements.
<b>Key Principle 13</b>	Promote development that is commensurate in scale and character with receiving settlement environments.
<b>Key Principle 14</b>	Address the dependency on private car transportation through enhanced sustainable mobility measures and greater integration of transportation and land use spatial planning.
<b>Key Principle 15</b>	Foster a collaborative platform with key stakeholders and infrastructure providers in coordinating the quantum and location of development within the network of towns and villages throughout the county.

#### 4.8.1 Settlement Strategy Methodology

In realising the population growth target for County Longford over the plan period, as established in the NPF Implementation Roadmap, and its allocation throughout the Settlement Hierarchy, a robust evidence-based analysis was conducted for the county and its respective settlements to determine historic growth trends and infrastructure

<sup>7</sup> This means within the existing built-up footprint of all sizes of urban settlement, as defined by the CSO in line with UN criteria i.e. having a minimum of 50 occupied dwellings, with a maximum distance between any dwelling and the building closest to it of 100 metres, and where there is evidence of an urban centre (shop, school etc.).

capacity to accommodate growth over the plan period and beyond. This approach was supported by demographic and housing market analysis conducted by *Future Analytics Consulting Limited*, in accordance with the population targets identified in the NPF Implementation Roadmap and average household sizes advocated by the NPF. Key aspects examined included:

- Existing population base and other demographic factors (e.g. birth and mortality rates);
- Availability of physical and social infrastructure, including public transport provisions, (both existing and planned);
- Settlement form including existing density levels, scale, function and character;
- Incidences of urban decay, dereliction, vacancy, stagnating urban environments, unfinished residential development;
- Brownfield land capacity;
- Planning history;
- Potential for economic and social development; and
- Analysis of socio-economic deprivation (Pobal HP Deprivation Index).
- Environmental constraints;
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the plan;
- An assessment of the potential adverse effects of the plan (in combination with other plans or projects) on Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas (Appropriate Assessment);
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of settlements.

#### 4.8.2 Consistency with Population Estimates and Projections

The *NPF Implementation Roadmap* provides transitional population projections at a County scale in order to inform Development Plans for the period 2026 and 2031. By 2031 the NPF Implementation Roadmap states that the population of County Longford is set to be in the range of 46,000-47,000. At the higher projected growth rate, this means that the population of the County will grow by approximately 6,120 people from its 2016 base (or 5,120 people at the lower rate). By 2026, it is envisaged that the population of County Longford will grow by 4,627 people at the higher projected rate to reach 45,500 (or 3,627 people at the lower rate).

**Table 4.11: NPF Roadmap / RSES Population Targets to 2026 and 2031 (Source: *Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework*)**

	Census 2016	2026 NPF Roadmap / RSES Target	2031 NPF Roadmap / RSES Target
<b>EMRA Region</b>	2,329,000	2,566,500-2,619,000	2,668,000-2,740,500
<b>Midlands Strategic Planning Area</b>	292,500	318,500-324,500	329,500-337,000
<b>County Longford</b>	40,873	44,500-45,500	46,000-47,000

In realising the population growth target for County Longford over the plan period and its allocation throughout the Settlement Hierarchy, a robust evidence-based analysis was conducted for the county and its respective settlements to determine historic growth trends and infrastructure capacity to accommodate growth. This approach was supported by demographic and housing market analysis conducted by *Future Analytics Consulting Limited*, in accordance with the population targets identified in the *NPF Implementation Roadmap* and average household size as advocated by the NPF.

The selection of the upper population growth targets detailed in the NPF Implementation Roadmap for the County (in respect of the target years of 2026 and 2031) was informed by population projection modelling undertaken by Future Analytics using the demographic cohort component methodology and key, up to date assumptions in fertility rates, mortality rates and migration rates per year of projection across the duration of the period.

The population projection modelling undertaken by Future Analytics provided three population growth scenarios for the County: low, medium and high, with variances in the level of net national migration the key determinant in each scenario. Even in the lowest population scenario, which aligned with the CSO's 10,000 net inward national assumption from 2020 and beyond for the entirety of the period, the modelling forecasted a population of 46,409 for County Longford at the target year of 2026 and a population of 49,646 for the corresponding target year of 2031. By contrast the upper range of the NPF population targets for County Longford for 2026 and 2031 were 45,500 and 47,000 respectively.

Given the policy implications for deviating from the population projections detailed in the NPF Implementation Roadmap, principally in relation to NPO 9 of the NPF, the decision to use the upper range of population figures in the Roadmap document was justified in light of the population modelling undertaken by our appointed consultants.

### **4.8.3 Settlement Hierarchy Methodology**

In developing a settlement hierarchy for County Longford, an Asset-Based Approach, similar to that advocated by the RSES in the preparation of its Growth Strategy, has been utilised to identify those settlements which have the greatest capacity and potential for growth within the county and sets out the qualitative and quantitative evidence base for the social, economic and natural assets that exist within the settlements of the county. The Asset-Based Criteria approach used by the Planning Authority is included in the Table included in Annex 6 and should be referred to when considering the settlement hierarchy of Longford County.

The asset-based methodology employed encompasses the identification and evaluation of a range of assets at settlement level across a number of criteria. These replicate those used in RSES and provide a means of evaluating common asset criteria across a range of settlements within the county, thereby providing the basis for identifying the emerging spatial hierarchy of settlements in the county. This process was also informed by the criteria listed in the Hierarchy of Settlements and related Infrastructure considered by NPF

(Figure 4.4). These criteria are grouped under 8 no. overarching themes, with criteria graded according to the size of the settlement.

Figure 4.4: Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Considered by the NPF (Source: NPF, p83)

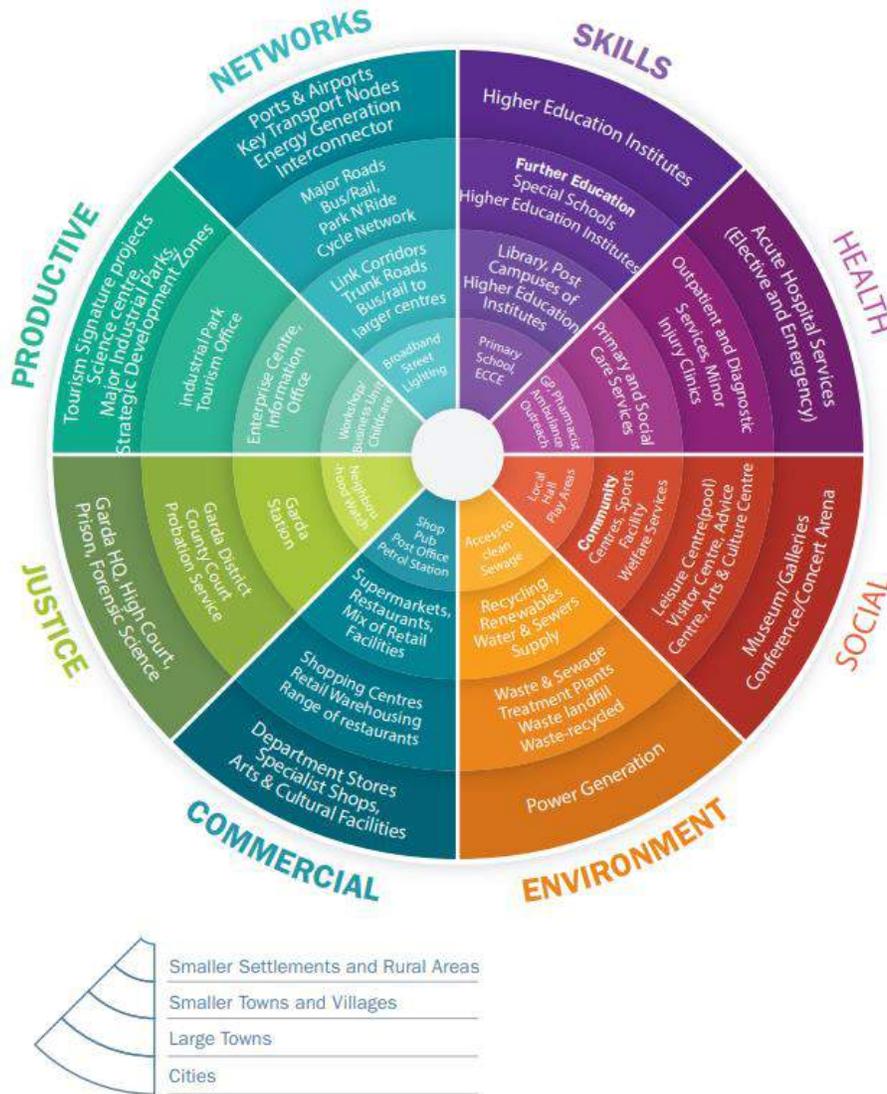


Table 4.12 presents the various asset-based criteria used in this approach, as well as an overview of the various quantitative and qualitative settlement appraisal measures for each relevant criterion for the respective settlements which have informed the Settlement Hierarchy for County Longford.

**Table 4.12: Summary of Criteria Utilised to Inform the County Longford Settlement Hierarchy**

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	RATIONALE
<b>SCALE</b>		
<b>Population</b>	Population resident within CSO defined settlement boundary.	Settlements with critical mass of population to drive regional development.
<b>Growth Rate</b>	% Growth rate between 2011-2016 (County Longford population growth rate was 4.24%)	Growth rate will determine capacity for future growth. Towns that have experienced high growth rates may require additional investment in services, infrastructure and employment.
<b>Higher Order Spatial Plan Designation</b>	Large towns defined by the NPF as >10,000 population and /or >2,500 jobs and settlements identified in the Growth Strategy for the Eastern and Midland RSES.	The RSES identified Longford Town as a 'Key Town' in its Growth Strategy owing to its substantial economic activity and as a centre for employment, with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as a growth driver to complement the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone.
<b>FUNCTION</b>		
<b>Commuter Trips</b>	Journey times from the settlement to work, school or college	The scale of commuting flows will inform the characterisation of a settlement as commuter focused or as more self-sustainable.
<b>Jobs to resident workers ratio</b>	By undertaking an analysis of the POWCAR and Workplace Zones 2016 database, it is possible to develop a profile of both the number of resident workers and number of local jobs.	An analysis of the ratio between workers and jobs at the settlement level reveals the economic importance of a number of County Longford settlements for their respective surrounding areas.
<b>Retail Hierarchy</b>	Retail hierarchy based on the Retail Strategy in the Plan.	Consideration must be given to the retail hierarchy included in the County Longford Retail Strategy.
<b>SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE / PLACEMAKING</b>		
<b>Community Facilities</b>	Sustainable neighbourhoods require a range of community facilities as stated in the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government <i>Guidelines on Sustainable</i>	The extent of local services provision (such as shops, schools, pre-school facilities, community halls or centres; medical centres etc) will determine the attractiveness of a settlement to attract and retain a critical mass of population.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	RATIONALE
	<i>Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009).</i>	
<b>ENTERPRISE</b>		
<b>Economic Assets</b>	Higher Education Centres, Business incubation and innovation centres, technology and research centres, business parks or industrial estates, local enterprise office, and strategic employment sites.	Firms and enterprise development are drawn to urban locations by market forces such as agglomeration, migration and specialisation that depend on factors such as scale, accessibility, innovation supported by higher education institutions and quality of life. As per the NPF <sup>8</sup> , Ireland's natural resources are some of our greatest assets and through the development of the agriculture, food, forestry, tourism and renewable energy sectors, this will not only sustain rural employment, but also contribute to driving the national economy.
<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>		
<b>Public Transport</b>	Proximity to high quality public transport, both existing and planned.	Access to transport infrastructure influences the location of housing and employment growth, with compact settlements more efficient in terms of maximising returns on transport investment.
<b>Modal Share</b>	% mode share of work and education trips (origin) by active travel (walk, cycle), public transport, car (driver, passenger).	Mode share data indicates the extent of car dependency in a settlement.
<b>NATURAL CAPITAL</b>		
<b>Flood Risk (SFRA)</b>	Flood Risk Summary of key Towns from SEA Environmental Report. Includes Flood Zones, constraints and measures identified in the FRMP along with assessment of climate change and adaption measures.	Future development and flood risk assessment will need to consider and address flood risk at settlement level.

<sup>8</sup> National Planning Framework, p75

#### 4.8.5 County Longford Settlement Hierarchy Tiers

The Settlement Hierarchy for County Longford has been assigned in accordance with the spatial structure and settlement typologies set out in the RSES. It categorises areas for development within the county on a priority basis as per Table 4.13. Furthermore recommended densities are indicated as per Table 4.14.

**Table 4.13: Settlement Hierarchy for Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027**

Settlement Typology	Description	Settlements
Key Town	Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres	Longford Town
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	i) Self-Sustaining Growth Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.	Granard
Self-Sustaining Towns	ii) Self-Sustaining Towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted ‘catch up’ investment to become more self-sustaining.	Ballymahon Edgeworthstown Lanesborough
Towns and Villages	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions.	Aughnacliffe, Ballinalee, Drumlish, Keenagh, Legan, Newtownforbes
Rural	Serviced Rural Villages and Rural Settlement Clusters with a limited level of services and the wider open countryside.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Serviced Rural Villages</u> Abbeyshrule, Ardagh, Ballinamuck, Clondra</li> </ul>

Settlement Typology	Description	Settlements
	The open countryside provides for rural economies and rural communities, based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural enterprise. This should be facilitated while avoiding over-spill development from urban areas and urban generated housing. The sustainable development of the open countryside will be supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Rural Settlement Clusters</u>                      Abbeylara, Ballycloughan, Ballywillan, Barry, Bunlahy Carrickboy, Carriglass, Colehill, Coolarty, Cullyfad, Derraghan, Dring, Enybegs, Forgney, Killashee, Kilnatraun, Legga, Lisryan, Melview, Moydow, Moyne, Mullinalaghta, Newtowncashel, Ratharney, Stonepark, Taghshinny.</li> <li>• <u>Open Countryside</u></li> </ul>

**Table 4.14: Recommended Residential densities and settlement hierarchy**

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY		
<b>Key Town (35-40 units/ha)</b>	<b>Longford Town</b>	
<b>Self-Sustaining Growth Town (25 units/ha)</b>	<b>Granard</b>	
<b>Self-Sustaining Towns (25 units/ha)</b>	<b>Edgeworthstown Ballymahon Lanesborough</b>	
<b>Towns and Villages (20 units/ha)</b>	<b>Aughnacliffe Ballinalee Drumlish Keenagh Legan Newtownforbes</b>	
<b>Rural</b>	<b>Serviced Rural Villages (15 units/ha)</b>	<b>Abbeyshrule Ardagh Ballinamuck Clondra</b>
	<b>Rural Settlement Clusters &amp; Open Countryside</b>	

#### 4.8.6 Population Allocation at Settlement Level

The demographic analysis undertaken to inform this Core Strategy identified a consistent trend over the period between 1991-2016 whereby Longford Town assumed approximately 25% of the overall county population in each subsequent census over this

period. This proportion is largely expected to be maintained over the plan period, with sufficient capacity within Longford Town to accommodate this additional growth.

The demographic analysis also revealed a disparity in the levels of growth in respect of the other main settlements in the county over the same 25-year timeframe. Over this period, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon recorded significant growth in population terms, with the populations of both settlements growing by 1,271 persons (+157%) and 1,061 persons (+130%). Lanesborough recorded more moderate growth over the same period (400 persons or +38%)<sup>9</sup>. In contrast, Granard sustained long periods of population stagnation and even decline over the same 25-year timeframe, with its population in 2016 (1,096) reducing by 125 persons (-10%) from its 1991 equivalent.

A key principle of the Settlement Strategy is the need for a more balanced network of higher order towns in the Settlement Hierarchy to support the role and function of Longford Town as the principal economic driver and focus of investment for the county. In addition, the demographic analysis illustrated a clear requirement to address the disparity in growth rates amongst the four other main settlements in the county and in particular to arrest the stagnation in growth experienced in Granard.

Accordingly it was decided to grow these 4 no. settlements in proportion to the overall growth of Longford Town, with Granard denoted as a Self-Sustaining Growth Towns in the Settlement Hierarchy, growing in population terms by 25% of Longford Town's equivalent population growth up to 2027. Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough are designated as Self-Sustaining Towns in the Settlement Hierarchy and will each grow by 15% of Longford Town's population growth over the same period. For the settlements within the remaining tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy, these will be allowed to grow relative to their current proportion to the overall county population on a non-intervention basis.

In adopting this interventionist approach in relation to the population allocations for the Self-Sustaining Growth Town and Self-Sustaining Towns, this Strategy provides for more balanced growth across the county, whilst recognising the geographic spread of each settlement across the county and the role each settlement can play in supporting the 'Key Town' of Longford Town, whilst also reinforcing and strengthening the wider network of towns and villages within the county. This approach also provides assurance that no lower order settlement will outgrow a higher order settlement. *A further interventionist approach was undertaken with respect to the housing allocation for the 'Rural' settlement tier to further sustain these settlements and in recognition of historical development trends for rural housing within County Longford. Over the period between 2006-2019, 40% of residential units granted planning permission were for single rural dwellings. Accordingly, further adjustments to the housing allocations within the settlements of Longford Town, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon were undertaken. This comprised of a reallocation of 40 units from Longford Town and 15 units each from Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon to be distributed throughout the 'Rural' settlement tier.*

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<sup>9</sup> Recorded as the CSO defined settlement 'Lanesborough-Ballyleague'

The allocations of the population growth for the county, as expressed in the *NPF Implementation Roadmap*, across the settlement tiers are detailed in Table 4.15: Core Strategy Table.

<b>Settlement Strategy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.1	Promote the sustainable growth and development of the county in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy and population targets established within the Core Strategy and commensurate with the network of urban centres, villages and rural areas presented in the Settlement Strategy and their respective capacities to assimilate sustainable levels of future development.
CPO 4.2	Require at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements to be located within the existing built-up footprint of the settlements <sup>10</sup> , in an effort to make settlements more compact and reduce unsustainable urban sprawl and ribbon development.
CPO 4.3	Reinforce the centres of settlements through the increased focus on the development of infill sites, brownfield lands, under-utilised land/buildings, vacant sites, and derelict sites within the existing built-up footprint of the settlements and develop outwards from the centre in a sequential manner.
CPO 4.4	Arrest the decline and stagnation in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades.
CPO 4.5	Manage the growth of rural areas that are under strong urban influence and stronger rural areas to avoid over-development, whilst sustaining vibrant urban communities.
CPO 4.6	Support the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield/infill lands, promote measures to reduce vacancy and the underuse of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centres and targeted settlements in the County in order to achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 30% of all new housing to be built within the existing urban footprint of targeted settlements in the County.

#### 4.8.7 Key Town – Longford Town

Longford Town has grown significantly in recent decades with a substantial economic profile as reflected in its high jobs to resident workforce ratio (1.596) indicative of a net-inflow of workers into the settlement owing to its robust employment base. Longford Town is designated as a ‘Key Town’ in the RSES on account of its role as an economically active service town providing employment for its surrounding area, as well as being endowed with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as a regional driver to complement the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone.

<sup>10</sup> This means within the existing built-up footprint of all sizes of urban settlement, as defined by the CSO in line with UN criteria i.e. having a minimum of 50 occupied dwellings, with a maximum distance between any dwelling and the building closest to it of 100 metres, and where there is evidence of an urban centre (shop, school etc.).

Its designation is also reflective of the substantial retail and administrative functions on offer in Longford Town, as well as its level of physical and social infrastructure which serves a broad, cross-regional hinterland. The RSES states that Key Towns should seek commensurate population and employment growth, on high quality public transport corridors coupled with investment in services, amenities and sustainable transport. It is a policy objective of the Council to prepare a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Longford Town to align with the RSES and this Core Strategy.

Given its designation within the RSES Settlement Hierarchy, and as reflected in this Core Strategy, Longford Town is identified as the settlement targeted for the most growth over the Plan period. Accordingly lands have been identified within its built-up urban boundary which could potentially be brought forward for development over the Plan period, and which are in accordance with the key NPO 3c of the NPF in delivering at least 30% of all new residential units targeted for Longford Town within its existing built-up footprint.

<b>Key Town - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.7	Support the continued sustainable growth and development of Longford Town in its capacity as a driver of economic activity and overall growth within the county.
CPO 4.8	Support Longford Town in fulfilling its function as a Key Town within the County and Regional hierarchy of settlements, including its role in supporting and complementing the designated Regional Growth Centre of Athlone.
CPO 4.9	Prepare and implement a Local Area Plan for Longford Town to align with the policy objectives of the NPF, Eastern and Midland RSES and Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, including this Core Strategy, within two years from the adoption of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027. Any such Local Area Plan will be informed by a Local Transport Plan to be prepared for Longford Town.

#### **4.8.8 Self-Sustaining Town – Granard**

Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, according to the RSES, are towns *‘with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining’*.

Granard has a robust employment base, with a particular focus on manufacturing in the food and agricultural sectors, with the Pat the Baker food manufacturing company and Kiernan Milling both significant employers. In 2016, there were a total of 269 resident workers within Granard, however 633 total jobs were recorded, giving a jobs to resident workers ratio of 2.35; the highest recorded ratio within the regional area. These statistics also reveal a low level of resident workers within the town, with a reliance on workers from outside the settlement. In addition, the settlement has experienced population growth

stagnation and decline between 1996-2016 (1,221 – 1,096 respectively<sup>11</sup>), in comparison to other settlements within the county.

Granard also acts as an important retail centre to its inhabitants and wider hinterland, as reflected in its designation in the RSES as a Level 3 retail centre (Town and/or\_District Centres & Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres)). Moreover, given its proximity to the Longford-Cavan border, Granard performs as a key service provider and retail centre for a broad hinterland which extends beyond the County boundary.

Granard also has sufficient capacity in its physical infrastructure (e.g. wastewater plant) to accommodate additional development commensurate with its position within the Settlement Hierarchy. Furthermore, Granard has been identified for significant regeneration in its town core which will act as a further catalyst in sustaining its existing population and robust employment base whilst enhancing further opportunities for residential development and employment.

<b>Self-Sustaining Town - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.10	Promote the commensurate population and employment growth in the designated Self-Sustaining town, in accordance with the Core Strategy, and to deliver targeted regeneration and 'catch-up' investment in services, infrastructure, amenities and local employment in order to become more self-sustaining.

#### **4.8.9 Self-Sustaining Towns – Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Lanesborough**

The RSES defines 'Self Sustaining Towns' as towns *'with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base, which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining'*.

Both Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon have seen significant growth over the twenty-year period between 1996 and 2016, with their populations increasing by approximately 181% and 138% respectively over this period. More recently, the 2016 Census recorded the populations of Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon as being 2,072 and 1,877 respectively, with both settlements firmly established as the second most populated towns in the county. Given their populations exceed 1,500, both settlements are considered 'urban' areas under the CSO definition<sup>12</sup>. Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon also command robust jobs to resident workers ratios (0.817 and 0.734 respectively).

Edgeworthstown has a long-established manufacturing and light-industrial base, with particular focus on agri-food and the service sector and also has excellent transports links

<sup>11</sup> Based on former Legal Town boundary in respect of both recorded populations for Granard.

<sup>12</sup> 'Urban and Rural Life in Ireland 2019', CSO (2019). Available at:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-urli/urbanandrurallifeinireland2019/>

owing to its proximity to key transport corridors in the form of the N4 and the Sligo-Dublin InterCity rail line. Similarly, Ballymahon has a strong manufacturing and light-industrial base, with a key retail and service-sector standing within the county, with significant growth in tourism-orientated services such as food and drink, hostelrys, and tourist accommodation which has coincided with the opening of the nearby Longford Forest Center Parcs resort in 2019.

Notwithstanding the significant population increase experienced in Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon over the last 25 years, their capacities to assimilate future development within their settlements is impeded by current limited capacities of their respective wastewater treatment plants (wwtps). Whilst Irish Water (IW) is committed to upgrading these plants over the lifetime of the plan, no such works will take place before 2024. Accordingly, given this need for ‘catch up’ investment, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon are categorised as ‘Self-Sustaining Towns’.

Lanesborough has also seen a steady increase in its population over the intercensal period, with the CSO defined settlement of Lanesborough-Ballyleague recording a population of 1,454 in 2016; a 6% increase on the equivalent 2011 census figure. In 2016, the Lanesborough-Ballyleague settlement recorded 543 resident workers with 351 jobs in the settlement (jobs to resident workers ratio of 0.64). Lanesborough is currently in a state of structural economic change, with the closure of the Lough Ree power station having a direct impact on ESB employees and indirectly on Bord na Móna employees with peat harvesting the main source of fuel for the plant.

Lanesborough has also been identified for regeneration purposes and has already secured funding for targeted regeneration schemes through the Rural Regeneration Development Fund and other funding streams. In addition, the roll out of the ‘Just Transition’ Fund will have significant positive impacts on a variety of sectors within the Lanesborough community, ranging from agri-food to tourism, to alternative energy sectors. It is anticipated that such targeted investment will provide the stimulus for further ‘catch-up’ investment to grow Lanesborough in a sustainable manner and enhance its self-sustaining attributes further.

<b>Self-Sustaining Towns - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.11	Support the further development of Self-Sustaining Towns as key locations of population growth and as drivers of economic growth and prosperity commensurate with the level of growth outlined in the Core Strategy.
CPO 4.12	Promote consolidation in Self-Sustaining Towns coupled with targeted investment where required to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining settlements.

#### 4.8.10 Towns and Villages

This tier of the Settlement Hierarchy comprises of 11 no. towns and villages which fulfil significant roles in terms of local services provision, amenity, local employment sources with scope for moderate residential growth. While these settlements invariably have a reduced level of services in comparison to those settlements identified in previous tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy, these settlements can offer an attractive environment for their inhabitants by balancing higher quality of life features associated with rural living, whilst also providing for the sharing of services, such as wastewater and water supply in a more efficient and effective manner, as opposed to sporadic, one-off rural development.

These settlements have unique attributes in terms of natural and/or built and cultural heritage that require specific designation to protect and enhance their character. Each settlement also has the necessary infrastructure capacity available to accommodate additional growth and to sustain and enhance existing services for the needs of their hinterlands and act as catalysts for the rural economy of the county.

<b>Towns and Villages - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.13	Promote the commensurate growth in development in the ‘Towns and Villages’ as designated in the Settlement Hierarchy, in a consolidated, sustainable and sequential manner, with targeted investment to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining.
CPO 4.14	Consider proposals for residential development in settlements defined as ‘Towns and Villages’ in the Settlement Hierarchy in accordance with the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Adherence to population allocations of the subject settlement as prescribed in the Core Strategy and the demand/need for the proposed level and type of residential development;</li> <li>b) The ability of the proposal to adequately address, and where possible enhance, the existing nature and character of the subject settlement;</li> <li>c) Compliance with relevant legislative, technical, environmental, design guidance prescribed under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and any such relevant policies and objectives contained within this Plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which may contain the subject settlement.</li> </ul>
CPO 4.15	Support housing and repopulation taking place within ‘Towns and Villages’ as designated in the Settlement Hierarchy, in a consolidated, sustainable and sequential manner, and to promote the provision of serviced sites supported by Irish Water in order to attract people to build their own homes and live in small towns, whilst also managing the levels of growth at an appropriate scale to ensure compliance with the Core Strategy Table.

Also refer also to CPO 5.17 in respect of the need to adhere to the provisions of official policy in relation to development accessing national roads.

#### **4.8.11 Rural (Serviced Rural Villages, Rural Settlement Clusters and Open Countryside)**

Given the predominantly rural nature of the population distribution in the county<sup>13</sup>, the network of rural settlement clusters within the county and residential development within the rural countryside are identified as critical elements of this Settlement Strategy for sustaining the vitality of rural communities. In terms of the future development of these areas, this Plan places emphasis on maintaining existing the Serviced Rural Villages of Abbeyshrule, Ardagh, Ballinamuck and Cloondara. This is in addition to the network of Rural Settlement Clusters within the county, with a view to the long-term enhancement of existing services and facilities and also the retention and creation of local-level employment opportunities in such small-scale settlements.

These locations provide modest social and community infrastructure and services such as schools, shops, post offices, public houses and residential housing. Residential development in these areas will only be permitted at a small-scale, commensurate with existing levels of development and reflective of the character of existing settlements. Small-scale residential development which act as a viable alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside and alleviate such pressures will be permitted in these areas. These areas will cater for local need in a similar manner to current one-off housing policy (and in accordance with the provisions of the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005 and any replacement guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended). A number of these settlements have experienced an increase in development in recent years and it is envisaged that these areas will provide scope for the further expansion of existing services as well as the introduction of new services and infrastructure over a longer timeframe, commensurate with the scale of such settlements. Fostering the conditions and environment for such settlements to sustainably grow and lead to further development of existing services is an overarching principle under this tier of the Settlement Hierarchy.

Rural Settlement Cluster Policy and Design Statements will be prepared within the lifetime of this Plan to address development issues in these Rural Service Clusters and identify opportunities for targeted infrastructure provision and investment. Such Policy and Design Statements will be informed by the programme for 'new homes in small towns and villages' to be developed under NPO 18b of the NPF, in collaboration with local authorities, public infrastructure agencies such as Irish Water and local communities, in order to provide serviced sites with appropriate infrastructure to attract people to build their own homes and live in these designated Rural Settlement Clusters. In the interim, the area contained within each identified Rural Settlement Cluster envelope shall be zoned to cater for the development of small-scale residential development reflective of the existing character of the settlement and limited local-level services and social and community infrastructure such as schools, neighbourhood and shops, except where specifically stated otherwise.

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<sup>13</sup> 2016 Census of Population identified a rural-urban population split as being 66% - 34% respectively for County Longford.

One – Off Rural Housing

A significant majority of housing planning permissions in County Longford have been in the open countryside, with one-off rural housing accounting for 64.1% of housing units granted in the county between 2012 and 2019. However, it should be noted that this period coincided with a time of very little activity in the housing market in Longford. The NPF recognises the importance of sustaining rural areas, specifically through NPO 15 which states:

*‘Support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid overdevelopment, while sustaining vibrant rural communities’<sup>14</sup>.*

As per NPO 19, the NPF requires a clear distinction to be made between areas under urban influence and elsewhere in providing for the development of rural housing in the countryside. The RSES reinforces this through its requirement for core strategies of development plans to identify ‘areas under strong urban influence in the hinterlands of settlements and set the appropriate rural housing policy response to avoid ribbon and over spill development from urban areas’, support revitalised towns and villages, achieve sustainable compact growth targets, sustainably address rural decline and protect the rural resource for rural communities.

The Council will ensure that development of the open countryside takes place in a manner that is compatible with the policy objectives of the NPF, and further expressed by the RSES, whilst ensuring the protection of key economic, environmental, biodiversity and cultural/heritage assets such as the road network, water quality and important landscapes. Section 4.8.12 sets out the Rural Settlement Strategy for County Longford including specific rural housing County Policy Objectives. The open countryside is and will continue to be, a living and lived-in landscape focusing on the requirements of rural economies and rural communities, based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural enterprise, while at the same time avoiding ribbon and over-spill development from urban areas and protecting environmental qualities.

<b>Rural Settlement Clusters - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.16	Support housing and repopulation taking place within Serviced Rural Villages in a consolidated, sustainable and sequential manner, and to promote the provision of serviced sites supported by Irish Water in order to attract people to build their own homes and live in Serviced Rural Villages, whilst also managing the levels of growth at an appropriate scale to ensure compliance with the Core Strategy Table.

<sup>14</sup> National Planning Framework 2040; p71.

CPO 4.17	Facilitate the expansion of and provision of new mixed-use and employment-generating development within Serviced Rural Villages at an appropriate size and scale subject to normal planning requirements.
CPO 4.18	Consider small developments of residential schemes in Serviced Rural Villages in respect of their scale, their locations within the settlement context, their visual harmony with the built environment of the subject settlement, including their ability to consolidate and enhance existing settlement character.
CPO 4.19	Prepare Policy and Design Statements for each of designated Rural Settlement Clusters within the lifetime of this County Development Plan, having regard to any pending programme developed under National Policy Objective 18b of the National Planning Framework and in collaboration with public infrastructure providers and relevant stakeholders.
CPO 4.20	Support housing taking place within designated Serviced Rural Villages and Rural Settlement Clusters to act as a viable alternative to one-off housing in the open countryside in accordance with Regional Policy Objective 4.78 of the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
CPO 4.21	Consider proposals for development in Rural Settlement Clusters in respect of their scale, their locations within the settlement context, their visual harmony with the built environment of the subject settlement, including their ability to consolidate and enhance existing settlement character. Only small-scale residential developments (maximum of 4 no. residential units in one individual proposal) and limited local-level services, such as neighbourhood shops and schools etc., shall be considered in these settlements.
CPO 4.22	Support the sustainable development of rural areas in County Longford by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.
CPO 4.23	Proposals for sensitive rehabilitation of disused vernacular houses will not be subject to the Rural Settlement Strategy for housing in the countryside that applies to new dwellings, assuming that their vernacular character is not compromised, that their fabric is repaired using appropriate techniques and materials, and that the structure was previously a dwelling. Where a building is derelict, measures should be taken to support and protect the building from collapse prior to and during works.

Also refer to CPO 5.17 in respect of the need to adhere to the provisions of official policy in relation to development accessing national roads.

#### **4.8.12 Rural Settlement Strategy**

A key principle underpinning the Settlement Strategy is the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas

that are under strong urban influence to avoid overdevelopment, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.

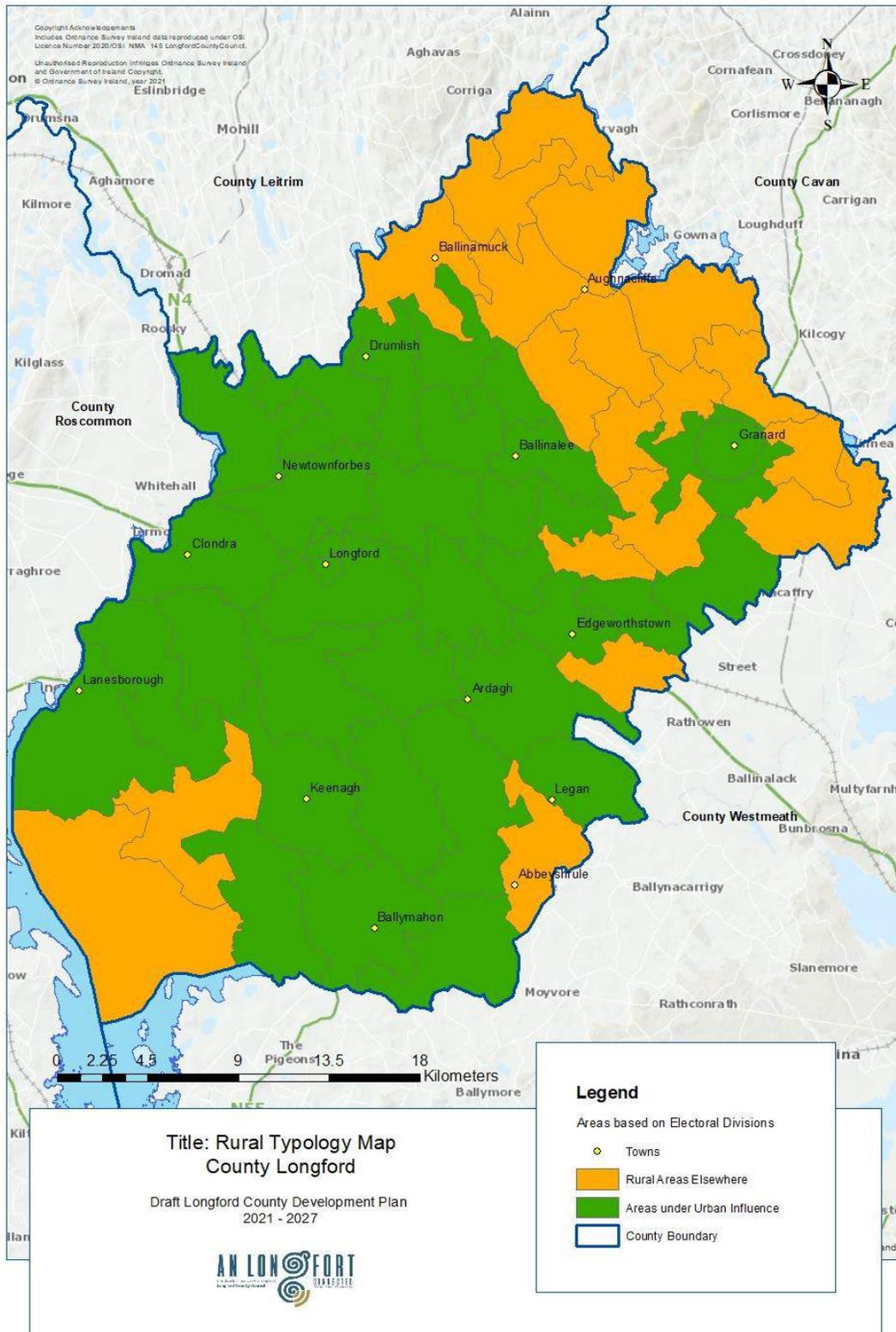
The NPF prescribes national policy in relation to the development of rural housing and requires that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence and rural areas elsewhere (NPO 19). The RSES sets out regional policy that requires Local Authorities to *‘manage urban generated growth in Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence (i.e. the commuter catchment of Dublin, large towns and centres of employment) and Stronger Rural Areas by ensuring that in these areas the provision of single houses in the open countryside is based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area, and compliance with statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements’*.

Having regard to this, rural typology mapping has been undertaken for County Longford which is consistent with national and regional policy and guidance. This typology map is based on the following 2 no. categories of rural areas:

<p><b>Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence</b></p>	<p>Areas which exhibit characteristics such as proximity to the immediate environs or close commuting catchment of large towns within the county with evidence of considerable pressure for development of housing owing to their proximity to such settlements. The policy in these areas is to facilitate housing development by people who have strong links to the particular rural area, who are an intrinsic part of the rural community.</p> <p>Such persons would normally have spent substantial periods of their lives living in the rural area as part of the established rural community, e.g. people employed in the rural area including farmers and their sons and daughters, people originally from the rural area and wishing to return, people wishing to reside near elderly parents to provide security and care, elderly parents wishing to live near other family members, people who would have grown up in rural areas seeking to build their home close to other family members, people working in rural areas such as teachers in rural schools.</p>
<p><b>Rural Areas Elsewhere</b></p>	<p>These areas are the residual rural areas of the county not under Strong Urban Influence which can range from strong rural areas where population levels are generally stable within a well-developed town and village and in the wider rural areas around them to structurally weaker rural areas which exhibit characteristics such as persistent and significant population decline as well as a weaker economic structure based on indices of income, employment and economic growth.</p>

The Rural Typology Map for County Longford (Figure 4.5), illustrates the extent of lands which are encompassed within these defined areas for the purposes of informing policy in relation to the delivery of rural housing over the plan period.

Figure 4.5: Rural Typology Map



The Council will manage sustainable growth in designated ‘Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence’ and facilitate the provision of single houses in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social requirement to live in a rural area, as well as compliance with siting and design criteria for rural housing and with statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

In respect of ‘Rural Areas Elsewhere’, the Council aims to accommodate rural housing demand from individuals for permanent residential development, subject to good planning practice by applying a more flexible approach in the assessment of planning applications which are primarily based on sustainable planning principles (appropriate siting and design and negligible impacts to existing amenities or sensitive environments). The requirement to demonstrate local housing need will not apply to applications within this designated area.

Dwellings and structures in the countryside need to be sited and designed to impact minimally on their setting. The utilisation of existing features, natural and manmade, can assist in integrating new development into its established setting. Design standards are outlined in *Chapter 16: Development Management Standards* and *Annex 7: Rural Design Guidelines for Residential Developments in Rural County Longford*. Furthermore, the Landscape Character Assessment (Chapter 14, Appendix 9 and Annex 11) assess the sensitivity and capacity of the different character areas ability to absorb and facilitate rural residential development.

<b>Rural Housing - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.24	<p>Accommodate demand from individuals for permanent residential development in defined ‘Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence’, subject to good planning practice, environmental carrying capacity and landscape protection considerations.</p> <p>Applicants seeking permission for the development of single dwelling rural housing in areas defined ‘Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence’ must satisfy the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The applicant was born within the local rural area, or is living or has lived in the local rural area for a minimum of 5 years at any stage prior to making the planning application. It includes returning emigrants seeking a permanent home in their local rural area. The ‘Local Rural Area’ for the purpose of this policy is defined as the area generally within an 8km radius of where the applicant was born, living or has lived.</li> </ol> <p>For the purpose of this policy, the rural area is taken to include ‘Rural Settlement Clusters’ listed in the Settlement Hierarchy, but excludes the Key Town, Self-Sustaining Growth Town, Self-Sustaining Towns, Towns and Villages and Serviced Rural</p>

	<p>Villages listed in the Settlement Hierarchy.</p> <p>2. The applicant has a functional economic or social requirement to reside in this particular rural area such as in any of the following 2 situations:</p> <p>(a) Economic requirements will normally encompass persons referred to in the revision to the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005 and, if applicable, circulars. It includes persons involved in full-time farming, horticulture or forestry as well as similar rural-based part-time occupations where it can be demonstrated that it is the predominant occupation.</p> <p>(b) Social requirements will normally encompass persons referred to in the revision to the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005 and, if applicable, circulars. Pending the making of the revised Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines by the Minister, a Functional Social Requirement in County Longford shall be taken as compliance with point 1 above.</p> <p>Special consideration shall be given in cases of exceptional health circumstances - supported by relevant documentation from a registered medical practitioner and a disability organisation proving that a person requires to live in a particular environment or close to family support, or requires a close family member to live in close proximity to that person.</p> <p>3. The applicant does not already own or has not owned a house in the open countryside.</p> <p>4. If the site is located within an Area of Special Control, there is no alternative site outside of Areas of Special Control.</p> <p>5. High quality siting and design.</p>
CPO 4.25	In line with Circular Letter PL 2/2017, review rural housing policy in line with Development Plan or other relevant Guidelines issued by the Minister in this area having regard to NPO 19 of the NPF.
CPO 4.26	Accommodate demand from individuals for permanent residential development in defined 'Rural Areas Elsewhere', subject to sustainable planning principles (appropriate siting and design and the demonstration of negligible impacts to existing amenities or sensitive environments).
CPO 4.27	Assess residential development in rural areas on 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.
CPO 4.28	Attach an occupancy condition to planning permissions in respect of rural housing applications in identified 'Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence', pursuant to Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, restricting the use of the dwelling to the applicant, as a place of permanent residence. The period of occupancy will be limited to a period of 7 years from the date of first occupation.

CPO 4.29	Restrict residential development on a landholding, where there is a history of development through the speculative sale or development of sites, notwithstanding the applicant's compliance with the local need criteria.
CPO 4.30	Recognise and promote the agricultural and landscape value of the rural area and prohibit the development of urban generated housing in the rural area.
CPO 4.31	Encourage the appropriate re-use and adaptation of the existing rural residential building stock in preference to new build.
CPO 4.32	Discourage ribbon development (defined as five or more houses alongside 250 metres of road frontage). The Council will assess whether a given proposal will exacerbate such ribbon development, having regard to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The type of rural area and circumstances of the applicant.</li> <li>b) The degree to which the proposal might be considered infill development.</li> <li>c) The degree to which existing ribbon development would coalesce as a result of the proposed development.</li> <li>d) Local circumstances, including the planning history of the area and development pressures. Notwithstanding the above, special regard will be given to the circumstances of immediate family members of a landowner on single infill sites in a line of existing dwellings with 5 or more houses along a 250 metres of road frontage.</li> </ul>
CPO 4.33	Consider applications for the provision of a recessed cluster form of development. The cluster shall be designed in such a way that is appropriate to the rural context and shall be set back into the landscape from the public road. Clusters shall not exceed five houses and will be subject to normal, planning, siting, design and local need considerations. Where there is a likelihood of more than one applicant seeking planning permission over a period of time, the Council will engage with the landowner to provide for an appropriate site layout capable of accommodating a recessed cluster development.
CPO 4.34	Only consider family members for backland development. The proposed development shall have no negative impact on third parties/ neighbouring property owners and viable sites with sufficient independent percolation areas will be required in order to meet technical guidelines. Sufficient screening will be required to screen the house from adjacent homes and this has to be in place prior to occupation of the house. Only single storey bungalow (including attic accommodation) type houses will be allowed in such backland locations to limit visual impact and overlooking.
CPO 4.35	Have regard to the <i>Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities, April 2005</i> , and any replacement guidance which require that new houses in rural areas be sited and designed to integrate well with their physical surroundings and be generally compatible with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The protection of water quality in the arrangements made for onsite waste water disposal facilities;</li> </ul>

	<p>b) The provision of a safe means of access in relation to road and public safety;</p> <p>c) The conservation of sensitive areas such as natural habitats, the environs of protected structures and other aspects of heritage.</p> <p>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's 'Code of Practice-Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (p.e. &lt;10)' (2009), or any subsequent update.</p>
CPO 4.36	<p>Preserve and protect the open character of transitional lands outside of settlements in order to prevent linear sprawl near towns, villages and settlements and to maintain a clear demarcation and distinction between urban areas and the countryside. This will not apply to persons building on family land where another family site is not available to them.</p>
CPO 4.37	<p>Consider applications for the provision of a recessed cluster form of development. The cluster shall be designed in such a way that is appropriate to the rural context and shall be set back into the landscape from the public road. Clusters shall not exceed five houses and will be subject to normal, planning, siting, design and local need considerations. Where there is a likelihood of more than one applicant seeking planning permission over a period of time, the Council will engage with the landowner to provide for an appropriate site layout capable of accommodating a recessed cluster development.</p>
CPO 4.38	<p>Restrict new accesses for one-off dwellings onto regional roads, where the 80km/hr speed limit applies in order to avoid the premature obsolescence of regional roads through the creation of excessive levels of individual entrances and to secure investment in non-national roads.</p>
CPO 4.39	<p>Strictly control developments which require vehicular access from public roads that were formerly towpaths or from existing towpaths along the Royal Canal. This is in addition to restrictions relevant to the Canal's designation as a Natural Heritage Area. It is policy to consider housing applications for established families only along roads that were formerly towpaths along the Canal and that such developments will be strictly controlled.</p>
CPO 4.40	<p>Require that the design of entrance gateways should be in keeping with the rural setting. All applications for a dwelling in a rural area should include detailed drawings and specifications for entrance treatments. The roadside boundary should ideally consist of a sod/earth mound/ fencing planted with a double row of native hedgerow species e.g. Hawthorn, field maple, holly, blackthorn, hazel etc. High block walls and gates and ornamental features will not be permitted.</p>

CPO 4.41	<p>Encourage the sensitive restoration of a derelict<sup>15</sup> traditional vernacular structure as an alternative to the construction of a one-off dwelling elsewhere subject to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The vernacular dwelling must be capable of being suitably restored to habitable accommodation in keeping with its original character without the necessity to demolish or significantly alter it.</li> <li>b) Documentary evidence to include a structural survey and photographs.</li> <li>c) The distinctive character and original historic fabric of the structure is retained using appropriate traditional construction methods and materials.</li> <li>d) Normal planning, siting and design considerations will be taken into consideration.</li> </ul>
CPO 4.42	<p>Accept the replacement of a dwelling other than a vernacular dwelling in circumstances where such a dwelling house is habitable, subject to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The structure must last have been used as a dwelling and the internal and external walls and roof must be intact.</li> <li>b) A report from a suitably qualified competent person shall be submitted to verify that the dwelling is habitable but that replacement of the dwelling is the most sustainable option.</li> <li>c) Documentary evidence of the most recent date of occupation should be submitted with the application.</li> <li>d) The design of the proposed replacement house shall be of a high standard and its scale and character appropriate to the site and to existing development in the vicinity and to the rural area.</li> <li>e) Normally a condition to demolish the existing dwelling will be included in any grant of permission.</li> <li>f) Require applicants in defined 'Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence' to comply with local need criteria identified in CPO 4.24 of this plan. Normal planning considerations will be taken into account in the assessment of planning applications for replacement dwellings.</li> <li>g) In cases where an applicant/occupant wishes to replace an existing habitable dwelling on the same footprint and of the same or similar floor area there will be no requirement to comply with local need criteria identified in this plan.</li> </ul>
CPO 4.43	<p>Facilitate the sensitive replacement of a structurally unsound derelict dwelling as an alternative to the construction of a one-off dwelling<sup>16</sup> elsewhere in the countryside. The scale of the replacement dwelling shall have regard to the site size. Documentary evidence in the form of a structural survey and photographs shall be submitted to accompany the application.</p>

<sup>15</sup> The structure, including walls must be intact and capable of restoration.

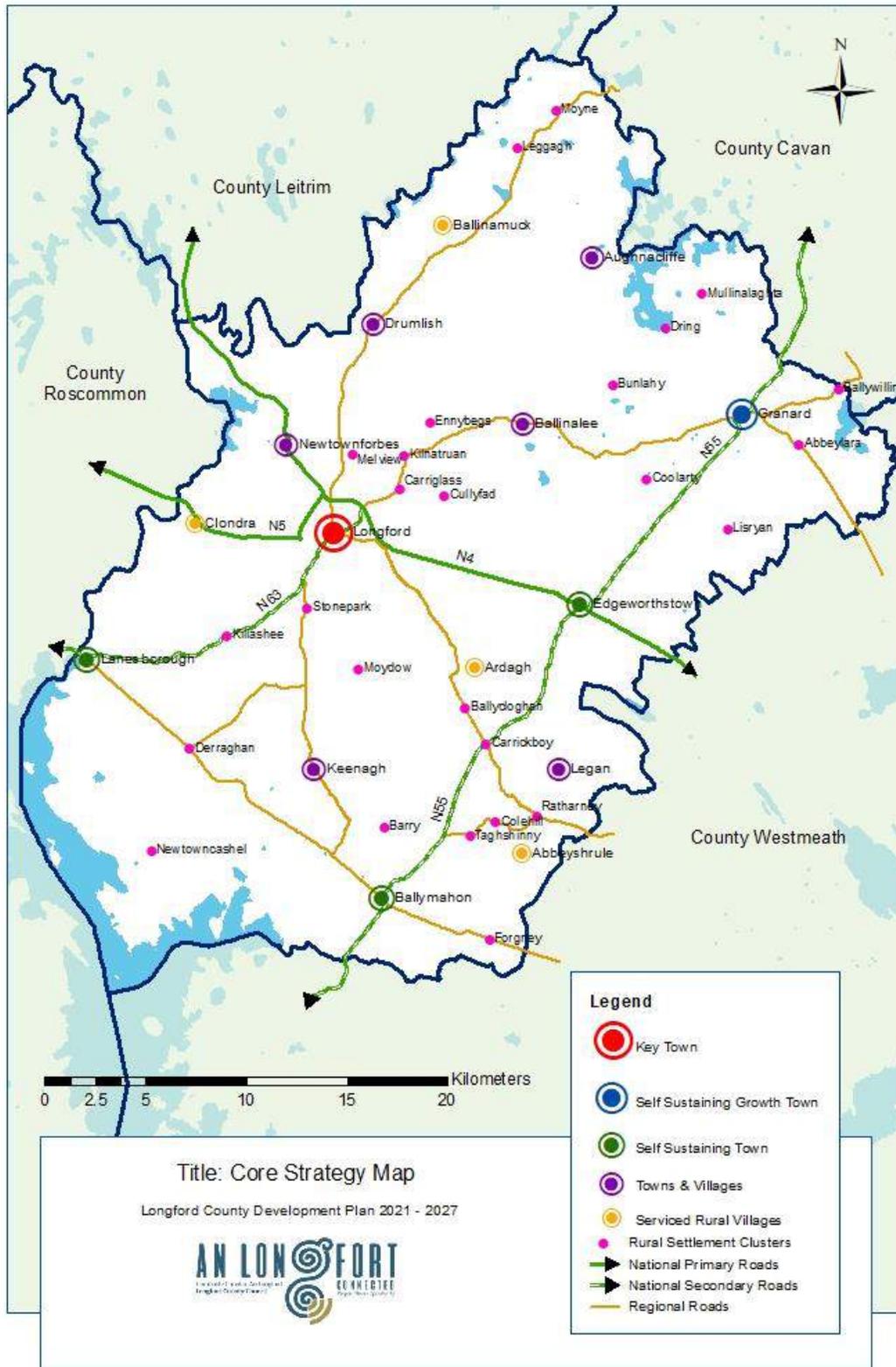
<sup>16</sup> Structure is in a ruinous or dangerous condition.

	The proposed applicant shall comply with local need criteria identified in the Plan and shall be subject to an occupancy condition.
CPO 4.44	Prepare an updated 'Rural Design Guidance for Residential Developments in Rural County Longford' over the lifetime of the Plan. Until such time as this is prepared, all new housing in the rural countryside shall achieve the highest quality of layout and design in accordance with the Development Management Standards set out in Chapter 16 of this plan and the current Rural Design Guidance for Residential Developments in Rural County Longford set out in Annex 7 of this Plan.
CPO 4.45	Encourage innovative design, and layouts that promote solar gain subject to protecting the character of the landscape.

#### 4.9 Core Strategy Map

The Core Strategy Map (Figure 4.6) provides a diagrammatic visualisation of the settlement distribution throughout the county and identifies the Settlement Hierarchy in the context of how Longford is envisaged to develop over the plan period in line with the availability and integration of services, transport, infrastructure and economic activity whilst also preserving its natural environment and amenities.

Figure 4.6: Core Strategy Map



#### 4.10 Core Strategy Table

The Core Strategy Table, as set out in Table 4.15 indicates the distribution of future population and housing across the settlements and tiers of the county in accordance with the defined Settlement Hierarchy.

**Table 4.15: Core Strategy Table**

Hierarchy Tier and Density	Settlement	Pop. 2016	Pop. Growth to 2027	Pop 2027	New HST (Housing Supply Targets) Units 2021-2027	30% of Required Residential Units within Existing settlement	Quantum of Land Required for New Residential Units to 2027 (Ha)	Quantum of Land Zoned for new Residential Units under this plan (Ha)	Quantum of Land Zoned within existing settlement Footprint (Brownfield/ Infill) (Ha)	Potential Units that can be delivered with existing settlement (Brownfield/ Infill)	Housing Yield – 'Other Lands' <sup>17</sup>	
											Quantum of Land (Ha.)	Potential No. of units <sup>18</sup>
<b>Key Town</b> (35-40 units/ha)	Longford Town	10008	+2502	12510	1304	391	34.77	35.33	35.33	1304	105.91	0
<b>Self-Sustaining Growth Town</b> (25 units/ha)	Granard	1096	+274	1370	143	43	5.71	6.40	5.31	133	25.90	10
<b>Self Sustaining Towns</b> (25 units/ ha)	Edgeworthstown	2072	+311	2383	162	49	6.48	7.10	7.10	162	15.60	0
	Ballymahon	1877	+282	2159	147	44	5.87	6	5.20	130	38.97	17
	Lanesborough	757	+151	908	79	24	3.95	4.42	1.87	47	7.40	32
<b>Town &amp; Villages</b> (20 units/ha)	Aughnaclyffe	177	+32	209	17	5	0.83	0.85	0.40	8	4.96	9
	Ballinalee	347	+62	409	33	10	1.63	2.26	2.26	33	12.62	0
	Drumlish	931	+140	1071	73	22	3.64	3.68	3.15	63	19.376	10
	Kenagh	581	+105	686	55	16	2.73	2.95	2.95	55	7.68	0
	Legan	215	+34	249	18	5	0.90	1.15	0.43	9	1.25	9
	Newtownforbes	778	+140	918	73	22	3.65	3.96	3.51	70	13.11	3
<b>Serviced Rural Villages</b> (15 units/ha)	Abbeyshrule	224	+34	258	19	-	1.17	1.21	-	-	-	-
	Ardagh	210	+32	242	16	-	1.09	1.64	-	-	-	-
	Ballinamuck	232	+35	267	18	-	1.21	1.29	-	-	-	-
	Clondra	449	+67	516	35	-	2.34	2.62	-	-	-	-
<b>Rural Settlement Clusters/Open Countryside</b>		20919	+727	21646	379	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		40873	+4927	45800	2568	770	75.96	-	-	-	-	-

<sup>17</sup> 'Other Lands' relates to 'Town Centre' and 'Strategic Residential Reserve' zoned lands.

<sup>18</sup> Residential yield on 'other lands' will be subject to variation taking account of the NPF Tiered approach to zoning and sequential development approach and 'Compact Growth' in making up the overall housing supply target but will not result in an exceedance of overall HST figures.

Under this Core Strategy, the scale and location of settlements has been considered and accordingly the requisite nature and scale of development appropriate to various settlement locations has been evaluated. Higher densities are applied to the Key Town of Longford Town (30 units per hectare), with a reduction in residential densities for Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns, and other towns and villages (12 units per hectare) and in a manner that is commensurate to the existing built environment of these settlements. Towns in the lower tiers will provide for commensurate population and employment growth, providing for natural increase and becoming more economically self-sustaining in line with the equality and capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure available.

From the population and housing allocations presented in the Core Strategy Table, a series of zoning maps are provided in Volume 2: Appendix 1 of this plan with respect to the settlements, and which reflect the figures provided and indicate the quantum and locations of future development for the plan period. In some instances, there may be slight variations in terms of zoning provided as a result of the physical characteristics of sites on the ground, however in line with the NPF and RSES the release of lands will be prioritised in a sequential manner and monitoring will be employed to promote development patterns in line with the Core Strategy. Similarly, the quantum of new residential zoned lands in some settlements will deliberately exceed the minimum quantum of land required for future residential development as detailed in the Core Strategy.

Given some of the minimum land requirements for future residential development in certain settlements of the county, there is a justifiable concern that the Key Aims and the County Policy Objectives of the Core and Settlement Strategies would be undermined if future residential development in settlements were deemed to be undeliverable if limited to the minimum quantum of land requirements for residential development and in the absence of any flexibility or alternative lands for residential development within the settlement. Accordingly, the approach adopted to deliberately exceed the minimum zoning requirement provides sufficient flexibility to prevent any land banking and address any potential issues of intransigence from landowners which could undermine the delivery of residential development in such settlements and the Settlement Strategy advocated in this plan. This approach is also in line with that advocated in Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government *Guidance Note on Core Strategies* (2010), where consideration of market choice is a requirement in relation to the quantum, location and phasing of development.

In giving effect to the Strategic Aims of the Core Strategy, a series of County Policy Objectives are included as follows:

<b>Core Strategy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.46	Ensure that the future spatial development of County Longford is in accordance with the National Planning Framework, including population targets set out under the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning

	Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.
CPO 4.47	Implement all land use planning policy and objectives in a manner which takes account of and is consistent with the Core Strategy in order to accelerate a transition to a greener, low carbon and climate resilient county with a focus on reduced travel demand through the promotion of sustainable settlement patterns.
CPO 4.48	Adhere to the quantum of housing development prescribed in the Core Strategy Table. Development shall not be permitted where it conflicts with the Core Strategy.
CPO 4.49	Support the compact growth of towns and villages to ensure that development proceeds sustainably and at an appropriate scale, density and sequence and in line with the Core Strategy Table
CPO 4.50	Monitor and manage the delivery of residential development in County Longford through the development management process to ensure it is in line with the Core Strategy. In this respect, the Planning Authority shall maintain a record of residential development permitted in individual settlements, as well as residential development permitted as single rural housing, in order to ensure compliance with the population allocations defined by the Core Strategy Table.
CPO 4.51	Zone an appropriate amount of lands within the settlement areas to accommodate the projected population growth as set out in the Core Strategy, including the undertaking of variations of Local Area Plans if required, to ensure consistency with the provisions of the Core Strategy.
CPO 4.52	Facilitate higher and increased building heights at suitable locations and in accordance with settlement hierarchy in line with Specific Planning Policy Requirement (SSPR) 1 of the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018).
CPO 4.53	Achieve the delivery of high-quality built environments ensuring that development is designed to a high standard in line with the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Best Practice Urban Design Manual (DoECLG 2009), the 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018) and Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPRs) 1 – 4 (inclusive), the core strategy for the county and other planning considerations.

#### 4.11 Monitoring and Implementation

The key determinants in achieving the Settlement Strategy outlined are the population and housing targets, as assigned in the Core Strategy Table according to settlement and settlement typology presented. The monitoring of the extent of residential development is required to ensure that development occurs in a coherent, reasoned and evidence-based manner. The delivery of all residential development will be carefully monitored during the lifetime of this plan to ensure it does not cumulatively result in the housing units and population been exceeded.

Longford County Council shall ensure that the future spatial development of County Longford is governed by means of a plan-led approach, directing residential and employment generating development to locations in accordance with National and Regional Policy, and with environmental carrying capacity, which can support investment in public infrastructure and services and which is sensitive to the physical character of the built and natural environment.

Further detail can be found in *Chapter 15: Monitoring, Evaluation and Implementation*.

## 4.12 Housing Strategy

In accordance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, each planning authority is required to prepare a Housing Strategy which will cover the period of its Development Plan. The Housing Strategy must have regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and must address the overall supply of housing within the administrative boundary of the local authority. Accordingly, the Planning Authority has a statutory obligation to address the need for social and affordable housing and to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for housing over the period of its Development Plan.

Under Section 94 (1) (a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), each planning authority:

*'shall include in any development plan a strategy for the purpose of ensuring that proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plan provides for the housing of the existing and future population of the area in the manner set out in the strategy'.*

This takes account of:

- existing need and the likely future need for housing;
- need to ensure that housing is available for persons of different income levels;
- need to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to reasonably match the requirements of the different categories of households, as may be determined by the planning authority, and including the special requirements of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, and;
- need to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different social backgrounds.

### 4.12.1 Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA)

The Housing Strategy contains a Housing Need Demand Assessment. This supports the preparation of the housing strategy and all subsequent related housing policy outputs, e.g. county development plans, local area plans, traveller accommodation plans.

The purpose of the HNDA is to:

- Assist local authorities to develop long-term strategic views of housing need across all tenures.
- Provide a robust evidence base to support decisions about new housing supply, wider investment and housing related services that inform an overall national housing profile.
- Inform policies about the proportion of social and affordable housing required, including the need for different types and sizes of provision.
- Provide evidence to inform policies related to the provision of specialist housing and housing related services.

The HNDA process is elaborated and presented in greater detail in the Housing Strategy provided in Volume 3, Annex 4.

### 4.13 Housing Legislation and Policy

In addition to the legislation already outlined, the Longford Housing Strategy 2021-2027 (Annex 4), provides a comprehensive overview of other relevant housing legislation and policy at national regional and local levels. A brief synopsis of some of the other key legislative and policy instruments is provided accordingly:

#### 4.13.1 Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015

There is a requirement for up to 10% social housing in developments in excess of 9 units. Further consideration is given to social housing delivery mechanisms in Annex 4.

#### 4.13.2 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework and National Development Plan

The NPF contains a number of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) that support the delivery of residential development at a suitable location and scale to achieve an overall target of 550,000 additional households nationwide by 2040, with the achievement of these relevant NPOs to be underpinned by the development of a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HDNA) by each Local Authority.

In terms of social housing, the National Development Plan will, through a planned capital investment of over €4.2 billion, support the delivery of some 40,000 new social housing homes by 2021. Direct Local Authority build, acquisitions, rejuvenation of formerly empty homes and provision by housing bodies are identified as the chief delivery mechanism.

#### 4.13.3 Rebuilding Ireland – An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness (2016)

Rebuilding Ireland specifically provides a multi-stranded approach to achieving key housing objectives, including to significantly increase the supply of social housing, to increase the housing build numbers by 2020, to service all tenure types, and to tackle homelessness. The Plan is designed to put in place the necessary financing, regulatory, governance and resource mechanisms and initiatives to accelerate the delivery of all types of housing supply - private, social and rental sector in places of high demand and acute shortage. The plan sets out five pillars for which a series of actions are planned to address the challenges presented by Ireland's disjointed housing sector as follows:

- Address homelessness;
- Accelerate social housing;
- Build more homes;
- Improve the rental sector;
- Utilise existing housing.

#### 4.13.4 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region

Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) contained within the RSES for the region aim to support local authorities in completing Housing Need Demand Assessments as required under the NPF and provide for a diverse range of housing types and tenures. The strategy also set out to support local authorities, approved housing bodies and other sectoral

agencies in the provision of a greater diversity of housing type and tenure, including social and affordable housing and exploring new models of low-cost rental and affordable homeownership.

#### 4.13.5 Longford County Housing Strategy 2015-2021

The Longford County Housing Strategy 2015-2021 provided a comprehensive review of demographics and housing demand within County Longford to inform the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021. It contains the projected need for the planning provision of housing, as well as the demand for social and affordable housing within the County based on data from the 2011 census and regional population targets. This analysis identified a requirement for 2,120 households during the lifetime of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021.

Given the difficult economic situation at the time, the Housing Strategy did not envisage Longford County Council building a substantial number of social or affordable housing units during the Plan's lifetime. However, it was acknowledged that there would be a need for social housing irrespective of overall social housing output. In order to meet this need the Housing Strategy advocated the implementation of Part V requirements of 14% in all new housing schemes subject to the type and location of the housing units required by the planning authority at a given time.

#### 4.13.6 Longford County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024

The Longford County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) 2019-2024 fulfils requirements under the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. The TAP aims to meet the accommodation needs of travellers in Longford within a five-year period up to 2024 whilst recognising the ethnic identity of the Traveller community and aiming to provide accommodation that is suitable to their specific needs. The TAP provides for standard housing options, as well as traveller-specific accommodation such as halting sites, temporary/emergency sites and one-off rural houses within County Longford. Different housing options will be provided in accordance with an assessment of need and are subject to feasibility.

### **4.14 County Longford Housing Strategy and Housing Need Demand Assessment 2021 - 2027 - Overview**

All aspects relating to the housing market were considered during the preparation of the Housing Strategy and associated Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA), including an assessment of the prevailing economic and local market conditions through detailed quantitative and qualitative assessments, which included drawing on local auctioneer and property management expertise, to ascertain a comprehensive impression of the current and future market outlook. Whilst the evidence gathered would suggest that challenges exist within the housing market in County Longford, there is consensus that activity should gather pace within the immediate future as the economy continues to grow and, with that, the increased demand for additional housing. Set within

this context, the Council has planned for the growth of the housing market in Longford, whilst recognising the need for increased levels of development within established urban settlements and the importance for fostering ‘compact growth’ in our settlements in the overall sustainable development of the County.

#### 4.14.1 Future Housing Requirements

The Longford Housing Strategy projects a likely need for 1,169 additional residential units in County Longford over the period from 2021 – 2027, the equivalent of 167 units per annum, as set out in Table 4.16. The Housing Strategy also identifies the projected number of households who will not be able to meet the ‘affordability criteria’<sup>19</sup> and who do not qualify for a mortgage and cannot afford private rental accommodation. Households which are identified as not being able to meet the ‘Affordability Criteria’ over the plan period are therefore considered to require social (and affordable) housing. The Housing Strategy has determined that 252 of the 2,568 additional anticipated households will not qualify for a mortgage during the plan period. Additionally, these 252 households will not meet the affordability criteria for private rental. This equates to an average of 9.8% of the additional anticipated households with the identified social requirement throughout the plan period being 252 no. units.

**Table 4.16: Summary of Anticipated Additional Households and Requirements over the plan period of 2021-2027**

		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2021-2027
<b>Additional Anticipated Households</b>	Total	428	428	428	428	428	428	2,568
<b>No. of Additional Households That Do Not Qualify for a Mortgage</b>	Subset of Above	42	42	42	42	42	42	252
<b>No. of Additional Anticipated Households That Do Not Qualify for a Mortgage AND Cannot Afford Private Rental</b>	Subset of Above	42	42	42	42	42	42	252
<b>Housing Shortfall (%)</b>	Of Total	9.8%	9.8%	9.8%	9.8%	9.8%	9.8%	9.8%

<sup>19</sup> This is based on understanding the threshold in the lowest house price band per year during the Development Plan period and application of the “Annuity Formula”. The “Annuity Formula” is based on the determination of an “Affordability Threshold”, a “Loan to Value Ratio”, an “Annual Percentage Rate (APR) - Interest Rate”, the determination of a “Monthly Percentage Rate (MPR) - Interest Rate”, and the determination of a “Loan Term (Years/Months)”.

#### 4.14.2 Existing Social Requirement and Targets

There are 933 households on the County Longford Social Housing List (March 2020). With respect to unit type requirements, the greatest demand is for three-bedroom properties which account for 56.5% of the need. This is followed by two-bedroom units (37.2%). Demand for social housing is concentrated in Longford Town (50%), Ballymahon (11.7%) and Edgeworthstown (8.9%). Under *Rebuilding Ireland*, County Longford was targeted to deliver 309 social housing units within the 'building, acquisition, leasing' category specifically between 2018-2021. Through 2018-2019, Longford County Council have already delivered 261 units through these mechanisms. Thus, over the course of 2020-2021 only 48 additional units are required to be delivered through 'building, acquisition and leasing' mechanisms in order to meet the *Rebuilding Ireland* targets. This is an encouraging indicator as to Longford County Council's ability to provide its social housing requirements in line with the aspirations of *Rebuilding Ireland*.

Additionally, a target of delivering 257 units across all social housing delivery streams (build, acquisition, leasing, Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)) was set for 2019. By the end of 2019, the total output in County Longford was 308 units, which indicates that Longford County Council achieved 120% of its *Rebuilding Ireland* Target to 2019. This is further elaborated in the Longford Housing Strategy in Annex 4. It is also a key priority of the Council to ensure that groups with special housing needs, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, the homeless, those in need of emergency accommodation and Travellers are accommodated in a way suitable to their specific needs.

#### 4.14.3 Average Household Size

Census 2016 indicates that the 40,755 people living in 15,122 private households in County Longford resulted in an average household size of 2.70 which is marginally lower than the state average of 2.75. However, the NPF states that the national average is expected to decline to around 2.5 by 2040, whilst acknowledging that urban households tend to be smaller than in the suburbs or rural parts of the country. In line with this projected trend, a graduated average household size is utilised within this plan to 2040 (i.e. assuming alignment with the NPF by 2040). By the end of the plan period in 2027, the average household size is projected to be 2.61. By applying the relevant household size to projected population increases, it is possible to forecast required household numbers to 2027 and beyond. This is addressed further in Annex 4: County Longford Housing Strategy 2021-2027.

#### 4.14.4 Household Size Cohort

Annex 4 provides further detail on projected household composition over the plan period, based on analysis of trends between 2002-2016. This analysis demonstrates a trend towards 1 and 2 person households over the plan period, which are projected to form a combined total of 58.7% of all households by 2027. In contrast, the number of households comprising of 4 people or more will continue to decline between 2021-2027. Households with 4 or more people will amount to approximately 25% of total households by 2027.

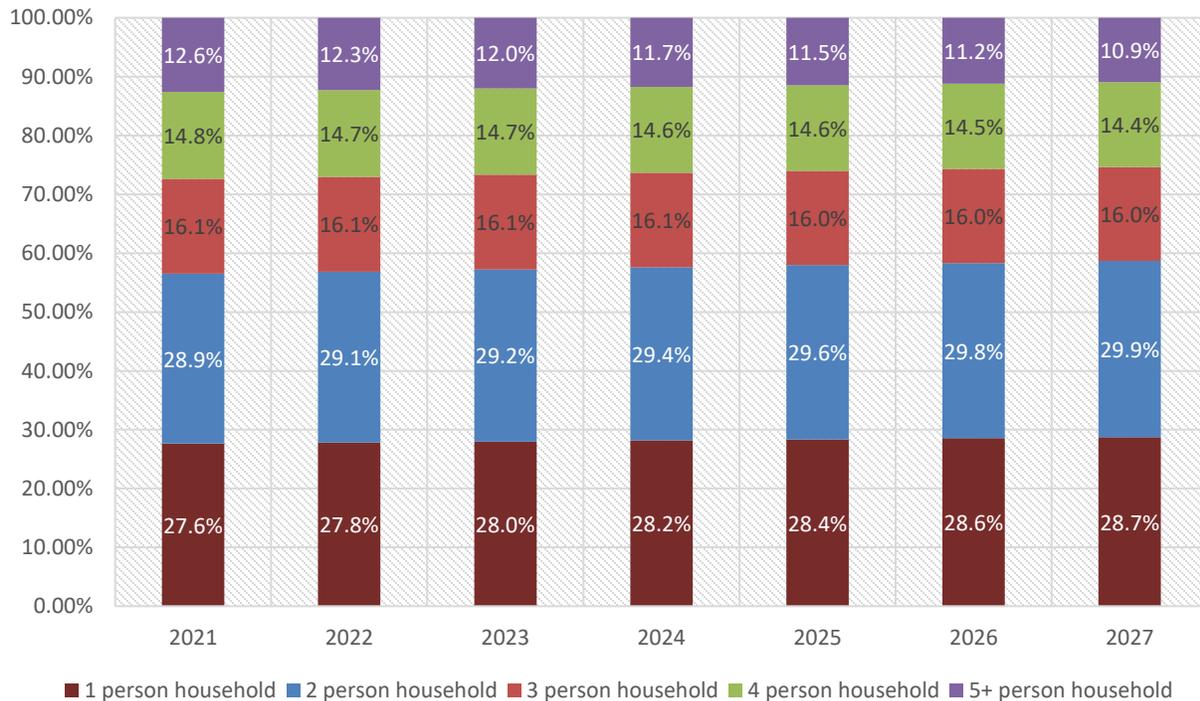
### 4.14.5 Household Composition

As set out in Section 6.6 of the NPF, information on household composition and projections in relation to household size are informative evidence inputs that can assist with understanding stock profile pressures. The Longford Housing Strategy 2021-2027 provides analysis of the historic information (2002, 2006, 2011 and 2016 Census) in relation to the composition of households at County level in order to understand these dynamics and estimate how they may change over time. Specifically, the intercensal average has been used to determine a trended annual average change in household composition. This indicates the following changes can be anticipated during the plan period:

- 1 person households will increase by an average of 0.19% annually
- 2 person households will increase by an average of 0.18% annually
- 3 person households will increase by an average of -0.03% annually
- 4 person households will increase by an average of -0.05% annually
- 5+ person households will increase by an average of -0.28% annually

Figure 4.7 and Table 4.17 indicate the estimated proportion and number of households by size during the plan period.

**Figure 4.7: Forecasted Household Size Cohort in County Longford during the plan period**



**Table 4.17: Household Size Cohort Forecasts for Additional Anticipated Households in County Longford during the plan period**

Additional Anticipated Households	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
1 Person Household	119	120	121	121	122	123	726
2 Person Household	124	125	126	127	127	128	758
3 Person Household	69	69	69	69	68	68	412
4 Person Household	63	63	63	62	62	62	374
5 + Person Household	53	51	50	49	48	47	298
<b>Total Additional Anticipated Households</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>2,568</b>

#### 4.14.6 Tenure

Tenure is another important consideration for the delivery of housing and Section 6.6 of the NPF identifies the need to estimate the demand for different tenure types. Analysis of the historic tenure split has therefore been undertaken in the Longford Housing Strategy 2021-2027 to help discern and forecast how the household tenure may change during the plan period. Historic data indicates the intercensal observed change between 2002-2016 and an annual average change applied forward for the plan period as a continuation of trends was applied. The following changes can be anticipated during the plan period:

- Annual average change of -1.02% observed in owner occupied households (average intercensal change of -5.1%).
- Annual average change of 0.7% observed in privately rented households (average intercensal change of -3.5%).
- Annual average change of 0.33% observed in other rented households (average intercensal change of -1.6%).

The applied changes for the additional anticipated households are indicated in Table 4.18 and Figure 4.8.

**Table 4.18: Household Tenure Forecasts for Additional Anticipated Households in County Longford during plan period**

Additional Anticipated Households	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
Owner occupied	254	250	245	241	236	232	1,458
Private Rental	94	97	100	103	106	109	610
Other Rental	80	81	83	84	85	87	500
<b>No. of Additional Anticipated Households</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>2,568</b>

**Figure 4.8: Household Tenure Forecasts for Households in County Longford during plan period**



#### 4.14.7 Residential Densities

Higher densities are applied to the Key Town of Longford Town (30 units per hectare), with a reduction in residential densities for Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns, and other towns and villages (12 units per hectare) and in a manner that is commensurate to the existing built environment of these settlements and subject to good design and Development Management Standards (see Chapter 16). It is important that the density of new development in towns and villages is reflective of the existing character and that growth is linked to infrastructural capacity.

#### 4.14.8 Layout and Design

A good development creates a ‘sense of place’ and community belonging to the residents. This is created by providing a mixture of house types and tenure, an individual design, the use of a variety of materials for the context of the site and area and connectivity of the site to other places. In considering proposals for development, the Council will have regard to the DEHLG Guidelines on ‘*Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities – Best Practice Guidelines for Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities*’ (2007), ‘*Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities – Statement on Housing Policy*’ (2007), ‘*Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities*’ (2018) and ‘*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*’ and the accompanying ‘*Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide*’ (2009).

#### 4.14.9 Apartment Development

The 2016 Census indicates that 1-2 person households now comprise a majority of households and this trend is set continue, yet Ireland has only one-quarter the EU average of apartments as a proportion of housing stock. (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018). In Longford, 4.2% of households lived in apartments in 2016, substantially lower than the national rate of 12%.

As with housing generally, the scale and extent of apartment development should increase in relation to proximity to core urban centres and other relevant factors in line with the standards, principles and any specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) set out in the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018) and the 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018).

#### 4.15 Housing Strategy County Policy Objectives

The following sets out the County Policy Objectives relating to housing in County Longford over the plan period of 2021-2027. Further particulars relating to housing provision are to be found in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy which sets out the extent of housing provision to serve the county's existing and future population in locations that comply with the Settlement Hierarchy, and also *Chapter 16: Development Management Standards*, which includes standards in relation to housing provision.

<b>Housing Strategy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.54	Provide new homes to meet expected future housing requirements in the County as identified in the HNDA. A total of 2,568 new homes shall be provided over the plan period to meet requirements a result of forecast population growth. New homes shall be provided in a planned and coordinated manner in accordance with the aims and policies of the Core Strategy, the RSES, and the National Planning Framework.
CPO 4.55	Seek the provision of an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures to ensure homes for communities in towns, villages and rural areas and to meet the needs of people of all incomes and needs.
CPO 4.56	Provide for new housing in existing settlements to ensure that settlements grow in a manner that is sustainable, includes provision of sufficient social and economic infrastructure, and to a scale which aligns with the Settlement Hierarchy set out in the Core Strategy.
CPO 4.57	Provide new housing in rural areas including one-off homes in accordance with the Development Plan where it meets the social and economic needs of these areas, tackles isolation, and promotes social inclusion.
CPO 4.58	Provide housing appropriate to the needs of the elderly (in accordance with the Longford Age Friendly Strategy 2015-2020 and any subsequent strategies), persons with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers, and the homeless. The Council shall support and promote the use of Universal

	Design principles and life-long adaptability in new housing developments to meet the needs of diverse groups and an aging population.
CPO 4.59	Seek high quality of design in all housing development having due regard to Government policy relating to sustainable development, which aims to reduce the demand for travel within existing settlements, and the need to respect and reflect the established character of rural areas.
CPO 4.60	Encourage the provision of affordable housing in appropriate locations in towns and villages, having regard to the aims and policies of the Core Strategy and the needs of local communities, including the need to deliver sustainable development, social integration and an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures.
CPO 4.61	Provide social and affordable housing to meet forecasted future housing need over the plan period as identified in the HNDA. The Council will endeavour to deliver a further 252 social and affordable housing units over the plan period to meet this forecasted need as resources allow.
CPO 4.62	Make use of a range of delivery mechanisms to provide new social and affordable homes including new builds, acquisitions, renovations and acquisitions of vacant homes, leasing, and housing supports including RAS and HAP.
CPO 4.63	Require that 10% of lands zoned for residential use, or for a mixture of residential and other uses, be reserved for social and affordable housing in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and any future revised Guidance.
CPO 4.64	Tackle vacancy and to secure new homes, tackle dereliction and deliver regeneration by bringing vacant sites back into use. This shall be pursued through the application of the vacant site levy in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015. The Council shall also endeavour to bring about the timely re-use of vacant Council-owned housing stock.
CPO 4.65	Promote the regeneration of town centres through the retention of town centre residential units and through encouraging the reuse of upper floors above commercial premises for residential accommodation.
CPO 4.66	Provide appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of the Travelling Community and to secure the implementation of the Longford County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024.
CPO 4.67	Support the on-going monitoring and review of the HNDA in accordance with the forthcoming guidance on HNDA methodology to be issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
CPO 4.68	To support the development of quality residential schemes with a range of housing options having regard to the standards, principles and any specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) set out in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009); Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018) and the 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018).

#### 4.16 Environmental Conservation and Protection

The development objectives in the Development Plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment. The accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes have informed the preparation of the Plan (see *Chapter 1: Introduction and Strategic Context* for a description of these processes and Volume 4 for associated documents detailing the findings). All recommendations made by these processes have been integrated into the Plan and this will contribute towards environmental conservation and protection within the County and beyond.

##### 4.16.1 Ecosystems Services Approach and Natural Capital

In preparing the Plan and developing policy objectives, the Council have followed these Ecosystem Services<sup>20</sup> Approach principles:

- a) Consideration of natural systems - by using knowledge of interactions in nature and how ecosystems function (including *Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment*);
- b) Taking into account of the services that ecosystems provide - including those that underpin social and economic well-being, such as flood and climate regulation (including *Chapter 3: Climate Change* and *Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications*), resources for food, fibre or fuel (*Chapter 9: Rural Economy*), or for recreation, culture and quality of life (*Chapter 7: Placemaking, Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage, Chapter 13: Green Infrastructure* and *Chapter 14: Landscape Character*);
- c) Involving people - those who benefit from the ecosystem services and those managing them need to be involved in decisions that affect them. Public consultation has informed the preparation of the Draft Plan which has been further refined before adoption, taking into account submissions/observations made during public display.

The Council shall promote an Ecosystem Services Approach, following the above principles, in its decision-making processes, including those relating to the preparation of statutory land use plans. In recognition of the need to manage natural capital<sup>21</sup>, provisions have been integrated into the Plan that will contribute towards management of air quality, noise pollution, light pollution, water quality and integrated catchment management.

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<sup>20</sup> Ecosystems are multifunctional communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. Ecosystems provide a series of services for human well-being (ecosystem services) either directly or indirectly contributing towards human wellbeing

<sup>21</sup> Renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals)

<b>Environmental Conservation and Protection - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 4.69	<u>United Nations Sustainability Goals</u> Contribute, as practicable, towards achievement of the 17 no. Sustainable Development Goals <sup>22</sup> of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which came into force in 2016.
CPO 4.70	<u>Regulatory framework for environmental protection and management</u> Cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management, including compliance with EU Directives - including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended), the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU, as amended by 2014/52/EC) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) – and relevant transposing Regulations.
CPO 4.71	<u>Information to be considered at lower levels of decision making and environmental assessment</u> Lower levels of decision-making and environmental assessment should consider the sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report that accompanies the Plan, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas;</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> Including:

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Features of the landscape that provide linkages/connectivity to designated sites (e.g. watercourses, areas of semi-natural habitat such as linear woodlands etc.);</li> <li>• Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas;</li> <li>• Areas likely to contain a habitat listed in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive;</li> <li>• Entries to the Record of Monuments;</li> <li>• Entries to the Record of Protected Structures;</li> <li>• Architectural Conservation Areas; and</li> <li>• Landscape/amenity designations.</li> </ul> |
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#### 4.17 Housing Climate Context and Associated Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a climate context and associated actions.

Careful planning, quality construction, good design and appropriate density remain constant for the successful delivery of our current and future housing needs. Ensuring existing homes are more energy efficient and that new homes produce less emissions (during construction and over their lifetime) will prove equally critical in reducing our carbon footprint. Irish homes use 7% more energy and emit 58% more CO<sub>2</sub> than EU averages, with 70% continuing to rely on fossil fuels alone<sup>23</sup>.

From 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 the *European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) Recast 2010*, requires all new buildings to achieve the 'Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB)' standard, which closely translates to an 'A2' Building Energy Rating (BER), and a 'B2' BER for extensions and/or refurbishments greater than 25% of the total surface area, or cost optimal equivalent. Ireland is meeting this requirement through its revised Building Regulations. Improving the fabric of buildings first (i.e. 'Fabric First'), including increased insulation and upgrading to triple glazed, air-tight windows, has been identified as the most successful and cost-efficient means of reducing the carbon emission of Ireland's housing sector.

The *National Planning Framework (NPF)* has outlined the construction of an additional 500,000 homes by 2040, to include 132,000 by 2027, under the *National Development Plan (NDP) 2018 – 2027* public housing programme, while simultaneously upgrading 500,000 existing homes to a B2 rating or better by 2030 under the *Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2019*. The NPF 'National Policy Objective (NPO) 33' seeks to 'prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location'; NPO 3c aims to 'deliver 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints'.

<sup>23</sup> Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) (2019), 'Energy in Ireland – 2019 Report', December 2019. <https://www.seai.ie/publications/Energy-in-Ireland-2019-.pdf>

Notwithstanding self-sustainable one-off housing, the concept of ‘compact growth’ as set out in the NPF is seen as the most considered means of achieving NPO33 and NPO3c. Compact growth aims to “*make better use of under-utilised land and buildings, including ‘infill’, ‘brownfield’ and publicly owned sites and vacant and under-occupied buildings, with higher housing and jobs densities*”. The successful delivery of same minimises car usage and its associated costs (e.g. pollution, congestion, wellbeing, etc) while simultaneously allowing for the provision of more public infrastructure and transport and facilitating more people to walk and cycle.

### ***Housing Actions Climate Change Actions***

Longford County Council shall:

- A4.1** Require all one-off housing applications to be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement, and in accordance with the principles set out in the ‘*Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines*’ (2005), to include an outlined assessment of the proposed against:
- Design and layout;
  - Construction and materials;
  - Energy strategy;
  - Waste and water reduction;
  - Services (incl. high speed broadband and transport links);
  - Landscape and ecology.
- A4.2** Require all housing scheme applications to meet the principles of the ‘*Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*’ DMURS (2019) and in accordance with the National Transport Authority ‘*Permeability Best Practice Guide*’ (2015), submit a ‘Permeability Audit’ where considered necessary by Longford County Council.
- A4.3** Require all existing, social housing in the ownership of the Local Authority to be upgraded to a B2 BER rating, where achievable.
- A4.4** Require all new-build housing, procured by LCC for the purposes of social housing, to be zero-carbon, Passivhaus, or equivalent standard.
- A4.5** Prioritise the principle of Passivhaus or equivalent standard in accordance with current Design Guidelines of the County Development Plan, or those deemed acceptable by the Planning Department.
- A4.6** Require all residential schemes outside of ‘Town Core’ zoned lands, to responsibly plant and maintain 1 no., native tree (e.g. Willow, Alder, Birch, Scots Pine, Holly, Sessile Oak) of a girth greater than 20cm, within the confines of the proposed site, per dwelling.
- A4.7** Require all future, multi-residential, industrial or warehousing applications to specify the type and location of permeable surfacing throughout, to include access roads.

## Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications

### 5.1 Introduction

Underpinning the sustainable future development of the County is the delivery of high-quality infrastructure that can service the demands of Longford's residents and its businesses and provide for balanced growth and reliable service provision necessary for creating sustainable and attractive communities and securing economic investment. This includes a wide range of infrastructure provision including water, wastewater, transport, utilities (e.g. broadband, electricity, gas), flood and surface water management measures through a plan-led approach in accordance with the County's Core, Settlement and Housing Strategies and Climate Strategy.

Mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change will have a significant bearing on future development patterns. The increase in the frequency of extreme weather events, as witnessed across varying global to local scales, serves only to highlight the increasing need for climate resilient development and the requisite infrastructure to enable such development in the future. Climate mitigation is now a focal point in national planning policy with an increased focus on the delivery of 'compact growth' development in our urban settlements to accommodate future growth. This development goal has clear implications for the future provision of infrastructure in our urban settlements in improving the 'liveability' and attraction of our towns as an alternative to less sustainable development patterns which could undermine the globally recognised need to move towards a low carbon development economy and society.

Accordingly, the challenge for Longford County Council, in conjunction with other agencies and authorities, is to ensure that the delivery of infrastructural services and the inclusion of mandatory statutory objectives is guided by the principles of sustainable development in facilitating more efficient land use and physical development, whilst providing for the continued social and economic growth of the County.

### 5.2 Transportation

A key feature of any sustainable community is the level of integration of appropriate transportation infrastructure with effective land use planning. This is recognised across varying spatial scales, whether it is through the provision of high-quality public transport or national routes to facilitate enhanced regional development, or the delivery of cycle lanes to encourage more sustainable movement within urban settlements and neighbourhoods. Land use planning has a distinct influence on travel behaviour, as clustering of development, coupled with improvements in street layouts and design, can strongly influence how people make their daily journeys. Accordingly, this section of the Plan is complemented by zoning policies and objectives contained within Chapter 4: *Core Strategy*.

### 5.2.1 Transport Policy Context

The Transportation Strategy presented in this plan is supported by a number of national and regional policy instruments and guidance, with the following providing an overview of their context.

#### 5.2.1.1 *The National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040*

The NPF emphasises the important role effective and targeted sustainable transportation solutions, across a range of modes, play in delivering the National Strategic Outcomes of compact growth for our settlements (NSO 1, 3 and 5). Furthermore, the NPF identifies the need to progressively electrify our mobility systems, whilst moving away from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems in line with Ireland’s Climate Change Mitigation Plan (NSO 8). The NPF advocates the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the private car into the design of our communities by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments (NPO 27). The NPF also advocates the provision of a quality nationwide community-based public transport system in rural areas which responds to local needs under the Rural Transport Network and similar initiatives (NSO 3).

#### 5.2.1.2 *Climate Action Plan 2019*

This plan sets out the Government’s plan of action in relation to combatting Climate Change and its impacts. It sets out governance arrangements including carbon-proofing our policies, establishment of carbon budgets and a strengthened Climate Change Advisory Council. A central component of the plan is the Government’s commitment to undertake the following:

- 70% of the Country’s electricity needs will come from renewable sources by 2030.
- Accelerate the take up of Electric Vehicle (EV) cars and vans so that we reach 100% of all new cars and vans are EVs by 2030. This will enable achieving our target of 950,000 EVs on the road by 2030.
- Approximately one third of all vehicles sold during the decade will be Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) or Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV).
- Make growth less transport intensive through better planning, remote and home-working and modal shift to public transport.
- Increase the renewable biofuel content of motor fuels.
- Set targets for the conversion of public transport fleets to zero carbon alternatives.

#### 5.2.1.3 *Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020*

This remains the principal transport policy document and sets out how the vision for a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. The Government reaffirms its vision for sustainability in transport and sets out five key goals to:

1. Reduce overall travel demand.
2. Maximise the efficiency of the transport network.
3. Reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
4. Reduce transport emissions.
5. Improve accessibility to transport.

#### 5.2.1.4 *The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020*

This Framework derived from *Smarter Travel* sets out a national policy for cycling, in order to create a stronger cycling culture, a safer environment for cycling and improved quality of life.

#### 5.2.1.5 *Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012*

The Guidelines seek to achieve and maintain a safe and efficient network of National Roads in the broader context of sustainable development strategies, thereby facilitating continued economic growth, while encouraging a shift towards more sustainable travel and transport in accordance with the *Smarter Travel* policy document.

#### 5.2.1.6 *2020 DMURS Interim Advice Note – Covid-19 Pandemic Response*

The current Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport sets out design guidance and standards for constructing new and reconfiguring existing urban roads and streets in Ireland, incorporating good planning and design practice and focus on the public realm. It also outlines practical design measures to encourage more sustainable travel patterns in urban areas.

#### 5.2.1.7 *National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020*

The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009-2020 (DTTS), uses the targets outlined in *Smarter Travel* and focuses more specifically on cycling as a sustainable transport mode. The document sets out the stated aim of creating a strong cycling culture in Ireland making cycling the norm, rather than an exception, for all short trips undertaken.

#### 5.2.1.8 *Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, 2018*

This strategy, authored by the DTTS, is designed to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations, constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenways users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over the next 10 years,

#### 5.2.1.9 *Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018-2022*

The National Transport Authority (NTA) provides rural transport services through the Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018-2022. The key priorities of this programme are directed at addressing rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. The services provided under the programme are intended to fulfil a primarily social function, in meeting the needs of communities in towns, villages and rural areas.

#### 5.2.1.10 *Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial Economic Strategy 2019-2031*

The RSES reinforces and expands on the policy provision for transportation contained in the NPF and sets out a number of guiding principles for the integration of land use and transport planning, as well as a number of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) for specific

land use and transport. One such RPO requires the preparation of Local Transport Plans (LTPs) for a number of selected settlements within the region, one of which is Longford Town (RPO 8.6). Such LTPs will include transport priorities for each settlement in terms of public transport infrastructure and services; cycle investment; improvements to the pedestrian environment; and road enhancements. RPO 4.59 also outlines the key objective to enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within Longford Town centre, by improving links between the core and surrounding areas through the further integration of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.

#### 5.2.1.11 National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2022:

The NDIS includes specific actions assigned to Local Authorities. Action 108 dishing of footpaths and action 109 accessible furniture.

#### 5.2.1.12 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) 2018:

The UNCRPD puts obligations on State Parties to ensure access for persons with disabilities to, inter-alia the physical environment and transportation in both urban and rural areas.

## 5.2.2 Land Use and Transportation Planning

A central theme associated with the aforementioned policy documents and guidance is the overriding requirement for enhanced integration of land use and transportation. In shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of land-uses, the integration of land-use and transportation can help reduce the need to travel and facilitate sustainable urban development. This plan therefore promotes an integrated approach to land-use and transportation which aligns with the Core Strategy and directs future development into existing towns and settlements within County Longford, in order to reduce car dependency. The plan strongly supports the creation of compact urban growth, consolidation of existing settlements and prioritisation of the development of brownfield lands across the settlement hierarchy, which in turn will encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking as viable alternatives to the private car. In order to strengthen the economic competitiveness and social advancement of the County, an effective transportation network is required to ensure adequate linkages between Longford, the Midland region and beyond.

<b>Land Use and Transportation - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.1	Support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements within the hierarchy of settlements as identified within the Core Strategy and which are well served by public transport.
CPO 5.2	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.

CPO 5.3	Provide for alternative forms of transportation and associated infrastructure in order to reduce the dependency on the private car, such as public transport initiatives and infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians.
CPO 5.4	Engage with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly in the creation of a coordinated sustainable transport plan for the Midland Region to guide and inform local policy in the development of more sustainable modes of transportation.
CPO 5.5	Promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County.
CPO 5.6	Integrate the County's transport and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns and improved linkages between the towns and villages within the County, with the aim of developing a coherent network dedicated to sustainable transport modes across the County and to the wider Midland region.
CPO 5.7	Provide, where possible, for the establishment of integrated transport nodes.
CPO 5.8	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.
CPO 5.9	Prepare and implement a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Longford Town in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and other relevant stakeholders. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and other relevant stakeholders, in accordance with the guidance note Area Based Transport Assessment 2019 (or any subsequent update) produced by the NTA and TII.
CPO 5.10	Support the use of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) technology for pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular traffic, public transport and parking management in all new developments.
CPO 5.11	<p>Require all major developments to submit Traffic Impact Assessments and Mobility Management Plans.</p> <p>Traffic Impact Assessments shall be prepared in accordance with the TII Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines (2014) (PE-PDV-02045).</p> <p>Mobility management / travel plans shall be submitted with applications for trip intensive developments including schools, significant employers, business parks and industrial estates, prepared having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>NTA Achieving Effective Workplace Travel Plans Guidance for Local Authorities: Achieving-Effective-Workplace-Travel-Plans-Guidance-for-Local-Authorities11.pdf (nationaltransport.ie)</i></li> <li>- <i>Dublin Transportation Office – Advice Note Mobility Management Plans (2002): <a href="https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/mobility_management_plans_2002.pdf">https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/mobility_management_plans_2002.pdf</a></i></li> </ul>

### 5.2.3 Road and Street Network

Several strategic national primary and secondary routes traverse the County from east to west; and from north to south. These include the N4 and the N5, both of which are components of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) Comprehensive Network; as well as the N55, N63 and several strategically important regionally routes, including the R392 which provides a route from Lanesborough and Ballymahon to Mullingar.

National planning policy in respect of road infrastructure in the National Planning Framework (NPF), sets out the importance of maintaining, improving and protecting the strategic function of the key transport corridors, including the strategic function of the TEN-T core and comprehensive network (NSO 2). A key feature of this is enhanced regional accessibility to the north-west, including upgrading northern sections of the N4 and N5 routes, with significant benefits for future regional connectivity for Longford. The RSES also emphasises the importance of maintaining, improving and protecting the strategic function of the key transport corridors, and supports the delivery of the N4 Mullingar to Longford route upgrade (RPO 8.10).

Continued investment in the county's road and street network is necessary to ensure the sustainable efficient movement of people and goods within the county, to provide access to developing areas and to support economic activity. Longford County Council intends to proceed with a number of specific projects during the period of this plan. In order to implement a range of design measures that ensure roads and streets are designed and managed to cater for all road users, the Council will have regard to the following; *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2020)*, *the Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland (2015)*, *TII Standard DN-GEO-03084 'The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads'* and other appropriate standards.

<b>Roads and Streets - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.12	Provide the highest quality road access and capacity on routes of economic importance to the County, and maintain and improve the capacity of existing arterial routes of national, regional and local importance within the County in the context of the National Planning Framework and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, including the relief of bottlenecks at strategic locations.
CPO 5.13	Identify the future needs of the national route network and co-operate in fulfilling these needs in conjunction with TII.
CPO 5.14	Promote improved access between the major settlements of the County and important centres in the Midland region, particularly those identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
CPO 5.15	To protect the capacity, efficiency and safety of the national road network in County Longford by complying with the ' <i>Spatial Planning and National Roads -Guidelines for planning authorities'</i> (2012).
CPO 5.16	Protect the study area, route corridor options and thereafter the preferred route corridor selected for the national road schemes being progressed in the Development Plan in accordance with National Development Plan

	Objectives and to prohibit development that could prejudice their future delivery.
CPO 5.17	<p>Undertake the following Corridor and Route Selection Process for relevant new infrastructure being promoted by the Council, but excluding those national road schemes which are advanced following TII guidelines and policy:</p> <p><u>Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental constraints (including those identified in Section 4 of the SEA Environmental Report) and opportunities (such as existing linear infrastructure) will assist in the identification of possible route corridor options;</li> <li>• Potentially feasible corridors within which infrastructure could be accommodated will be identified and these corridors assessed. The selection of the preferred route corridor will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by the relevant specialists; and</li> <li>• In addition to the constraints identified above, site-specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate corridors.</li> </ul> <p><u>Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potentially feasible routes within the preferred corridor will be identified and assessed. The selection of preferred routes will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by the relevant specialists, taking into account project level information and potential mitigation measures that are readily achievable;</li> <li>- In addition to the constraints identified above, site specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate routes; and</li> <li>- In addition to environmental considerations, the identification of route corridors and the refinement of route lines is likely to be informed by other considerations.</li> </ul>
CPO 5.18	<p>Reserve lands in advance of investigating the feasibility of potential schemes for the improvement, maintenance and management of road traffic systems throughout the County. Lands shall be reserved for the following potential schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N5 Longford – Scramogue Scheme</li> <li>• N4 – N63 – N5 By-Pass to the South of Longford.</li> <li>• N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky)</li> <li>• N55 Granard By-Pass</li> <li>• N63 Killashee By-Pass</li> <li>• N55 Edgeworthstown By-Pass</li> <li>• N55 Ballymahon By-Pass</li> <li>• N55 Tonywardan-Ardagullion Improvement</li> <li>• N63 Barnacor Road Re-alignment</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N55 Ballymahon to Kilcurry Re-alignment</li> <li>• R392 Newcastle to Forgney Re-alignment</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Council will investigate the feasibility of these potential schemes, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Any future proposals for roads shall be consistent with the other provisions contained in the Plan, including CPO 5.17 in relation to Corridor and Route Selection Process; and take into account the most up to date, available information on flood risk at that time.</li> <li>- Where these corridors have been identified they will be protected from further development prior to the establishment of a final route.</li> <li>- Where corridors have not yet been developed the Council shall pursue the development of these corridors and shall protect corridors from development once established.</li> <li>- Where route selection corridors exist, Longford County Council, in consultation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), shall ensure that the final route is identified within a reasonable timeframe.</li> </ul>
CPO 5.19	<p>Protect routes of strategic importance within the County, as outlined below, from further access creation and the intensification of existing accesses and development on national routes. Development on the National and Regional Routes outlined below shall be carefully considered to preserve their strategic role and safeguard the strategic function of the national road network, in accordance with the provisions of the <i>DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012)</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N4 to Dublin and Sligo &amp; N5 to Castlebar</li> <li>• N55 to Cavan and Athlone &amp; N63 to Galway</li> <li>• R194 Longford to Virginia</li> <li>• R198 Longford/Arvagh</li> <li>• R392 Lanesboro/Mullingar,</li> <li>• R393 Longford to Ballynacarrigy/Mullingar</li> <li>• R395 Edgeworthstown to Castlepollard</li> <li>• R396 Granard to Castlepollard</li> <li>• R397 Longford/Ballymahon</li> <li>• R398 Derraghan to Brickeens</li> <li>• R399 Ratharney to Kilcurry.</li> </ul> <p>Works to accesses along these routes shall be assessed according to the relevant technical criteria, including the <i>TII/NRA Design Standards</i>.</p>
CPO 5.20	<p>To apply a less restrictive approach to non-residential development of strategic or national importance or extensions to such developments accessing onto the National Road Network in accordance with the provisions of Section 2.6 of the <i>'Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for planning authorities'</i> (2012), such provisions will be identified</p>

	<p>in an evidence based plan-led manner for incorporation in the Development Plan.</p>
CPO 5.21	<p>Facilitate essential safety improvements on regional and local roads in order to enhance the efficiency and capacity of the regional and local road network.</p> <p>In accordance with this policy, the following roads have been identified and lands along these roads may be reserved for their improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R198 – Gaique to Camagh;</li> <li>• R392 – Forgney;</li> <li>• R397 – Terlicken to Kenagh via Corryena;</li> <li>• L-1040 – Esker to Killeenatraun via Ennybegs;</li> <li>• L1023 &amp; L1024 – Leggagh;</li> <li>• L1077 &amp; L1085 – Killasonna.</li> </ul> <p>- 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.</p> <p>- The feasibility of any improvements will be investigated, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Any future proposals for roads shall be consistent with the other provisions contained in the Plan, including CPO 5.17 in relation to Corridor and Route Selection Process.</p>
CPO 5.22	<p>Improve existing Local Roads in the County 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.</p> <p>In accordance with this policy the following roads have been identified and lands along these roads may be reserved for their improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LP – 1016 - From Monaduff 3 roads to Derawley 4 roads</li> <li>• LP – 1019 - From Kiltycreevagh 3 roads (East) to Kiltycreevagh 4 roads</li> <li>• LP – 1020 - From Kiltycreevagh 3 roads (East) to Cloonelly 3 roads</li> <li>• LP – 1022 - From Gaique Bridge to Monaduff 3 roads</li> <li>• LP – 1024 - From Cloonelly 3 roads to Legga 4 roads (North, Main Road)</li> <li>• LP – 1025 - From Gaique 4 roads to Gaique Bridge (at School)</li> </ul> <p>- 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.</p> <p>- The feasibility of any improvements will be investigated, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the Plan relating to</p>

	sustainable mobility. Any future proposals for roads shall be consistent with the other provisions contained in the Plan, including CPO 5.17 in relation to Corridor and Route Selection Process.
CPO 5.23	<p>Prepare access strategies for any lands that adjoin national roads in areas subject to 50kph speed limits or 100kph speed limits in relation to settlements that are covered by Zoning Strategies as set out under <i>Appendix 1: Land Use Zonings</i>.</p> <p>For transitional zones (subject to a speed limit of 60kph before a lower 50kph) on sections of national roads on the approaches to or exits from town centres to provide for a limited level of direct access to facilitate orderly urban development.</p> <p>Any such proposal must, however, be subject to a road safety audit carried out in accordance with the TII requirements and a proliferation of such entrances, which would lead to a diminution in the role of such zones, must be avoided and have regard to the following: <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2020)</i>, <i>the Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland (2015)</i>, <i>TII Standard DN-GEO-03084 'The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads (2018)'</i> and other appropriate standards.</p>
CPO 5.24	Ensure that streets and roads within the county are designed to balance the needs of place and movement, to provide a safe traffic calmed street environment in accordance with the principles set out in the <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2020)</i> , while meeting the needs of all road users.
CPO 5.25	Promote sustainability in road use and the reduction of negative impacts on the natural environment including carbon emissions where possible through good design practice.
CPO 5.26	Provide and encourage traffic calming measures for settlements in the county where feasible and as resources allow.
CPO 5.27	<p>Require the inclusion of a Road Safety Impact Assessment as part of any proposed development/project of a significant scale which may have potential implications on major transport infrastructure. Such assessments shall be in accordance with <i>TII Publications PE-PMG-02001 (Road Safety Impact Assessment (2017))</i> or any future update.</p> <p>Require that a Road Safety Audit (RSA) shall be undertaken on all new national road infrastructure projects, on any schemes or proposals which results in a permanent change to the layout of a national road and any other developments in excess of the thresholds for a TTA and sub-thresholds for a TTA specified in <i>TII Publications GE-STY-01024 Road Safety Audits (2017)</i>, or any future update.</p>
CPO 5.28	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.

CPO 5.29	Request the provision of specific information on the potential impact of proposed developments on the road network. All applications shall 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, refer to <i>Chapter 16: Development Management Standards</i> ).
CPO 5.30	Require a licence prior to each proposed instance of road opening. Works shall only be carried out in accordance with the terms of the licence granted.
CPO 5.31	Consider the provision of suitably designed and privately developed commercial vehicle rest stop/park outside of urban area, subject to the provision of safe access and circulation, suitable public facilities, adequate screening and the compatibility of adjacent land uses.
CPO 5.32	Co-operate with other agencies in the provision of additional links between the national road network and public transport, especially rail and bus transport, including strategic park and ride facilities.
CPO 5.33	Restrict the use of national, regional and local roads for advertising purposes in line with the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and to implement the provisions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NRA policy document "<i>Policy on the Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads</i>"</li> <li>- Section 3.8 of the '<i>DoECLG Spatial Planning and national Roads Guidelines</i>';</li> <li>- "<i>Longford County Council Policy on Advertising Signs</i>".</li> </ul>
CPO 5.34	Ensure that the capacity and efficiency of the national road network drainage regimes in County Longford will be safeguarded for national road drainage purposes.
CPO 5.35	Development proposals in proximity to a noise source and located within the Longford County Council Noise Action Area (including existing or proposed national road) should include noise attenuation measures and shall refer to S.I. No. 140 of 2006 Environmental Noise Regulations and Section 3.7 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities. The costs of implementing mitigation measures shall be borne by the developer / applicant. The Authority will not be responsible for the provision of additional noise mitigation.

Road improvements will be carried out in accordance with a phased programme of works (subject to feasibility assessment described under the relevant Policy Objectives and consistency with the other provisions contained in the Plan, including CPO 5.17 in relation to Corridor and Route Selection Process) are outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Programme of Road Improvements 2021-2027

<b>Road Improvement Scheme</b>			
<b>National Roads</b>			
<b>Project</b>	<b>Completion of Design</b>	<b>Contract Award</b>	<b>Completion of Construction</b>
<b>N4 Mullingar to Longford (Rooskey)</b>	Ongoing	TII Dependent	TII Dependent
<b>N55 Granard By-Pass</b>	TII Dependent		
<b>N55 Restoration/Improvement</b>	Mid to long term objectives		
<b>N55 Edgeworthstown By-Pass</b>			
<b>N63 Restoration/Improvement</b>			
<b>N63 Killashee By-Pass</b>			
<b>Longford Streets Restoration/Improvement</b>			
<b>Ballymahon Streets Restoration/Improvement</b>			
<b>Granard Streets Restoration/Improvement</b>			
<b>Non-National Roads</b>			
<b>Project</b>	<b>Completion of Design</b>	<b>Contract Award</b>	<b>Completion of Construction</b>
<b>R392 Ballymahon/Lanesborough improvement</b>	Mid to Long Term Objectives		
<b>R198 Road Improvement – Longford to Arvagh via Drumlish.</b>			
<b>R194 Road Improvement – Longford to Ballywillan via Ballinalee, Granard</b>			
<b>R393 Road Improvement – Longford to Ballinacarrow Bridge (Agharra) via Carrickboy</b>			
<b>R395 Road Improvement – Edgeworthstown to Balloo</b>			
<b>R396 Road Improvement – Rathcronan to Camagh</b>			
<b>R397 Road Improvement – Cartrongeeragh to Tirlickeen</b>			
<b>R398 Road Improvement – Derraghan to Brickeens</b>			
<b>R399 Road Improvement – Ratharney to Kilcurry</b>			
<b>Development of Granard Parking Access Road</b>			
<b>Aughnacliffe to Ballinalee restoration/improvement</b>			

<b>Lisdreenagh to Clontymullen (L5187/L1099/L1096) restoration/improvement</b>			
<b>Kilnacarrow Road (L52652) improvement</b>			
<b>Various Industrial Estate Developments</b>	Ongoing	DoTTS Dependent	DoTTS Dependent

\* All regional and local road schemes are subject to identification and prioritisation by Longford County Council and funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

### 5.2.4 Parking

Parking provision can have significant effects in influencing transport choices, reducing traffic congestion and encouraging the use of more sustainable forms of transportation. The policy provisions contained within this plan with respect to bicycle and car parking, including provisions for electric vehicles (EVs), are underpinned by the emphasis provided in the NPF and RSES to encourage more targeted sustainable transportation solutions.

The RSES contains a number of guiding principles in respect of parking, emphasising that maximum car parking standards should be applied to all non-residential development proposals and the inclusion of a car parking cap on areas where the highest intensity of development occurs. It also contains a specific policy objective for local authorities to include proposals in statutory land use plans to facilitate and encourage an increase in electric vehicle use, including measures for more recharging facilities and prioritisation of parking for EVs in central locations (RPO 7.42).

The Development Management Standards set out in *Chapter 16* of this plan set out maximum car parking standards. It is acknowledged that a number of areas of the County are highly dependent on private car use, particularly in areas poorly served by public transport networks. The rationale for the application of car parking standards is to ensure that consideration is given to the accommodation of vehicles, including provisions for those with limited mobility, in assessing development proposals, while being mindful of the need to promote a shift towards more sustainable forms of transport. There is a degree of flexibility, depending on the nature and location of the development and its proximity to public transport, which allows developers to submit a car parking analysis of a particular area, in order to demonstrate the supply and demand for car parking spaces.

<b>Car Parking - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.36	Seek to ensure that all new private car parking facilities are provided to an appropriate standard, proximate to the development which it serves and in accordance with the <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2020)</i> .
CPO 5.37	Allow for the reduction in car parking standards in suitable town centre locations in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport.

CPO 5.38	Manage the provision of on-street parking by encouraging short term business/ shopping activity, whilst discouraging long stay on street commuter parking and parking by Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).
CPO 5.39	Require proposed car parks to include the provision of necessary wiring and ducting to be capable of accommodating future Electric Vehicle charging points, at a rate of 10% of total space numbers.
CPO 5.40	Ensure that car parking or EV charging infrastructure does not detract from the comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists.
CPO 5.41	Seek the provision of designated HGV parking areas within new industrial developments, as appropriate.
CPO 5.42	Encourage the use of materials and engineering solutions that optimise natural surface water drainage as part of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) associated with large scale car parks.
CPO 5.43	Ensure applications for new or replacement rural dwellings provide for the installation of at least one electric vehicle charging point.
CPO 5.44	Ensure provision of car parking in accordance with <i>Chapter 16: Development Management Standards – Table 16.1: Car Parking Standards</i> and associated guidance notes. With the exception of ‘Residential’ car parking the number of spaces provided should not exceed the maximum provision set out.

### 5.2.5 Sustainable Transport

Ireland’s carbon reduction emission targets are for a 40% reduction in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from 1990 levels by 2030; and at least 80% by 2050. The transport sector is one of the most significant contributors to our national GHG emissions and any transition towards a low carbon society needs to coincide with improvements to existing levels of public transport services in order to provide more viable and attractive alternative modal choices to the private car.

The Council is committed to facilitating a sustainable public transport system and increasing the level of integration between future development and public transport modes in line with recommendations contained within the publication *Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland* (Department of Transport, 2009). Accordingly the overarching policy is of promoting a shift towards smarter, more sustainable modes of travelling and reducing the overreliance on the private car. This approach is also in line with National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 5 of the NPF which advocates the expansion of attractive public transport alternatives to car transport to meet the needs of our settlements and rural areas.

In addition, given the importance placed on planning for more compact settlement forms across the planning policy hierarchy, there is a clear need for greater coordination between land use and public transport provision. Future growth, both in terms of employment and residential development must be based on sustainable modes of transport. Given the strategic position of County Longford in terms of the national transport infrastructure and arterial public transport routes, consideration should be given to the development of

integrated transport hubs within the County and the promotion of public transport connectivity between designated towns and villages.

The promotion of use and increased delivery of sustainable modes of transport is fundamental to achieving Ireland's carbon emission reduction requirements of 20% by 2020 and 30% by 2030. In addition to the reduction of emissions, failure to deliver public transport investment will result in a highly congested network that cannot meet the economy's transport needs. *'The provision of a well-functioning, integrated public transport system, enhancing competitiveness, sustaining economic progress and enabling sustainable mobility choices for citizens supports the overall objectives of Ireland 2040'*<sup>1</sup>.

The following are considered to constitute the key principles underlying future sustainable transport:

1. Favour a hierarchy of 'putting the pedestrian first' followed by the provision of cycling and transport in more urban and residential areas, over developments that prove more favourable to car use and dependency;
2. Encourage cycling and its connectivity to existing public transport hubs and centres of activity and tourism, particularly those that provide an onward network of sustainable transport options;
3. Support the development of high-quality public space that contain small blocks/ small streets, urban parks and dense, mixed use, people-orientated design;
4. Use Sections 48 and 49 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 as amended to secure financial contributions towards the capital costs of providing and/or upgrading strategic public transport infrastructure;
5. Target transport investment that first seeks to enhance the efficiency of the existing network through the application of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) in delivering increased information, service, travel modes and telecommunication;
6. Implement measures that improve the efficiency and sustainability of high quality, urban transport through expanded public transport capacity, improved traffic management and bus priority, walking and cycling infrastructure;
7. Facilitate the efficient movement of goods and people in the interest of commerce and enterprise;
8. Secure implementation of transport projects supported by national and regional spatial planning policies, and in adherence to the "Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future" and any future updated version or similar national guidance;
9. Approach sustainable transport comprehensively and agree to undertake regular monitoring to include trip profiles (number, duration, modal use) and emissions, and at critical junctions. This will facilitate improved benchmarking and better inform future Urban Mobility, Permeability, Local Traffic and Climate Change Action Plans;
10. Develop a sustainable travel network that is adaptable and flexible for a range of possible future scenarios and resilient to major shocks and events, such as

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/progress\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/progress_en)  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy/e9ec84-transport/>

extreme weather and disruption;

11. Consider the impact on the quality of life objectives that include, a) health and wellbeing, b) safety and security for all users and non-users, c) equal access, d) respect for the needs of local communities, and e) environmental, economic and social sustainability.

<b>Sustainable Transport - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.45	Ensure new development areas and employment land-uses are permeable for walking and cycling and are laid out in such a way as to facilitate the operation of and access to public transport by residents and employees.
CPO 5.46	Ensure that the layout and design of new developments provide for bus stops, passenger waiting facilities, and bus turning and service regulatory layover facilities, as required.
CPO 5.47	Support and develop public transport routes throughout the County through collaboration with the National Transport Authority.
CPO 5.48	Retrospectively provide public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and facilities in existing development areas to achieve growth in sustainable mobility.
CPO 5.49	Provide suitable infrastructure on public transport corridors to improve safety and efficiency for public transport users.

#### **5.2.5.1 Rail**

Railway infrastructure within the County consists of the Sligo-Dublin line, which provides a service to Longford Town and Edgeworthstown and is an essential transportation link for the county. This critical infrastructure has also been recognised in the RSES, which promotes the provision of enhanced rail services on this line. Given the proximity of key settlements to this key infrastructure, this plan advocates a range of policies aimed at maximising the use of this key regional and national transport infrastructure.

#### **5.2.5.2 Bus**

Given its location within a national context and the number of key national primary and secondary routes within its functional area, Longford is well serviced by a number of Bus Éireann services, as well as Public Service Obligation (PSO) operators. In addition, there are a number of Local Link bus routes in operation throughout Longford which provide vital public transport links for rural areas to key settlements within the County. The promotion of permeability within and connectivity between the existing urban towns and smaller urban settlements and rural areas remains a key transport goal of the Council. In addition to community bus routes operated under the Rural Transport Initiative, private bus operators service both urban centres and rural communities. It is important that these services are retained and improved.

Public transport services in rural areas provides a vital means of access for rural inhabitants to key employment and social services and a means of further sustaining rural settlements. *Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon* provides public transport for people living, working and visiting the rural areas of these respective counties and accordingly provides access to public services, employment, training, health and social facilities. In recognition of the importance of improving access to and from rural locations, the Council supports the extension of the Rural Transport Programme and other such initiatives which respond to local travel needs throughout the county and wider rural region.

<b>Sustainable Public Transport - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.50	Continue to work with the relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the integration of active travel (walking, cycling) with public transport
CPO 5.51	Support the continued integration of national, regional and local bus and rail services to ensure the delivery of a fully integrated public transport service.
CPO 5.52	Improve access to public transport as part of road improvement projects, where possible.
CPO 5.53	Seek to address urban congestion, with particular emphasis on facilitating improved bus transport movement and reliability, and improved links to bus and railway stations.
CPO 5.54	Support the (NTA) Connecting Ireland: Rural Mobility Plan and encourage public transport providers and rural community transport initiatives to enhance the provision of public transportation services linking the rural villages to the main towns within Longford.
CPO 5.55	Support the operation of existing bus services and facilitate the provision of improved facilities for bus users in towns and villages including the provision, in collaboration with the relevant agencies, of set down areas for coaches and bus shelters for passengers. Such provision is particularly required in towns and villages not served by national routes.
CPO 5.56	Support bus priority measures on existing and planned road infrastructure, where appropriate, in collaboration with the National Transport Authority, Bus Éireann and the Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
CPO 5.57	Facilitate the provision of park and ride facilities in appropriate locations within convenient reach of transport nodes and along strategic transport corridors.
CPO 5.58	Liaise with and encourage transport providers and other agencies (e.g. NTA, developers etc) to provide appropriate bus shelters and real time information panels at bus stops.
CPO 5.59	Facilitate the expansion and development of existing and any future proposed rail facilities and supporting infrastructure within the county.
CPO 5.60	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.

CPO 5.61	Support and promote the heritage value of the rail network and the retention and enhancement of disused rail lines with uses to provide for tourism, amenity and sustainable transports uses such as cycleways and walkways.
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### 5.2.6 Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicles (EV) refer to both Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV). In line with the Government target to electrify all new cars and vans by 2030, the NPF acknowledges the need to move away from '*polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets*'.

CSO statistics of new private car registrations in 2019 have seen a 67.4% increase in the number of new private EV cars in 2019, compared with the equivalent of new private EV cars recorded in 2018. However there remains a significant under investment in public charging infrastructure, with only 6 no. charging points serving the County (March 2020). The Council will seek to promote the use of EVs and the development of associated infrastructure, such as public charging points and in respect of car parking provisions.

<b>Electric Vehicles - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.62	Liaise and collaborate with relevant agencies to support the growth of EVs with support facilities and infrastructure through a roll-out of additional electrical charging infrastructure at appropriate locations.
CPO 5.63	Support the prioritisation of parking for Electric Vehicles (EVs) in town centre locations.
CPO 5.64	Support the provision of electrical charging infrastructure both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in Chapter 16: <i>Development Management Standards</i> of this plan.

### 5.2.7 Cycling and Walking

The Council recognises the fundamental contribution cycling and walking to the overall well-being and quality of life aspects of residents, in addition to its environmental benefits. The Council will encourage and support the delivery of a high quality, permeable and attractive pedestrian and cycling network that allows for multiple direct connections between key destinations.

Through the implementation of the *Design Manual of Urban Roads and Streets*, (DTTS and DECLG, 2020), the *Permeability Best Practice Guidelines*, (NTA, 2013) and the *National Cycle Manual* (NTA, 2011), there are opportunities to make walking and cycling more attractive. Where possible, the Council will seek to implement enhanced pedestrian and cycling permeability in urban environments as part of the development management process, in order to provide for continual improvements and coherency to existing cycling and walking network infrastructure with individual settlements.

At a wider settlement scale, the Council will seek to implement pedestrian and cycling improvements with the assistance of the NTA through the *Green Schools Programme* and *Sustainable Transport Measures Grants Scheme*. This is in line with the guiding principles for land use and transport presented in the RSES, which advocates the management of space in town and village centres to deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life.

County Longford has also seen the development of greenway routes within the County, most notably the Longford Royal Canal Greenway section which runs from Abbeyshrule to Cloondara, with a spur at Killashee to Longford Town. More localised cycleways and walkways have also been developed, such as the Newcastle Woods, Clondra to Lanesborough, Cairn Hill Trail and the Ardagh Mountain Walk. The primary function of such routes relates to tourism and recreational value for the local population in addition to visitors, however, they also form the basis as key components of an overall cycling and walking network.

Accordingly, it is the aim of this Council to build upon these successful cycling and walking routes and to promote the continued development of a more integrated and coherent cycling and walking network throughout the County, which provides for more sustainable transport infrastructure for everyday users whilst also catering for tourism and recreational users. Specific policies relating to the development of tourism and recreational cycleways and walkways are detailed in *Chapter 10: Tourism*.

<b>Cycling and Walking - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.65	Work with the relevant statutory bodies and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling.
CPO 5.66	Identify and implement a strategic, coherent and high-quality cycling and walking network across the County that is integrated with public transport and interconnected with cultural, recreational, retail, educational and employment destinations and attractions.
CPO 5.67	Promote the organisation of traffic in towns and villages to separate motor vehicular, bicycles and pedestrian traffic in accordance with the <i>National Manual for the provision of Cycle Facilities in Urban Areas</i> , the <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets</i> and <i>The National Cycle Manual</i> .
CPO 5.68	Promote walking through the development and expansion of a network of safe walking trails within towns and villages and their environs. Such routes can link with existing walking trails, Sli na Slainte and the Green Infrastructure Network and existing or new public rights of way.
CPO 5.69	Adopt and implement the provisions of the <i>Draft Longford Walking and Cycling Strategy</i> and, where necessary and appropriate, reserve lands for the provision of off-road cycling tracks and cycling/pedestrian infrastructure as identified as part of any such cycling strategy prepared.

CPO 5.70	<p>Seek the development of effective cycling infrastructure along the key urban arterial routes to and from Longford Town:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (R198 – Battery Road/Church Street/Bridge Street;</li> <li>- R393 – Dublin Road; and</li> <li>- the N63 – Ballinalee Road);</li> </ul> <p>in order to coincide with key employment areas, public transport hubs and schools within Longford Town.</p>
CPO 5.71	Facilitate the provision of cycleways and footpaths, particularly in conjunction with new housing developments.
CPO 5.72	Ensure that all new roads and cycle routes implement the <i>National Cycle Manual</i> or any replacement document, with a focus on a high level of service for cyclists and encourage a modal shift from the private car to cycling.
CPO 5.73	Provide for safer routes to schools within the county and promote walking and cycling as suitable modes of transport as part of the <i>Green Schools Programme</i> and other local traffic management improvements.
CPO 5.74	<p>Ensure that the upgrading of roads will not impact negatively on the safety and perceived safety of cyclists. Support the development of safe cycle routes and enhance and maintain these routes with quality signposting, lighting and road surfaces separated from vehicular traffic following the standards set out in 2020 DMURS Interim Advice Note – Covid-19 Pandemic Response and the NTA’s National Cycle Manual and any further review and iteration of the same.</p> <p>Encourage the development of off-road cycling. Ensure that the upgrading of roads will not impact negatively on the safety and perceived safety of cyclists. Ensure that any dedicated cycle routes which are developed away from the main public carriageway are well lit. Routes should, where possible, follow off-road tracks and quiet country roads.</p>
CPO 5.75	Promote the potential development of long-distance walking and cycling routes, particularly those with historical and cultural associations and links to other routes in adjacent counties in association with the Irish Sports Council. Aim to establish and link with a strategic network of trails from residential areas, open spaces and existing or new public rights of way to facilitate the creation of a secure and safe greenway network.
CPO 5.76	Improve the attractiveness and usability of the pedestrian environment of the County, particularly in residential areas, designated settlements and in areas of high amenity.
CPO 5.77	Implement, at appropriate locations, pedestrian permeability schemes and enhancements.
CPO 5.78	Provide signposting, information boards and public lighting for walking and cycling routes at appropriate locations.
CPO 5.79	Require the provision of secure cycle parking facilities in settlements, at public service destinations, key public transport nodes and in all new residential and commercial development in accordance with the cycle

	parking standards presented in <i>Chapter 16: Development Management Standards - Table 16.2: Cycle Parking Standards</i> .
CPO 5.80	Require suitable and secure shower and changing facilities for all new employment developments in accordance with the requirements set out in <i>Chapter 16: Development Management Standards</i> .

### 5.2.8 Aviation

Whilst there are no commercial aerodromes in operation in the County, the private aerodrome in Abbeyshrule remains a key infrastructure element for the County and the wider region in terms of its recreational value for users, as well as its potential as a key transport node. Accordingly, the following policies are relevant in relation to aviation activities:

<b>Aviation Development - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.81	Facilitate and promote the development of Abbeyshrule Aerodrome as a Midlands Regional Airport, where appropriate and where it would: contribute towards the proper planning and sustainable development of the County; and comply with all environmental legislation and policies and objectives contained within this Plan and higher level planning documents, including the National Planning Framework and Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
CPO 5.82	Consider the potential expansion of Abbeyshrule Aerodrome in the context of the surrounding heritage features including residential amenity and the architectural and amenity value of the village and the Royal Canal.

### 5.3 Water Supply and Wastewater Services

In terms of the national planning policy context, the NPF emphasises the critical importance of investment in water services infrastructure to the implementation of the National Development Plan and the achievement of NSO 9 and NPO 63, which seek the sustainable management of water and other environmental resources. NPOs 72a and 72b prescribe the requirements for distinguishing between zoned lands that are serviced (Tier 1 lands) and zoned lands that are serviceable within the lifetime of the plan (Tier 2 lands). The NPF also requires planning authorities and infrastructure delivery agencies to focus on the timely delivery of enabling infrastructure to priority zoned lands in order to deliver planned growth and development (NPO 73c). The RSES reinforces NSO 9 at a regional-level through Regional Strategic Outcome (RSO) 7, seeking the sustainable management of water, waste and other environmental sources, as well as containing policies aimed at ensuring that all residential and employment developments are planned on a phased basis in collaboration with infrastructure providers.

Irish Water is responsible for the provision of public water supply, wastewater collection and treatment services. It is an objective of Irish Water to provide both drinking water and

wastewater capacity to facilitate growth in accordance with core strategies at county level, and with national and regional planning policies and objectives (subject to the constraints of the Irish Water Capital Investment Programme). Longford County Council retains its role in facilitating the provision of adequate water services, in conjunction with Irish Water, at a local level, through Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

Therefore, underpinning the sustainable growth of the County is the alignment of investment in critical infrastructure, such as water supply and wastewater services, with future development needs. This County Development Plan, through the implementation of the Core Strategy, provides for greater linkages between the settlement hierarchy and the timing, scale and provision of water and wastewater facilities. This section should be also read in conjunction with *Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and the Environment, Section 12.15 Water Quality* for specific detail in relation to groundwater and water quality protection policies.

### **5.3.1 Water Supply**

Public drinking water in County Longford is supplied through 5 no. public water supply schemes (Longford Central; Granard; Gowna; Ballymahon; Lanesborough and Newtowncashel). These are predominately surface water abstraction supplies with the exception of Lanesborough and Newtowncashel which are groundwater sourced supplies. The 2016 census indicates that 11,419 private households (75.7%) in the county are served by public watermains. The remaining households are served by either Group Water Schemes or private wells, which do not fall within the remit of Irish Water.

Private bored wells used as a source of water supply to single dwellings are the responsibility of the householder. Such wells are not regulated under the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014 and Irish Water has no regulatory function in this regard. The Council is responsible for providing guidance and advice in relation to the protection of water quality and in this regard the Council administers and manages well grants on behalf of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG).

The protection of our surface and groundwater sources is a key challenge facing Longford in the future, and to ensure that existing water services infrastructure and capacity is adequately managed, which includes the ongoing implementation of a Water Conservation Programme. Practical water conservation measures including active leakage detection, demand management and pressure management have played and will continue to play a major role in reducing the demand for potable water, thus facilitating additional development and improving the level of service to existing consumers in the county through the existing watermain networks. The Council will continue to engage with Irish Water to ensure that the future demands of the county are provided for and will continue to promote water conservation in conjunction with Irish Water.

<b>Water Supply and Distribution - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.83	Work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect existing water infrastructure, to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new water services infrastructure to facilitate future growth.
CPO 5.84	Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment.
CPO 5.85	Have regard to the EPA 2019 publication ' <i>Drinking Water Report for Public Water Supplies 2018</i> ' (and any subsequent update) in the establishment and maintenance of water sources in the County in conjunction with Irish Water.
CPO 5.86	Support recommendations made by the EPA arising from any failure to meet drinking water standards and any enlistment on the EPA's Remedial Action List in conjunction with Irish Water.
CPO 5.87	Support the preparation of Drinking Water Protection Plans and Source Protection Plans to protect sources of public water supply, in accordance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.
CPO 5.88	Ensure that adequate water services is available to service development prior to the granting of planning permission and to require developers to consult Irish Water regarding available capacity, prior to applying for planning permission.
CPO 5.89	Promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation in existing and new development within the County by encouraging demand management measures among all water users and requiring new developments to incorporate water conservation measures.
CPO 5.90	Provide guidance and advice regarding the protection of water supply to private wells with the overall responsibility remaining with the householder.

### 5.3.2 Wastewater

The provision of well-maintained, quality wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential to facilitate sustainable development in the county in line with the Core Strategy, while also protecting the environment and public health in accordance with the requirements of the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021.

#### 5.3.2.1 Serviced Areas

In Longford, there are currently 20 no. wastewater treatment plants, the majority in the ownership and maintenance of Irish Water. However, Longford County Council operate and maintain 5 no. wastewater treatment plants on behalf of the Irish Water, with the foul sewer network collecting effluent from approximately 11,400 homes. Monitoring of the treated effluent from the plants is carried out as required in accordance with the *Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive* and conditions of the Discharge Licences and Certificates of Authorisation issued by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Council, in conjunction with Irish Water, has identified specific capacity constraints associated with the Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon wastewater treatment plants. While both of these settlements feature prominently in the settlement hierarchy for the county, (as detailed in *Chapter 4: Core Housing and Settlement Strategies*), consideration of further development in these settlements will be contingent on the upgrading of these treatment plants, or the submission of appropriate engineering solutions for individual developments which suitably address wastewater treatment and disposal to the satisfaction of the Council and Irish Water. Irish Water has committed to the upgrade of these treatment plants within the lifetime of this plan.

### 5.3.2.2 Unserviced Areas

In unserviced areas and outside the main settlements, the main method of sewage disposal is by individual septic tanks and proprietary wastewater treatment systems. The requirements for these systems are set out in the *EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment Systems and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (2010)*. For larger developments the requirements are set out by the *EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals – Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels (1999)* and *EPA Guidance on the Authorisation of Discharges to Groundwater (EPA 2011)*.

The control of development in areas of high groundwater vulnerability is a priority for the Council. Where existing clusters of septic tanks in vulnerable groundwater areas are augmented with additional septic tanks, the risk of pollution increases significantly and therefore excessive concentrations of septic tanks which would adversely affect groundwater quality will be strictly prohibited.

<b>Wastewater - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.91	Liaise and work in conjunction with Irish Water during the lifetime of the Plan in the provision, upgrading or extension of wastewater collection and treatment systems in the County to serve existing and planned future populations and enterprise in accordance with the requirements of the Core Strategy.
CPO 5.92	Ensure that development will only be permitted in instances where there is sufficient capacity for appropriate collection, treatment and disposal (in compliance with the <i>Water Framework Directive</i> and <i>River Basin Management Plan</i> ) of wastewater.
CPO 5.93	Collaborate with Irish Water in contributing towards compliance with the relevant provisions of the <i>Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2001</i> and <i>2004</i> and the <i>Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007</i> as amended.
CPO 5.94	Support strategic wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provide for the separation of foul and surface water networks to accommodate future growth in the County.
CPO 5.95	Have regard to the capacity of the Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon wastewater treatment plants (and any other plants within the County of

	limited capacity to accommodate the core strategy and settlement hierarchy), with any further growth in these settlements contingent on the upgrading of these treatment plants, or the submission of appropriate temporary engineering solutions for individual developments which suitably address wastewater treatment and disposal to the satisfaction of the Council and Irish Water and in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Water Framework Directive</i> and relevant <i>River Basin Management Plan</i> .
CPO 5.96	Resist the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and solutions to maximise the capacity of towns with combined drainage systems.
CPO 5.97	Protect against development proposals, involving individual treatment systems, which would increase effluent loading within existing housing clusters located within areas of high groundwater vulnerability.
CPO 5.98	Ensure that private wastewater treatment plants, where permitted, are operated in compliance with EPA's. 'Promote changeover from septic tanks to public collection networks in all cases where this is feasible.' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (PE. ≤10)</i> (EPA 2009), as may be amended.</li> <li>- <i>EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals – Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels (1999)</i> and <i>EPA Guidance on the Authorisation of Discharges to Groundwater (EPA 2011)</i>, as may be amended.</li> </ul>
CPO 5.99	Support appropriate options for the extraction of energy and other resources from sewerage sludge in the County.

#### 5.4 Surface Water Management - Sustainable Drainage Systems

The management of surface and storm water is important in order to avoid increased flood or pollution risk in the storm water network, rivers and streams in the County's towns, villages and rural areas. Traditionally, rain falling on impervious surfaces was directed into a receiving watercourse through surface water drainage systems. While such drainage systems are effective at transferring surface water quickly, they provide only limited attenuation causing the volume of water in the receiving watercourse to increase more rapidly, thereby increasing flood risk.

The Council will require compliance with best practice guidance for the collection, reuse, treatment and disposal of surface waters for all future development proposals. Best practice guidance is available from *The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study* (GDSDS). Development proposals will be required to meet the design criteria (adjusted to reflect local conditions) and material designs therein. This approach using Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) offers a total solution to rainwater management and is applicable in both urban and rural situations.

For new developments, Longford County Council will require that all developments incorporate '*Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems*' (SuDS) as part of the development proposals. SuDS are effective technologies which aim to reduce flood risk, improve water

quality and enhance biodiversity and amenity. The systems should aim to mimic the natural drainage of a site to minimise the effect of a development on flooding and pollution of existing waterways. SuDS include devices such as swales, permeable pavements, filter drains, storage ponds, constructed wetlands, soakways and green roofs. In some exceptional cases, and at the discretion of the Planning Authority, where it is demonstrated that SuDS devices are not feasible, approval may be given to install underground attenuation tanks or enlarged pipes in conjunction with other devices to achieve the required water quality. Such alternative measures will only be considered as a last resort.

Development proposals will be required to be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment that addresses run-off rate, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality. This approach using SuDS offers a total solution to rainwater management and is applicable in both urban and rural situations. Current best practice guidance on SuDS is available from the Guidance Documents produced by the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS). Proposals for surface water attenuation systems should include maintenance proposals and procedures.

<b>Surface Water Management - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.100	Support in conjunction with Irish Water the improvement of storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in urban environments.
CPO 5.101	Ensure new development is adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure which meets the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, associated River Basin Management Plans and CFRAM Management Plans.
CPO 5.102	Require surface water storage measures to be provided in new developments 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 Systems (SuDS) standards such as <i>The SuDS Manual</i> (CIRIA, 2015), <i>'Dublin Corporation Stormwater Management Policy Technical Guidelines'</i> and <i>'Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works'</i> incorporating <i>'Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study, Volume 2, New Developments'</i> or any future updates.
CPO 5.103	Ensure that in public and private developments in urban areas, both within developments and within the public realm, seek to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.
CPO 5.104	Maintain and enhance the existing surface water drainage systems in the county and promote and facilitate the development of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems including integrated constructed wetlands and to promote and support the retrofitting of SuDS in established urban areas.

CPO 5.105	Prohibit the discharge of surface water run-off and rainwater into foul sewer systems.
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## 5.5 Flood Risk Management

Flooding is an environmental phenomenon and can pose a risk to human health as well as causing economic and social effects. Principal sources of flooding, for the purposes of the Development Plan and accompanying Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), are defined as follows:

- Fluvial flooding – when the capacity of a watercourse is exceeded or the channel is blocked or restricted, and excess water spills out from the channel onto adjacent low-lying areas (the floodplain).
- Pluvial flooding – as a result of high intensity rainfall where the volume of run-off exceeds the capacity of the existing surface water network and the excess water cannot be absorbed.
- Groundwater flooding – as a result of prolonged rainfall when the capacity of the natural underground reservoir is exceeded.

The European Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risk aims to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity. The National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme is the principal response to EU ‘Flood’ Directive (2007/60/EC) on the assessment and management of flood risk. Within County Longford, the CFRAM targeted areas of significant flooding which included the settlements of Longford Town, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Granard and Lanesborough. The CFRAM Management Plans set out the long-term strategies and measures required to manage risk in these areas. Both the mapping and the proposed flood management strategy is incorporated into the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) that informs this Development plan. *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG and OPW (2009)* address flood risk management within the planning system and describe good flood risk practice in planning and development management. Planning authorities are directed to have regard to the Planning Guidelines in the preparation of Development Plans and Local Area Plans, and for development management purposes. The key principles of flood risk management set out in the flood Guidelines are to:

- Avoid development that will be at risk of flooding or that will increase the flooding risk elsewhere, where possible;
- Substitute less vulnerable uses, where avoidance is not possible; and
- Mitigate and manage the risk, where avoidance and substitution are not possible.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been prepared to inform this Development Plan (Volume 4). Consequences of flooding depend on the hazards associated with the flooding (e.g. depth of water, speed of flow, rate of onset, duration, wave-action effects, water quality), and the vulnerability of people, property and the environment potentially affected by a flood (e.g. the age profile of the population, the type of development, presence and reliability of mitigation measures etc.).

Climate change is a key consideration under the CFRAM, all flood relief schemes and the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on *the Planning System and Flood Risk Management* (DoEHLG/OPW 2009) and Circular PL2/2014. Certain lands within the County have the potential to be vulnerable to flooding and this vulnerability could be exacerbated by changes in both the occurrence of severe rainfall events and associated flooding. The SFRA defines the approach to the assessment of climate change impacts.

### 5.5.1 Climate Change and Flooding

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Technical Appendices, 2009' recommends that a precautionary approach to climate change is adopted due to the level of uncertainty involved in the potential effects. In contributing towards compliance with the Guidelines, climate change scenario mapping has been added to the SFRA that accompanies the Plan.

The Plan requires that the SFRA mapping and the most up to date CFRAM Programme climate scenario mapping is consulted by prospective applicants for developments and that it is made available to lower-tier Development Management processes in the Council.

CPOs 5.108 and 5.110 require that any flood risk assessment includes an assessment of the potential impacts of climate change, such as an increase in the extent or probability of flooding, and any associated measures necessary to address these impacts. DMS16.206 requires applications for development in flood vulnerable zones to provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures to include issues such as floor levels.

<b>Flood Risk Management - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.106	Support the implementation of recommendations in the CFRAM Programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.
CPO 5.107	Support the implementation of recommendations in the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP's), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.
CPO 5.108	Support, in co-operation with the OPW, the implementation of the EU Flood Risk Directive (2007/60/EC), the Flood Risk Regulations (SI No. 122 of 2010) and the DEHLG/OPW publication <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)</i> and Departmental Circular PL2/2014 (or any updated/superseding versions). This will include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate in accordance with the Guidelines, the risk of flooding within the flood risk areas indicated in the accompanying Strategic Flood Risk Assessment report, including fluvial, pluvial and groundwater flooding, and any other flood risk areas that may</li> </ul>

	<p>be identified during the period of the plan or in relation to a planning application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development proposals in areas where there is an identified or potential risk of flooding or that could give rise to a risk of flooding elsewhere will be required to carry out a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, and Justification Test where appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009</i>, (or any superseding document) and <i>Circular PL2/2014</i> (as updated/superseded). Any flood risk assessment should include an assessment of the potential impacts of climate change, such as an increase in the extent or probability of flooding, and any associated measures necessary to address these impacts.</li> <li>• Development that would be subject to an inappropriate risk of flooding or that would cause or exacerbate such a risk at other locations shall not normally be permitted.</li> <li>• Where certain measures proposed to mitigate or manage the risk of flooding associated with new developments are likely to result in significant effects to the environment or European sites downstream, such measures will undergo environmental assessment and Appropriate Assessment, as appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>The Council shall work with other bodies and organisations, as appropriate, to help protect critical infrastructure, including water and wastewater, within the County, from risk of flooding. Future amendments to the plan shall consider, as appropriate any new and/or emerging data, including, when available, any relevant information contained in the CFRAM's Flood Risk Management Plans and as recommended in the SFRA for the Plan.</p>
CPO 5.109	<p>Protect Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B from inappropriate development and direct developments/land uses into the appropriate Flood Zone in accordance with <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009</i> (or any superseding document) and the guidance contained in DMS 16.205. Where a development/land use is proposed that is inappropriate within the Flood Zone, then the development proposal will need to be accompanied by a Development Management Justification Test and site-specific Flood Risk Assessment in accordance with the criteria set out under with <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009</i> and <i>Circular PL2/2014</i> (as updated/superseded). In Flood Zone C, (Please also refer to Development Management Standard, Development Management Standard, DMS 16.205, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%, Flood Zone C), site-specific Flood Risk Assessment may be required the developer should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. The County Plan SFRA datasets and the most up to date CFRAM Programme climate scenario mapping should be consulted by prospective applicants for developments in this regard and will be made available to lower-tier Development Management processes in the Council.</p>

	<p>Flood Zone maps should not be used to suggest that any areas are free from flood risk as they do not include groundwater or artificial drainage system flood risk.</p> <p>Applications for development on land identified as Benefitting Land (under Arterial Drainage Schemes /Drainage Districts) may be prone to flooding, and as such site-specific flood risk assessments may be required in these areas. The Council will ensure that new developments proposed in Arterial Drainage Schemes and Drainage Districts do not result in a significant negative impact on the integrity, function and management of these areas.</p>
CPO 5.110	<p>Site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required for all planning applications in areas at risk of flooding (fluvial, pluvial or groundwater), even for developments appropriate to the particular Flood Zone. The detail of these site-specific FRAs will depend on the level of risk and scale of development. A detailed site-specific FRA should quantify the risks, the effects of selected mitigation and the management of any residual risks. The assessments shall consider and provide information on the implications of climate change with regard to flood risk in relevant locations. The <i>Draft Guidance on Assessment of Potential Future Scenarios for Flood Risk Management (OPW, 2009)</i>, (or any superseding document) and available information from the CFRAM Studies shall be consulted with to this effect.</p>
CPO 5.111	<p>Require all applications in areas prone to flooding to be subject to the Justification Test set out in the <i>Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i>. Compensatory flood storage provision or the provision of flood defences will not override the need for completion of the justification test.</p>
CPO 5.112	<p>Consult with the OPW in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible, and to retain a strip on either side of such channels where required, to facilitate maintenance access thereto.</p>
CPO 5.113	<p>Actively work with the CFRAM Programmes and catchment-based Flood Planning Groups, including where catchments go beyond the Council's administrative boundary, in the development and implementation of catchment-based strategies for the management of flood risk - including those relating to storage and conveyance.</p>
CPO 5.114	<p>Protect the integrity of any formal (OPW or Longford County Council) flood risk management infrastructure, thereby ensuring that any new development does not negatively impact any existing defence infrastructure or compromise any proposed new infrastructure.</p>
CPO 5.115	<p>Ensure that the reasonable requirements of Inland Fisheries Ireland are adhered to in the construction of flood alleviation measures in the county.</p>
CPO 5.116	<p>Protect water bodies and watercourses within the County from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. This will include protection buffers in riverine and wetland areas as appropriate. In addition, promote the sustainable</p>

	management and uses of water bodies and avoid culverting or realignment of these features.
CPO 5.117	Recognise the important role of peatland and other wetland areas in flooding patterns. Development in these areas shall therefore be subject to a Flood Risk Assessment in accordance with the relevant guidance.
CPO 5.118	Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW <i>Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan</i> Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.
CPO 5.119	<p>Facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk areas designated as ‘<i>Constrained Land Use</i>’ on Settlement Plan zoning maps<sup>2</sup>. Future development on these lands is limited to minor development where plan-making Justification Tests have not been undertaken and the Constrained Land Use applies.</p> <p>SFRA datasets will be made available to the lower-tier forward planning and Development Management and associated SFRA/FRA processes in the Council. These processes may lead to the identification of areas where the Constrained Land Use Zoning provisions contained within this Plan may apply. In this regard, prospective applicants for developments in areas that have been previously developed and are at elevated levels of flood risk are encouraged to consult with the Planning Department at the earliest opportunity. Appendix II of the SFRA that accompanies the Plan includes mapping at a County level of historic (page 2) and predictive (page 3) flood risk indicators.</p>
CPO 5.120	<p>Ensure that applications to existing developments in flood vulnerable zones shall provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures to include, but not be limited to specifications of the following - floor levels, internal layout, flood resilient construction, flood resistant construction, emergency response planning, access and egress during flood events.</p> <p><u>(Please Refer to CPO 5.119 and Development Management Standard DMS 16.206).</u></p>

<sup>2</sup> *Constrained Land Uses*

Flood risk areas in settlement plans are represented by a ‘*Constrained Land Use*’ designation. This designation generally limits new development, but will facilitate existing development uses within these areas that may require small scale development such as small extensions. Development proposals within these areas shall be accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment, carried out in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines and Circular PL 2/2014 (or as updated), which shall assess the risks of flooding associated with the proposed development.

Proposals shall only be considered favourably where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that they would not have adverse impacts or impede access to a watercourse, floodplain or flood protection and management facilities, or increase the risk of flooding to other locations and be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The nature and design of structural and non-structural flood risk management measures required for development in such areas will also be required to be demonstrated, to ensure that flood hazard and risk will not be increased. Measures proposed shall follow best practice in the management of health and safety for users and residents of the development.

Specifications for developments in flood vulnerable areas set out in this Plan shall be complied with as appropriate. (Please also refer to CPO 5.120 and Development Management Standard DMS 206).

## 5.6 Environmental Services

### 5.6.1 Waste Recovery and Disposal

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 is the continued implementation of the *Eastern and Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021*. The strategic vision of Eastern and Midlands Waste Management Plan (WMP) is to rethink the approach to managing wastes, by viewing waste streams as valuable resources which can lead to a healthier environment and sustainable commercial opportunities for our economy. The Eastern and Midlands WMP sets out 3 no. specific and measurable performance targets to:

- achieve a 1% reduction per annum in the quality of household waste generated per capita over the period of the Eastern and Midlands WMP.
- reduce to 0% the direct disposal of unprocessed municipal waste to landfill (from 2016 onwards), in favour of higher value pre-treatment processes and indigenous recovery practices.
- achieve a recycling rate of 50% of managed municipal waste by 2020.

This accords with the transition to a more circular economy and bio economy, where the value of bio-based products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste is minimised.

The NPF supports circular economy principles (NPO 56) that minimise waste going to landfill and maximises waste as a resource, with prevention, preparation for reuse, recycling and recovery prioritised in that order over the disposal of waste. The NPF (NSO 9) also supports the development of district heating networks where technically feasible and cost effective as well as the development of necessary and appropriate hazardous waste management facilities to avoid the need for treatment elsewhere. Similar circular economy principles in relation to waste management are supported in the RSES through RPO 10.25.

#### 5.6.1.1 Construction and Demolition Waste

There is only one large-scale licenced Construction and Demolition recycling facility in the region (Dublin based). In County Longford, there are currently 18 no. sites with permits to accept clean soil and stone, and 2 no. sites with permits to accept inert construction and demolition waste. It is anticipated that more facilities, particularly Construction and Demolition recycling facilities, will be established within the Eastern and Midlands WMP area.

#### 5.6.1.2 Bring Facilities and Civic Amenity Facilities

There are currently 25 no. bring banks within the County for the collection of aluminium cans and glass. There are also a number of privately owned/operated textile banks throughout the County and 2 no. civic amenity sites for the disposal of recyclable materials and waste electrical and electronic equipment. The Council will seek to develop such facilities over the life span of this plan.

<b>Waste Management - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.121	Support the implementation of the Eastern and Midlands Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 and any updates made thereto.
CPO 5.122	Continue to facilitate and promote the provision of civic amenity sites, including 'bring centres' for the purposes of providing a collection point for the recycling of domestic waste, subject to siting, location, compatibility with adjacent land uses and other relevant development management criteria.
CPO 5.123	Promote the principles of the circular economy in minimising waste going to landfill and maximise waste as a resource, with prevention, preparation for reuse, recycling and recovery prioritised in that order, over the disposal of waste.
CPO 5.124	Promote and support the provision of separate collection of waste in accordance with the requirements of the <i>Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations 2009</i> , the <i>Waste Framework Directive Regulations 2011</i> and other relevant legislation.
CPO 5.125	Promote and facilitate communities to become involved in environmental awareness activities and community-based recycling initiatives or environmental management initiatives that will lead to local sustainable waste management practices.
CPO 5.126	Promote and facilitate high quality sustainable waste recovery and disposal infrastructure/technology including composting (anaerobic digester) plants for managing organic solid waste, at appropriate locations, with the County subject to the protection of the amenities of the surrounding environment including European Sites, and in keeping with the EU waste hierarchy.
CPO 5.127	Require, where necessary, Project Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plans as part of applications for development in accordance with " <i>Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects</i> " (DoEHLG, 2006). Such plans should be submitted for developments above the stated thresholds within these guidelines and as required by the Planning Authority.
CPO 5.128	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.
CPO 5.129	The Council shall continue to fulfil its duties under the Waste Management (certification of historic unlicensed waste disposal and recovery activity) Regulations 2008 (S.I. No 524 of 2008), including those in relation to the identification and registration of closed landfills.
CPO 5.130	Ensure that all waste collectors and householder who use the services of authorised waste collectors are fully compliant with the Waste Management Act 1996, as amended and the Waste Management (Collection Permits) Regulations 2007, as amended.

## 5.7 Energy Networks Infrastructure

### 5.7.1 Electricity Network

The provision of a secure and adequate electricity infrastructure is essential to meet the growth in demand and to ensure that an efficient and reliable electricity supply is available to households, business and industry. County Longford is well served, given the role of the former Lough Ree Power Station in the midlands transmission network, with significant transmission infrastructure in the county, in particular a 110kV transmission line and associated substation at Lanesborough. This infrastructure also supplies the local distribution network that brings power to homes and businesses throughout Longford and Roscommon.

Eirgrid, the national grid operators, are investing significantly in maintaining and enhancing the transmission infrastructure in the county, with the redevelopment of the 110kV substation at Lanesborough having been granted planning permission. The upgrading of the transmission network will facilitate power flows from both renewable and conventional sources to maximise the use of existing power corridors. The Council will continue to support the infrastructural renewal and development of electricity.

### 5.7.2 Gas Network

Gas Networks Ireland owns and operates the gas transmission pipeline in the south of the county. This pipeline initially served the Longford Forest Center Parcs resort via a 29km distribution pipeline extension from County Westmeath to the resort site, just outside of Ballymahon and inside the Longford County boundary. Work is currently underway to extend the gas network transmission link to Ballymahon. These developments represent key milestones in enhancing the energy network and security in County Longford, with the Council supporting further extension of this network to other areas of the county and which is also supported in Chapter 4: *Regeneration*.

<b>Energy Networks Infrastructure - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.131	Support and promote the sustainable improvement and expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution network that supply the County, subject to landscape, residential, amenity, environmental and other planning considerations.
CPO 5.132	Facilitate the delivery and expansion of the gas network infrastructure throughout the county for both domestic and business/industry use and to have regard to the location of existing gas infrastructure pipeline in the assessment of planning applications.
CPO 5.133	Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the county and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Strategy, including the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the

	electricity and gas transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner subject to appropriate environmental assessment and planning merits.
CPO 5.134	Support roll-out of the Smart Grids and Smart Cities Action Plan enabling new connections, grid balancing, energy management and micro grid development.
CPO 5.135	Require that the location of local energy services such as electricity/telecommunications, be undergrounded, where appropriate. Where undergrounding of cables is being pursued, proposals should demonstrate that environmental impacts including the following are minimised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat loss as a result of removal of field boundaries and hedgerows (right of way preparation) followed by topsoil stripping (to ensure machinery does not destroy soil structure and drainage properties);</li> <li>• Short to medium term impacts on the landscape where, for example, hedgerows are encountered;</li> <li>• Impacts on underground archaeology;</li> <li>• Impacts on soil structure and drainage;</li> <li>• Impacts on surface waters as a result of sedimentation.</li> </ul>
CPO 5.136	Support the development, reinforcement, renewal and expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution grid, including the development of new lines overhead lines, underground cables, pylons and substations as required to provide for the future physical and economic development of County Longford.

## 5.8 Renewable Energy

The European Commission agreed a binding EU renewable energy target of 32% of total energy consumption by 2030. National policy has reaffirmed this commitment towards a more climate resilient and low carbon Irish economy and society through the publication of a number of climate change, energy and planning policy documents. As per *Project Ireland 2040*, new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing potential from energy sources such as wind and solar.

An efficient and secure energy supply is essential to the future growth and sustainable development of County Longford. However, it is essential to ensure that energy demands are met without compromising environmental quality. There is a need for a move from traditional energy generation methods based on the burning of carbon-based fossil fuels, towards a more sustainable, low-carbon based energy generation and overall economy through renewable energy technologies. Renewable energy such as wind, solar and biomass will assist in managing the transition of the local economies of such areas in gaining the economic benefits of greener energy. This change away from traditional fossil-fuel based energy generation will have positive environmental impact, however not without adverse economic impacts as evidenced through the closure of the Lough Ree Power Station.

The Council recognises the importance of Renewable Energy and its potential in contributing to the reductions in fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions. EMRA will be working with the Council and other County Councils in the region to identify potential Strategic Energy Zones. In addition, during the lifetime of the Development Plan the Council will produce a Renewable Energy Strategy (Including a Wind Energy Strategy) for the County, which will include an assessment of the metrics including an assessment of the proportion of national renewable energy targets to be allocated for County Longford. This assessment will form part of the Renewable Energy Strategy for the County.

Furthermore, within the County a number of renewable energy projects have also been granted with the potential to generate a combined output of between 78.3MW High Estimate of potential MW output to 63.3MW Low Estimate of potential MW output of clean renewable energy.

Longford County Renewable Energy approved projects:

Planning Ref	Name – Location	Description
PL18135	Kilashee - Middleton, Ballycore, Treanboy and Newtown	Ten-year permission for a solar farm on a site of 51.38ha, up to 216,000sq.m of solar PV panels to generate 35MW to 50MW
PL19222	Ballykenny	25 year permission for a solar farm up to 19Ha with an export capacity of 9MW comprising of solar PV panels
PL1681	Edgeworthstown – Lisnageeragh	25 year permission for a solar farm for a 4.2MVA on a 14.5Ha site
PL18146	Fisherstown, Clondra	30 year permission for a solar farm with an export capacity of 4MW comprising solar PV panels.
PL14.248470 / PL.Ref.17/47	Cleghill	25 year operational period solar farm with export capacity of 11.1MW on a 19Ha site

Total Granted 78.3MW High Estimate of potential MW output  
63.3MW Low Estimate of potential MW output

<b>Renewable Energy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.137	Promote energy conservation, increased efficiency and growth of locally based renewable energy alternatives, in an environmentally and socially acceptable and sustainable manner and having particular regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

CPO 5.138	Facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and support the implementation of actions identified in the Longford County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and any future amendments.
CPO 5.139	Co-operate and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation, in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future needs of the county.
CPO 5.140	Support and encourage the sustainable development of renewable energy auto-production units (the production of energy primarily for on-site usage) for existing and proposed developments in line with relevant design criteria, amenity and heritage considerations and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
CPO 5.141	Support the identification, in conjunction with EMRA, of Strategic Energy Zones, areas suitable to accommodate large energy generating projects within the Eastern and Midlands Regional area.
CPO 5.142	Prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy for the County over the lifetime of this plan and subject to the availability of resources. This strategy will support the development of renewable energy infrastructure to deliver government objectives in relation to energy efficiency and the transition to a low carbon future. The Strategy will include a Wind Energy Strategy for the County.
CPO 5.143	Adopt a positive approach to renewable energy proposals, having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, including community, environmental and landscape impacts and impacts on protected or designated heritage areas/structures.
CPO 5.144	Have regard to the Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework, when adopted, when assessing any renewable energy proposals.
CPO 5.145	Promote and support the use of renewable forms of energy as a contribution to the energy demand of all new buildings, where consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of an area.
CPO 5.146	Support and facilitate the development of secure, appropriately-scaled energy storage facilities at suitable locations throughout the county.
CPO 5.147	Ensure environmental assessments for new energy developments should address reasonable alternatives for location. Where existing infrastructural assets such as sub-stations, powerlines and roads already exist within proposed development areas, then such assets should be considered for sustainable use by the proposed development where the assets have capacity to absorb the new development.
CPO 5.148	Grid connection routing options should be developed to safeguard the strategic function of the national road network in accordance with Government Policy by utilising alternative available routes. The Council requires an assessment of all alternative grid connection routing options to be submitted prior to any proposal being considered for a grid connection utilising the national road network.

CPO 5.149	The Council shall give consideration to extending the length of the Planning Permission and the life of renewable energy projects on a case by case basis given the nature of the proposed development and the type of renewable energy project.
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### 5.8.1 Wind Energy

Wind energy is currently the most significant contributing resource of renewable energy in Ireland, as well as being Ireland's largest and most cost-effective renewable electricity resource. In 2018, wind provided 85% of Ireland's renewable electricity and 28% of our total electricity demand and is now the second greatest source of electricity generation in Ireland after natural gas<sup>3</sup>. The strong performance of wind as an energy source is linked to the high level of wind resource available to the country. As an island-nation on the periphery of Europe, Ireland benefits from significant wind resources.

The Council recognises the importance of wind energy as a renewable energy source which can play a vital role in achieving national targets in relation to reductions in fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions. The Council seeks to enable renewable and wind energy resources of County Longford to be harnessed in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The Council will have regard to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities and the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (December, 2019), prepared by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, or any update made thereto. In addition, potential applicants are advised to consult with appropriate statutory and non-statutory bodies in areas which may require special protection.

There are a number of issues which must be taken into consideration when dealing with applications for wind energy development including; visual impact; landscape protection; impacts on residential amenity; impact on wildlife and habitats; hydrogeological and stability issues, connections to the national grid and impact of construction and ancillary infrastructure including access roads. In general, and in accordance with higher level national and regional policy, the Council will encourage wind energy, provided such developments would not have an adverse effect on residential amenities, special landscape character, views or prospects, European Sites, protected structures, aircraft flight paths or by reason of noise or visual impact.

#### 5.8.1.1 Commercial Wind Energy Developments

In Longford there are currently no commercial-scale wind farms in operation in the county. However, in June 2020, An Bord Pleanála granted permission for the development of a 24 no. turbine windfarm at Derryadd, Derryaroge and Lough Bannow bogs in the southwest of the county, with an estimated installed capacity of 96MW.

<sup>3</sup> *Renewable Energy in Ireland 2020 Update*, SEAI (2020) – available at: <https://www.seai.ie/publications/2020-Renewable-Energy-in-Ireland-Report.pdf>

Section 7.9 of the RSES refers specifically to the after use of extensive tracts of publicly owned peat extraction areas and consideration of their potential contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including renewable energy production. The county is well endowed by vast tracts of cutaway peatland, predominately along the western fringes of the county, much of which is under the ownership of Bord na Móna. With a strong history of energy production and an extensive electricity transmission network in place, the potential exists in such peatland areas for a smooth transition to renewable energy sources. This approach should be informed by the preparation of appropriate management plans that address the future uses of worked out industrial peatlands.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) provides mapping data of wind speeds across the country and indicates that turbine heights above 75m-100m result in commercially viable wind speed. Typically, modern commercial turbine design heights are in excess of 140m. In this regard, the Council has identified areas of wind potential where wind energy development will be encouraged. This is illustrated in Appendix 2 of this plan.

### 5.8.1.2 Micro and Community Wind Energy Developments

Micro generation is the term used to refer to generation that is less than 11kW. Micro-generators reduce the amount of electricity that would otherwise have to be bought from the grid. By installing a micro-generator, home and business owners can take action to address the issues of climate change, rising electricity prices and reliance on fossil fuels. Micro-wind turbines can often be installed on rooftops or on poles in back gardens, subject to the requirement for planning permission, where necessary.

Community ownership of wind energy projects enables local communities to benefit directly from local wind energy resources being developed in their local areas, ensuring long-term income for rural communities. The Council will encourage communities to co-operate in the development of suitable wind energy projects in rural or urban locations.

<b>Wind Energy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.150	Have regard to the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to 'Wind Energy Development' and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions.
CPO 5.151	Encourage the development of wind energy in suitable locations in an environmentally sustainable manner and in accordance with Government policy and any forthcoming Renewable Energy Strategy for County Longford.
CPO 5.152	Encourage proposals for commercial wind energy developments to be located on cutaway peatlands in those areas identified as having wind potential within the county, as defined in Appendix 2, subject to environmental, landscape, habitat and wildlife protection requirements being addressed.

CPO 5.153	<p>Ensure that the assessment of wind energy development proposals will have regard to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ sensitivities of the county’s landscapes;</li> <li>▪ visual impact on protected views, prospects, scenic routes, as well as local visual impacts;</li> <li>▪ impacts on nature conservation designations, archaeological areas, county geological sites and historic structures, public rights of way and walking routes;</li> <li>▪ local environmental impacts, including those on residential properties, such as noise and shadow flicker;</li> <li>▪ visual and environmental impacts of associated development, such as access roads, plant and grid connections;</li> <li>▪ scale, size and layout of the project and any cumulative effects due to other projects; the impact of the proposed development on protected bird and mammal species;</li> <li>▪ County Longford Wind Energy Strategy (when adopted);</li> <li>▪ impact of the grid connection from the proposed wind farm to the ESB network.</li> </ul>
CPO 5.154	<p>Ensure that proposals for energy development demonstrate that human health has been considered and has regard to the forthcoming Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines , including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Noise;</li> <li>▪ Shadow Flicker (for wind turbine developments, including detailed Shadow Flicker Study);</li> <li>▪ Ground Conditions/Geology (including landslide and slope stability risk assessment);</li> <li>▪ Air Quality;</li> <li>▪ Water Quality; and</li> <li>▪ Assessment of impacts on collision risk species (bird and bats).</li> </ul>
CPO 5.155	<p>Encourage and support the development of small-scale wind energy development and single turbines in urban and rural areas and Industrial Parks, provided they do not negatively impact upon environmental quality, landscape, wildlife and habitats or residential amenity or other relevant planning consideration.</p>
CPO 5.156	<p>Ensure wind energy developments sited on peatlands do not increase overall carbon losses. Proposals for such development should demonstrate that the following has been considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Peatland stability; and</li> <li>▪ Carbon emissions balance.</li> </ul>

### 5.8.2 Solar Energy

Emerging trends in the renewable energy market has identified solar energy as making a significant contribution to Ireland’s renewable energy targets, with an increased uptake in these installations across large industrial and agricultural buildings where energy load requirement is substantial. Roof mounted array installations are typically integrated within

existing buildings for use by those buildings. Such installations are fixed to the roof of an existing building, typically by way of a pitched mounting frame and orientated south where possible to maximise solar exposure of the PV panels. Solar Photovoltaic (PV) installations typically comprise of ground mounted arrays or roof mounted arrays. In the case of ground mounted solar arrays, these installations typically comprise of a metal frame that is anchored to the ground to hold solar panels at a fixed angle, which can be adjusted to allow for seasonal shifting in the solar path of the sun.

In recent years, commercially operated solar farms, typically comprising of ground mounted PV installations of varying scales in terms of size and energy output, have emerged. Site specific criteria for ground mounted commercial PV array installations include:

- A typical landholding size criterion is 25 acres for a 5MW project;
- Generally flat topography in order to maximise the collection of solar radiation;
- Generally, south facing terrain unimpeded by aspects that may cause overshadowing; and
- Suitable ground conditions to facilitate ground mounting frames.

Whilst such installations typically do not yield an energy supply comparable to a modern windfarm development, solar panel installations do have distinct advantages. PV installations typically range in height of 2.5m – 3.0m in height and therefore have less of a potential visual impact than wind energy developments. Use of appropriate screening techniques such as vegetation planting can further lessen the visual impacts of such developments. PV array installations have no moving parts and therefore maintenance of such sites is less complex. Also construction and assembly of PV solar installations and site restoration, is considerably more efficient than for windfarms. PV installations also provide a viable use in agricultural landholdings, particularly under-utilised agricultural land.

<b>Solar Energy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.157	Promote the development of solar energy infrastructure in the county, in particular for on-site energy use, including solar PV, solar thermal and seasonal storage technologies. Such projects will be considered subject to environmental safeguards and the protection of natural or built heritage features, biodiversity, views and prospects, and other relevant planning considerations.
CPO 5.158	Encourage the development of solar energy in suitable locations in an environmentally sustainable manner and in accordance with Government policy and any forthcoming Renewable Energy Strategy for County Longford.
CPO 5.159	Support and encourage the installation of solar collectors and panels for the production of heat or electricity in residential and commercial buildings, in line with relevant design criteria.
CPO 5.160	Require that proposals for solar energy address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Landscape Character of the County.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visual impact particularly on raised/elevated sites.</li> <li>▪ ‘Zone of Visual Influence’ and visual impact of the structures.</li> <li>▪ Glint and glare and the potential impact on the adjoining road networks and dwellings through the submission of an associated report.</li> <li>▪ Road access and impact on the road network serving the site during the construction and operational phases.</li> <li>▪ Archaeological Impact.</li> <li>▪ Incorporation of security measures – use of CCTV/surveillance cameras and security fencing.</li> <li>▪ Suitability/strength of the grid and accessibility to it.</li> <li>▪ Suitability of the site, having regard to other land use policies, including the need to protect areas of important built and natural heritage.</li> <li>▪ Decommissioning of obsolete infrastructure and after-use.</li> </ul>
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### 5.8.3 Hydro Energy

Hydro energy or hydroelectricity is the term for the process whereby electrical energy is generated when falling water from reservoirs or flowing from rivers, streams or waterfalls (run of the river) is channelled through water turbines. Hydro-energy is a clean source of energy, that does not create pollution or require fuel to function. However, as rivers throughout Ireland are relatively small, they provide a limited hydro energy capacity. Currently, there are no known hydro electrical schemes in operation in County Longford. However, in terms of potential hydro electrical sites, the most obvious site is the River Shannon, given its volume and flow rate.

<b>Hydro Energy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.161	Seek to ensure that proposals for hydro energy installations, including micro-hydro schemes have regard to the recommendations of Inland Fisheries Ireland in relation to the protection of fisheries resources, and of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.
CPO 5.162	Support the roll out of small-scale hydroelectric projects on rivers, water courses, dams and weirs across the county, where projects do not impact negatively on freshwater species, biodiversity and natural or built heritage features.
CPO 5.163	Ensure that the assessment of hydro energy and micro-hydro development proposals will have regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the free passage of fish and other aquatic fauna,</li> <li>• the sensitivity of the landscape;</li> <li>• the visual impact on protected views, prospects and scenic routes as well as local visual impacts;</li> <li>• the impacts on nature conservation designations, archaeological areas and historic structures, public rights of way and walking routes.</li> </ul>

### 5.8.4 Geothermal Energy

Geothermal energy refers to heat energy stored in the ground. Deep geothermal energy can only be accessed through geological processes or by drilling through the surface. The second source of heat in the ground is from radiation from the sun and is regarded as stored energy, which stays relatively warm throughout the year and can be extracted using a ground source heat pump.

To support the increased use of geothermal energy for heat in Ireland, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) have published the following:

- *Geothermal Energy in Ireland - a roadmap for a policy and regulatory framework published by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)*
- *An Assessment of Geothermal Energy for District Heating in Ireland published by the GSI*
- *An Assessment of Geothermal Energy for District Heating in Ireland a non-technical Roadmap for a Policy and Regulatory Framework and a mapping tool to identify and assess Geothermal Site Suitability - Geoenergy (gsi.ie)*

<b>Geothermal Energy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.164	Facilitate large and smaller scale geothermal energy generating developments, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and consideration of environmental and ecological sensitivities.
CPO 5.165	Promote the use of geothermal heat pumps for space heating and cooling as well as water heating in domestic, commercial and recreational buildings subject to the protection of water quality and any other relevant considerations.

### 5.8.5 Bio-Energy

Bioenergy is defined as the energy derived from biomass, and it is considered that this sector has a key role in the delivery of our renewable heat and renewable transport targets which are outlined accordingly.

#### 5.8.5.1 Combustion

Biomass is defined in the Renewable Energy Directive as the biodegradable proportion of products, waste and residues from agriculture (including vegetal and animal substances), forestry and related industries, including fisheries and aquaculture, and the biodegradable fraction of industrial and municipal waste. Applications for the combustion of biomass can range in size from a domestic boiler to commercial and industrial installations. The main feedstocks for such installations are dry organic residues (e.g wood chip and pellets), energy crops (e.g. Willow, Reed Canary Grass) and municipal waste.

The most efficient combustion processes use both the heat and electricity generated in a high-efficiency CHP (combined heat and power) process. Examples of the applications of

CHP include small scale installations suitable for hotels, hospitals and leisure centres where there is a steady demand for heat and power throughout the year. Larger scale CHP systems are suitable for large industrial and commercial processes such as pharmaceutical plants, breweries, third level institutes and food processing plants. Another application of CHP use is district heating, however, the uptake in such systems in Ireland has to date been very low, principally as a result of the relatively mild climate in Ireland and the pattern of low-density housing in the country.

### 5.8.5.2 Biochemical Processes (Anaerobic Digestion)

Biochemical processes typically involve the anaerobic digestion (AD) of biomass which can result in the generation of heat and/or electricity; and the production of transport fuel or for grid injection. Multiple feedstock anaerobic digestion facilities vary from on-farm digesters, using various agricultural and food wastes such as grass, slurry, and food waste as feedstocks. There is also potential to produce renewable gas from anaerobic digestion of organic wastes and residues from domestic/commercial food waste. Renewable gas is carbon neutral and identical in function to natural gas, so the existing network can be used, and gas customers do not need to change boilers or gas-powered appliances.

<b>Bio-Energy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.166	To support EMRA and work with the Regional Assembly in developing and progressing a bioeconomy plan for the region (RSES RPO 7.37) in order to identify potential new opportunities for the County.
CPO 5.167	Facilitate the development of projects that convert biomass to energy, subject to proper planning considerations and where it can be demonstrated that the feedstock source is sustainable.
CPO 5.168	Promote and prioritise utilisation of existing waste streams from agricultural and forestry sectors for renewable energy projects including anaerobic digestion, subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.
CPO 5.169	Promote the development of waste heat technologies and the utilisation and sharing of waste heat in new or extended industrial and commercial developments, where the processes associated with the primary operation onsite generates waste heat.
CPO 5.170	Locate biomass installations in areas that do not affect residential or visual amenity, and which are served by public roads with sufficient capacity to accommodate increased traffic flows.

## 5.9 Information and Communication Infrastructure

The provision of a high-quality competitive information and communications telecommunications (ICT) service is essential in order to promote industrial and commercial development, and to enhance social inclusion and mobility. There is a reliance on the provision of such services for industrial, commercial, tourism and social development and the expansion of ICT infrastructure is key to meeting the needs of the

County's population and a digital economy. This is addressed further in Chapter: *Economic Development Strategy*.

ICT investment is essential for furthering the social and economic development of County Longford. The provision of an efficient broadband service is critical in the development of a knowledge-based economy, and as such the need to build new infrastructure to provide increased capacity in order to raise the quality of coverage and to meet the demand for services is recognised. As witnessed during the restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the availability of high-quality ICT infrastructure, particularly broadband, is a vital feature of modern business and enterprise. The pandemic provided a unique opportunity to evaluate the infrastructural capabilities of remote working at a mass-level through demands on internet connectivity and appropriate channels of communication and highlighted the importance of high-quality ICT infrastructure.

### **5.9.1 Telecommunications Infrastructure**

Fast, reliable and cost-effective telecommunications can encourage economic development in an area and can enhance quality of life in a number of areas by offering new choices in education, entertainment and communications. There are a number of mobile voice and data service providers operating across the county including Vodafone, O2, Three and Meteor.

The Council will have regard to planning guidelines provided by the DoEHLG '*Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities*' in assessing proposals for telecommunications infrastructure and support structures. The Planning Authority will work with the telecommunications providers to facilitate the development of infrastructure that respects the recognised values of the natural and built heritage and will seek to encourage the co-location of masts and antennae on existing structures within the county.

### **5.9.2 Broadband**

The provision of high-speed, reliable and affordable broadband is essential to the economic growth of both County Longford and the wider region in terms of attracting inward investment and increasing competitiveness. It is also essential to ensure a high quality of life for residents of County Longford, particularly those in more peripheral areas. There has been a significant increase in the level and quality of IT connectivity across the county, which is indicative of the high levels of investment in this area in recent years. However, much of this improvement has been focused on urban areas, and many rural areas continue to experience poor quality of service. This issue must be addressed in order to support rural enterprise and sustain rural populations.

County Longford has benefitted from significant advancements in broadband infrastructure in recent years, with the majority of the county well served by high-speed broadband connectivity in the majority of the settlements within the county, with further commitments in commercial rural deployment plans to extend the rollout of high-speed broadband, most

notably through the National Broadband Plan. Longford continues to benefit from the rollout of several Government led broadband schemes (including the National Broadband Scheme, Rural Broadband Scheme and Broadband for Schools), ensuring that broadband services are available in communities across the county.

<b>Information Communications Technologies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 5.171	Co-operate with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and public and private agencies where appropriate, in improving high quality broadband infrastructure throughout the County and supporting the delivery of the National Broadband Plan.
CPO 5.172	Promote and facilitate the sustainable development of a high-quality ICT network throughout the county in order to achieve balanced social and economic development, whilst protecting the amenities of urban and rural areas
CPO 5.173	Seek to provide public Wi-Fi zones in public spaces where possible.
CPO 5.174	Promote orderly development of telecommunications infrastructure throughout the county in accordance with the requirements of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>'Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities'</i> (1996), except where they conflict with Circular Letter PL 07/12 which shall take precedence, and any subsequent guidelines.</li> <li>- <i>'Guidance on the potential location of overground telecommunications infrastructure on public roads'</i>, (Dept of Communications, Energy &amp; Natural Resources, 2015).</li> </ul>
CPO 5.175	Ensure that the location of telecommunications structures should minimise and /or mitigate any adverse impacts on communities, public rights of way and the built or natural environment.
CPO 5.176	Encourage co-location of antennae on existing support structures and to require documentary evidence as to the non-availability of this option in proposals for new structures. The shared use of existing structures will be required where the numbers of masts located in any single area is considered to have an excessive concentration.

### 5.10 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.

<b>Major Accidents Directive – County Policy Objective</b>
It is the County Policy Objective to:

CPO 5.177	<p>Have regard to the following in assessing applications for new developments (including extensions);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Major Accidents Directive (Seveso II – 96/082/EEC and Seveso III 2012/18/EU);</li> <li>- The potential effects on public health and safety;</li> <li>- The need to ensure adequate distances between such developments and residential areas, areas of public use and any areas of sensitivity.</li> </ul>
CPO 5.178	<p>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.</p>

## 8.8 Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications - Climate Context and Associated Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a climate context and associated actions.

### **Transport**

Travel is a source of unwanted noise, emissions, and energy use, accounting for 42.2% of Ireland's Total Final Energy Consumption in 2018, the largest take up of any sector<sup>4</sup>. When compared to Energy, Industry, Residential and Agriculture, Transport has also been the only sector that has not reduced its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since 1990, continuing to account for nearly 30% of Ireland's total emissions – 72% of which coming from road transportation alone; with passenger cars accounting for 61% of same<sup>5</sup>.

In line with Ireland's National Mitigation Plan (NMP) 2017 on climate change and the NPF shared goals, by 2040 we need to have moved away from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems in favour of cleaner and quieter towns a cities, completely free from combustion engines. Separately, the Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019 – 2031 has prioritised reducing the 'need' for travel over economically 'efficient' travel, reinforced by the Climate Action Plan 2019 (CAP) in its ambition to make growth less transport intensive through better planning, remote and home-working and modal shift to public transport.

The CAP also aims to accelerate the take up of Electric Vehicle (EV) cars to meet a target of 950,000 EVs on the road by 2030, which will see approximately a third of all new vehicles sold within the next decade to be Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) or Plug-in Hybrid Electric

<sup>4</sup> Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) (2019), 'Energy in Ireland – 2019 Report', December 2019. <https://www.seai.ie/publications/Energy-in-Ireland-2019-.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> European Parliament (2019), 'CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from cars: facts and figures', 22 March 2019. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20190313STO31218/co2-emissions-from-cars-facts-and-figures-infographics>

Vehicle (PHEV). Current Government proposals will see the banning of a new petrol and diesel cars by the same 2030 deadline under the Climate Action Amendment Bill 2019.

Census 2016 data reveals that 68.25% of County Longford commuters travel to work by car, above the national average of 65.6%, and just 1.7% of work commuters availing of public transport compared to 9.3% nationally.

### **Waste**

Waste is an inevitable part of our daily lives but the more we buy, the more waste we generate, so our priority is first to reduce, followed by reuse, and only then recycle. Recycling offers a way to keep useful resources working for use, while providing a safe and regulated systems for dealing with hazardous waste that could otherwise end up in landfill (DCCAE). The NPF acknowledges the necessity to provide adequate capacity and systems to manage waste in an environmentally safe and sustainable manner.

Internationally 95% of the value of the material from plastic packaging for example, up to €120 billion a year, is lost after its first use, while textile production is said to contribute more to climate change than international aviation and shipping combined<sup>6</sup>. By 2030, the CAP 2019 has proposed a reduction in food waste by 50%, waste packaging by 70% and plastic packaging by 55%, along with a ban and elimination on single use and non-recyclable plastic. Each year, Irish households produce around one tonne of waste<sup>7</sup>. Whether it is recycled or ends up in landfill, all that waste must be transported, treated and disposed.

Through its 'Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development' (2010) programme UNESCO aims to make climate change education a more central and visible part of the international response to climate change, helping people better understand the impact of global warming and increasing 'climate literacy' among young people. Similarly, a Climate Change Charter signed on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 by Minister for the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCASE) and Minister of State, committed all local authorities to deliver upon effective climate action, including building local citizen engagement, particularly with the young, and partner and collaborate on climate action initiatives with local community groups, local enterprise and local school and higher-level institutions. Education plays an important role in tackling waste. A study conducted by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in 2018 of our commercial waste identified approximately 70% of material in the black bin could be diverted to recycling or composting, with plastic waste double to what it was ten years ago.

### **Energy**

Today most of Ireland's energy use comes from the burning of fossil fuels, like coal, oil and peat. To counteract this reliance the NPF proposes an aggregate reduction (since 1990) in carbon dioxide emissions of at least 80% by 2050 across electricity generation, built

<sup>6</sup> Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2016), *The New Plastics Economy – Rethinking the Future of Plastics*, World Economic Forum.

[https://www.newplasticseconomy.org/assets/doc/EllenMacArthurFoundation\\_TheNewPlasticsEconomy\\_Pages.pdf](https://www.newplasticseconomy.org/assets/doc/EllenMacArthurFoundation_TheNewPlasticsEconomy_Pages.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (2019), *Climate Action – what you can do about waste*, Publication, 17 June 2019.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/climate-action-waste/>

environmental and transport sectors. Ireland has excellent renewable energy resources including wind, bio-energy and solar. By 2020 Ireland has a commitment to generating a minimum of 16% of all energy from renewable resources (Renewable Energy Directive Ireland), having already achieved 22% in 2016 (Ireland 2050) from a base of 9.1% in 2015. This will include 40% from renewable electricity, 12% from renewable heat and 10% from renewable transport.

A report prepared by Baringa commissioned by the Irish Wind Energy Association has claimed that renewable energy technologies like wind, solar, bioenergy and hydro alone can provide 70% of our electricity demand by 2030. This target can also be achieved in a way that is cost neutral to the electricity consumer while simultaneously reducing CO2 emissions by 30%. Wind energy is both Ireland's largest and cheapest renewable electricity resource, third in the world in its usage behind Denmark and Uruguay. In 2018, wind provided 85% of Ireland's renewable electricity and 30% of our total electricity demand, second only to natural gas<sup>8</sup>.

Since 2010, solar PV has been the fastest growing power generation technology worldwide, however solar PV installed capacity in Ireland is amongst the lowest in Europe. One square metre of solar panels provides the same amount of hot water as the equivalent of more than 100 litres of oil and is effective even when the sky is overcast or cloudy (SEAI). Worldwide, the sun delivers more energy to earth in an hour that is used worldwide in a year. To capitalise on this effect, designing our homes and buildings to face south and capture as much light as possible can reduce our energy bills by more than 10%.

Aside from Solar and Wind, Biomass and Hydroelectricity at 3.5% combined largely makes up the remainder of Ireland's renewable energy supply<sup>9</sup>. Biomass by comparison to other forms of renewable energy is comparatively expensive, with a limited availability of indigenous biomass, high import costs and its inconvenience in comparison to other fuels, such as oil and gas. Although poorly developed, Tidal/Wave Energy potential in Ireland is enormous, calculated by the SEAI to be 29GW, and easily meeting Ireland's peak electricity demands of above 5GW (Eirgrid).

New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.

### ***Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications - Climate Actions***

Longford County Council shall:

**A5.1:** Require the installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) recharging points at all LCC public service locations, and the procurement of two no. EV vehicles for shared working use by its staff.

<sup>8</sup> Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (2020), 'Wind Energy'.

<https://www.seai.ie/technologies/wind-energy/>

<sup>9</sup> Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (2020), 'Electricity'

<https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-statistics/electricity/>

**A5.2:** Require all one-off housing to install a minimum of 1 no. Electric Vehicle (EV) home charger unit in accordance with current Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) recommendations.

**A5.3:** Require all multi-unit, residential developments to install 1 recharging point per 5 units, and ducting infrastructure for every parking space within the development boundary.

**A5.4:** Require all non-residential developments with more than 10 parking spaces to install 1 no. recharging point per 20 parking spaces, and ducting infrastructure for at least 1 in 5 parking spaces within its property boundary.

**A5.5:** Actively encourage and incentivise public and private carpooling / carsharing, assigning 10% of all public parking, and parking associated with future commercial and industrial applications, for its sole provision.

**A5.6:** Require all non-residential developments to provide a minimum of 4 no. bicycle parking spaces or one per user, whichever is the greater, within 50 metres from a building entrance. Each space shall be well lit, sheltered, with cycle racks fixed to a permanent structure.

**A5.7:** Prepare a feasibility study (to include route options) for a cycle route on approach and through each town within its functional area.

**A5.8:** Require the registration of all new taxi/hackney vehicles to be Electric Vehicles (EVs) on the provision of rapid, car recharging been made available at each taxi rank throughout the county.

**A5.9:** Prioritise the appointment of public transport service providers with the lowest, demonstrated CO2 emissions across their fleet.

**A5.10:** Require all future footpaths to be a minimum of 2 metres in width, space permitting.

**A5.11:** Require in accordance with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's 'Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Protects (2006), the submission of a Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan (CDWMP) for any project in excess of:

- houses or more;
- aggregate floor area in excess of 1250 sq. m;
- demolition or refurbishment of 100 m3 of Construction or Demolition waste; or
- civil engineering projects in excess of 500 m3 of waste.

**A5.12:** Require all future, primary, secondary and special school planning applications to be accompanied by evidence of Eco-Schools / Green-Schools Programme (Green Flag) registration and conditioned for its continued enrolment.

**A5.13:** Promote 23<sup>rd</sup> March every year as a climate change action day, internally and amongst the wider community through local media platforms.

**A5.14:** Undertake annual monitoring and spot checks of existing refuse and segregation at all local authority owned and operated locations.

**A5.15:** Facilitate community participation and/or micro-generation of renewable power, as well as community gain arrangements, while encouraging the development of small scale, community owned wind farms.

**A5.16:** Convert all public streetlighting within the functional area to well designed and directed LED lights, with dimmable capabilities where preferable.

**A5.17:** Source all building electricity demands from a renewable resource only.

**A5.18:** Actively participate and achieve the targets as set out by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy.

**A5.19:** Commission the feasibility study of Lanesborough becoming Ireland's first, 'Low Carbon Town', with reference to the Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) 2020.

**A5.20:** Establish a program to prepare and publish a full Building Energy Rating (BER) inventory for all publicly owned social housing within its functional area, GDPR permitting.

**A5.21:** Ensure all relevant developments take account of the Servo-III Directive (e.g. storage of hazardous chemicals) and reduce excessive energy consumption / CO<sub>2</sub> production.

**A5.22:** Require the integration of a Building Management Systems (BMS) at its primary office locations for the benefit of reducing energy and maintenance costs.

## Chapter 6: Regeneration

### 6.1 Introduction

Regeneration is a cross cutting theme of the Development Plan which contains a physical, social and economic dimension, which in some cases may overlap. This Development Plan for the achievement of regeneration aims to tackle problems of population decline, lack of investment and physical dereliction in an integrated and cross cutting way, through several policy areas including integrated land use and socio-economic measures to address the physical, economic, social and environmental problems associated with dereliction and decay. Measures to overcome substantive barriers to development such as new infrastructure provision, environmental enhancement and site assembly will be considered, along with the promotion of a multi-sector partnership approach involving the planning authority, other public agencies and business and community interests.

Flexibility in the application of zoning and development management policies and standards, will be considered in order to ensure that regeneration is promoted rather than inhibited, while having due regard to the need to protect structures and areas of architectural merit, including through the identification of appropriate new uses for such buildings, and those located in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Remediation of contaminated lands will also be considered.

In terms of funding support the Development Plan has identified and outlined a particular development strategy which can be formulated into more specific regeneration projects, and which encompass a number of elements aimed at enabling 'compact growth'. These include specific investment in infrastructure to support development, site assembly, land acquisition, and sustainable transport initiatives, aimed at activating strategic sites that have been identified in the Development Plan.

There are significant national and regional policy requirements, along with section 28 guidelines which relate to Regeneration. The Development Plan is underpinned by policies that are consistent with overarching relevant national and regional guidance and policies; the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which place a new policy emphasis on renewing and developing existing urban settlements.

### 6.2 Statutory Context

As per section 10(3)(h) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) there is a requirement to include mandatory objectives in relation to regeneration. This requires that a development plan shall include objectives for

*(h) the development and renewal of areas, identified having regard to the core strategy, that are in need of regeneration, in order to prevent –*

*(i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land,*

*(ii) Urban blight and decay*

*(iii) Anti-social behaviour, or*

*(iv) A shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use are a mixture of residential and other uses.*

### **6.3 Policy Context**

#### **6.3.1 National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018**

Regeneration and rejuvenation have been identified as central components in the delivery of ‘compact growth’ as set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF). The focus nationally is on the regeneration of town and city centres and realising the potential of these areas, as a means of tackling climate change, social exclusion, and housing shortages, while working towards improving quality of life. The National Planning Framework highlights that the utilisation of public lands can act as a catalyst to stimulate regeneration and wider investment. One of the key policy priorities is the harnessing of publicly owned lands, including military sites, and combining the potential of such assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment.

The National Planning Framework also recognised the importance of regeneration to the strategic growth and renewal of our communities, through the establishment of a Regeneration and Development Fund, overseen by a new National Regeneration and Development Agency. The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Strategy (ORIS) also plays an important part for rural communities by providing funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for the necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas across Ireland.

#### **6.3.2 Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES)**

The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), sets out at a regional level to support the implementation of *Project Ireland 2040* and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Eastern and Midland Region. This in turn further guides policy making decisions at a local level through the County Development Plan.

In terms of Regeneration the following Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSO’s) are noted:

- *RSO 2*: Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region's citizens.
- *RSO 3*: Support sustainable rural development and strengthen rural networks, economies and communities. Manage urban generated growth in areas under strong urban influence and encourage sustainable growth in areas that have experienced decline or stagnation.
- *RSO 5*: Enhance, integrate and protect our arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration.
- *RSO 12*: To build a resilient economic base and promote innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems that support smart specialisation, cluster development and sustained economic growth.
- *RSO 16*: Provide a regional framework for collaboration and partnerships and to support local and regional bodies in leveraging funding and partnership opportunities.

Accordingly, the County Development Plan has been aligned to the relevant Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) and associated relevant Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs).

### 6.3.3 Action Plan for Rural Development: Realising our Rural Potential (Gol, 2018)

The Action Plan for Rural Development contains a range of measures to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland under the Government's *Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme*. The *Town and Village Renewal Scheme* which was launched by the Government in 2016 is such a measure aimed at starting the process of rejuvenating Ireland's rural towns and villages to make them more attractive places in which to live, work and visit.

### 6.3.4 Framework for Town Centre Renewal (DBEI,2017)

This sets out key characteristics of a successful town centre and includes an Action Plan for Town Centre Renewal. These relate to the need to bring redundant, under-utilised and derelict land and buildings back into active use. It directly aligns with the principles of sustainable development by reducing the need for greenfield development, supporting the urban fabric and re-using existing resources. The Action Plan in this Framework will be a useful tool for towns and villages applying for funding under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. This document provides good 'health check' indicators on creating more vibrant town centres to include: -

- Accessibility
- Pedestrian Flows
- Environmental Quality
- Public Realm
- Diversity of Uses

A strong town centre would get a top mark in each of the aforementioned indicators. Regeneration should focus on working to develop a strong town core in the first instance, subsequently from the core to peripheral areas.

### 6.3.5 Longford Regeneration Initiative

This focuses on the following Thematic Priority Areas: -

1. Community-led Development and Capacity Building
2. Policy Alignment and Implementation
3. Coordination and implementation

The regeneration section of Longford County Council is tasked with the delivery of a wide range of projects and initiatives and securing funding for these through community-led development and capacity building, policy alignment and coordination and delivery. The following points summarise the main action areas of the section in support of:

- The provisions of the Core Strategy in securing the settlement hierarchy, ensuring that towns and villages are attractive places to live works and visit generating positive change in local communities
- Reversing town/village and rural population decline, by encouraging new roles and functions for buildings, streets and sites and promoting new economic opportunities through appropriate placemaking initiatives including targeted regeneration master planning for specific areas
- Compact and Sustainable Growth - encouraging compact forms of development that that focus on consolidating the footprint of existing settlements with new development.
- Integration of sustainable and climate action policies, the national transition objective and the Just transition process
- Strong stakeholder engagement through established Town Teams and other vehicles to maximise a bottom-up approach
- Protecting environmental and heritage assets, encouraging access, awareness conservation and preservation as appropriate.

A number of future projects have also been identified which have been incorporated into Development Plan Policy Objectives.

## 6.4 Regeneration Typology

There are many different types of regeneration, which are discussed accordingly: -

1. Compact Growth Urban Regeneration (Housing)
2. Economic Urban Regeneration
3. Heritage Urban Regeneration
4. Rural Regeneration

### 6.4.1 Compact Growth Urban Regeneration (Housing)

One of the key elements of the NPF relates to the need for compact growth, with housing development within and close to existing built-up areas and a focus on the regeneration of infill and brownfield sites.<sup>1</sup> The NPF and EMRA RSES identifies ‘*Compact Growth*’ as the means to deliver sustainable growth in our urban settlements through consolidation, rather than the continued sprawl of urban development into the countryside, at the expense of town centres and smaller villages. Compact Growth is focused on the following types of urban sites, many of which incorporate a significant element of regeneration:

- ***Brownfield Sites*** - Any land which has been subjected to building, engineering or other operations excluding temporary uses or urban green spaces. These sites generally comprise of redundant lands and/or buildings.
- ***Infill Sites*** - Development within urban infill sites must consider the context of the surrounding area.
- ***Backland Development*** - Undeveloped parcels of land located to the rear of existing buildings.

Accordingly, urban regeneration and ‘compact growth’ are key focus areas within this Plan, supported with a central objective to regenerate the County’s towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing. In accordance with the RSES, the Development Plan has adopted an asset-based approach to the strategic location of new residential development, which will contribute to regeneration, placemaking and compact growth (Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1: Asset Test: Criteria for the strategic location of new residential development (Source: EMRA RSES 2019).**

<b>Scale</b>	Is there potential for compact sustainable development, based on the settlements scale, rates of growth, local ambition and availability of serviced lands?
<b>Functions</b>	Is there a good level of local employment provision, based on its jobs ratio and net commuting flows, and/or potential to develop complementarities with other places?
<b>Services</b>	Will local services and amenities including community, education, health, leisure and retail be accessible as set out in the ‘10-minute settlement’ concept?
<b>Placemaking</b>	Will the development reinforce a sense of place and character, and create a healthy and attractive environment in line with good urban design principles?

<sup>1</sup> NPO 3a Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements; NPO 3c Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints.

<b>Economic</b>	Is there potential for better alignment of housing and employment provision, to strengthen local economies or drive economic development opportunities?
<b>Connectivity</b>	Is the development accessible to existing/planned public transport and is there potential to improve modal share of public transport, walking and cycling?
<b>Environment</b>	Does the environment have the carrying capacity for development? Is there potential to enhance environmental quality and/or support transition to low carbon/climate resilience?
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Is there a requirement for improvements to water, waste water, utilities and/or digital infrastructure and services to support the proposed development?

The aim is to target the ‘Key Town’ of Longford and to develop economically active self-sustaining ‘Growth Towns’, in addition to promoting regeneration in rural towns and villages. Towns which require targeted ‘catch-up’ investment to enhance local employment and services and to promote regeneration in towns and villages are identified in the settlement hierarchy (see *Chapter 4: Core Strategy and Housing*).

A vital element of this approach is the regeneration of infill and brownfield sites. In this regard Longford County Council will over the lifetime of the Plan, establish a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites so that a ‘pipeline’ of development opportunities can be kept under review through monitoring and reporting. Longford County Council will also work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to promote co-ordination in the delivery of increased urban densities in towns centres. In this regard piecemeal development of individual plots will generally not be permitted, unless it is satisfactorily demonstrated that the development will not jeopardise the comprehensive redevelopment of surrounding lands.

<b>Compact Growth Urban Regeneration (Housing) – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.1	Work with all relevant stakeholders in the promotion of urban ‘compact growth’ regeneration in County Longford and establish a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites so that a ‘pipeline’ of development opportunities can be kept under review through monitoring and reporting.
CPO 6.2	Facilitate urban development on infill/brownfield sites through the redevelopment and regeneration of underused, vacant or derelict town centre and urban lands to create more desirable places in which people can live and work.  <i>Piecemeal development of individual plots will generally not be permitted, unless it is satisfactorily demonstrated that the development will not jeopardise the comprehensive redevelopment of surrounding lands.</i>

CPO 6.3	Enable infill and appropriate brownfield redevelopment in order to maximise the efficient use of existing infrastructure and services and promote a positive modal shift towards sustainable transport use.
CPO 6.4	Promote increased urban densities and building heights at suitable locations in accordance with the settlement hierarchy , in accordance with Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), or any future amendments or updates of the same.
CPO 6.5	Enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within the town centres of Longford, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Ballymahon, Lanesborough and Drumlish, by improving links between the core and surrounding areas through the further integration of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.
CPO 6.6	Set out measures to reduce vacancy and the underuse of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centres.
CPO 6.7	Support efforts to deal with waste and contamination relating to brownfield regeneration.
CPO 6.8	Deliver compact urban growth through the delivery of innovative adaptable urban schemes.
CPO 6.9	Deliver compact growth and regeneration through active land management
CPO 6.10	Encourage the development of improved connectivity, provision of services and good quality public realm in urban locations and create an environment for investment in high quality residential development and supporting services and amenities such as schools, shops, recreation areas and open spaces.
CPO 6.11	Carry out master planning to ensure that large areas of land, are appropriately planned and developed in a sustainable manner, which includes provision for phasing, infrastructure provision, community facilities, density, layout, open spaces, landscaping and development design briefs and statements.
CPO 6.12	Require all development proposals for strategic brownfield and infill sites be accompanied by a site brief and/or masterplan that sets out a phased programme for the regeneration of the site and demonstrates how the proposal will comply with National Guidelines that seek to integrate principles of good urban design, planning and placemaking.

#### 6.4.2 Economic Urban Regeneration

Longford is the eighth most deprived region in the country, according to the latest national deprivation index. The report draws on Census data and scores areas based on indicators such as unemployment rates, educational attainment, housing and lone-parent ratio. This is seen as a contributor to anti-social behaviour and related problems. It is recognised that there are a particular number of areas in the County which are blackspots in terms of economic opportunity and anti-social behaviour, and this requires targeted regeneration measures. In accordance with the Regional Policy contained with the EMRA RSES, (RPO 6.61), Longford County Council recognises the importance of both promoting economic opportunity and supporting social inclusion

measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development. In particular attention will be given to deprived areas in the urban areas of Longford Town, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Lanesborough, Ballymahon and Drumlish.

In this regard Longford County Council will work collaboratively with relevant agencies to support the consolidation and development of strategically located land banks for enterprise and employment opportunity, and associated regeneration gain. This will include collaboration with the IDA and Enterprise Ireland on the availability of sites of enterprise purposes. The Upper Shannon Erne Future Economic Project, which is a collaboration between the Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon local authorities with ESB and Bord na Móna, provides the opportunity to deliver cross regional economic projects.

In terms of physical and enabling infrastructure, it is recognised that County Longford is centrally located within the country, and Longford Town itself is strategically located on the N4/M4 from Dublin to Sligo, with national roads including the N55, N5 and N63. Planned infrastructure upgrades include the N4 from Mullingar to Carrick-on Shannon and there is further potential to provide for enhanced rail service on the Dublin - Sligo rail line and improve connections to Athlone. Natural gas has already come to Ballymahon and should be capitalised on.

<b>Economic Urban Regeneration – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.13	Work with all relevant stakeholders in the promotion of economic regeneration and support infrastructure.
CPO 6.14	Engage with communities, landowners, public and private sector agencies, the Joint Policing Committee (JPC) and other council departments in terms of regeneration opportunities for the towns and County.
CPO 6.15	Support the consolidation of the town centres of Longford, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Ballymahon, Lanesborough and Drumlish and the enhancement and linking of brownfield and outlying sites to the town centres, with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites.
CPO 6.16	Support the development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in the 'Key Town' of Longford and the self-sustaining and growth towns of Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, Lanesborough and Granard; and Drumlish for residential, employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities, and target the utilisation of available funding where available.
CPO 6.17	Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development. In particular attention will be given to deprived areas in the urban areas of Longford Town, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Lanesborough, Ballymahon and Drumlish.

CPO 6.18	Support the development of projects which support community led themes of Local Action Plans, in terms of digital connectivity, enterprise creation opportunities, public realm and environment, tourism infrastructure, promotion and marketing.
CPO 6.19	Secure projects to promote social inclusion and community integration in conjunction with EU initiatives on Urban Security.
CPO 6.20	Develop an Action Plan for Town Centre Renewal which brings redundant, under-utilised and derelict land and buildings back into active use as a first preference ahead of peripheral areas, and which reduces the need for greenfield development, supporting the urban fabric and re using existing resources.
CPO 6.21	Support the viability of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes targeted in core areas.
CPO 6.22	Encourage pilot projects for the re-use of brownfield sites and encourage active temporary uses, where feasible, in order to encourage activation of vacant sites that require longer lead in time for regeneration.
CPO 6.23	Ensure development proposals on infill sites within existing streetscapes provide active frontages.
CPO 6.24	Ensure in accordance with the ' <i>Framework for Town Centre Renewal, 2017</i> ' that ' <i>health checks</i> ' are carried out for town centres and that more vibrant town centres are created in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Pedestrian Flows</li> <li>• Environmental Quality</li> <li>• Public Realm</li> <li>• Diversity of Uses</li> </ul>
CPO 6.25	Promote access to sustainable transport and availability of alternative transport modes such as walking and cycling between strategic areas and services.
CPO 6.26	Support and provision and development of serviced industrial and commercial sites in the towns and villages throughout the County, as appropriate.
CPO 6.27	Support the provision and development of Enterprise Hubs in the towns and villages throughout the County, as appropriate.
CPO 6.28	Promote high speed broadband availability to communities and the potential for remote working.
CPO 6.29	Develop initiatives to promote the expansion of the Gas network in collaboration with Gas Networks Ireland.
CPO 6.30	Promote measures to enhance investment opportunities in employment generation in conjunction with cross regional initiatives.

### 6.4.3 Heritage Urban Regeneration

Planning for the regeneration of a historic town needs an integrated approach that balances the protection of the built heritage and the sustainable development of historic urban areas with the needs of modern living and takes account of the concerns and aspirations of the community and key stakeholders. This requires the coordination and management of different stakeholders.

The development of a common vision for a town, supported by a coordinated and integrated series of objectives and a programme of realistic, achievable actions, will balance the conservation of heritage, alongside the needs of those who live in and use the historic town. Bringing unused or underused spaces within towns back into use has many advantages, such as reviving economic value, activating abandoned and derelict sites, and reducing pressure for greenfield development. Additional initiatives to promote placemaking and the economic vibrancy include Town Centre Health checks, historic and public realm plans, which are linked to statutory local area plans. The importance of community led village design and enhancement statements is also recognised.

Local distinctiveness is key to each town having a unique selling point and the character and distinctiveness of the historic built environment are recognised as central to future vitality and viability. It is recognised that there are opportunities for Longford County Council in conjunction with other stakeholders to target funding initiatives for heritage led regeneration. Examples of such heritage led regeneration are the Connolly Barracks and the Camlin Quarter area in Longford town; and the reuse of the former Lanesborough ESB power plant building.

<b>Heritage Urban Regeneration – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.31	Work with all relevant stakeholders in the promotion of heritage led regeneration.
CPO 6.32	Promote the sensitive and adaptive reuse of Protected Structures, historic building stock and industrial structures, where appropriate
CPO 6.33	Undertake initiatives to promote placemaking and economic vibrancy in terms of Town Centre Health checks, historic and public realm plans and community led village design and enhancement statements.
CPO 6.34	Seek where possible European, national and regional regeneration related funding to support heritage led regeneration projects.

### 6.4.4 Rural Regeneration

The NPF identifies the need to strengthen and diversify rural towns to be a focus for local housing and employment growth. Rural towns can act as a focus for development in their areas through the provision of services across economic, social and administrative areas. For some rural areas in the county, urban and commuter

generated development has undesirably affected the character and cohesion of these locations. Simultaneously, in less accessible rural locations, population levels have declined, and it has been difficult to sustain basic services and community facilities at these locations. It is recognised that the RIAI's *Toolkit for Towns and Villages* provides useful advice for local authorities in relation to rural regeneration.

The RSES aims to strengthen the fabric of rural Ireland, supporting rural towns and communities. The rejuvenation of rural towns and villages requires that appropriate job creation can be supported in rural areas. It is recognised that provision of serviced or serviceable sites in a manner that provides a structured space for new enterprise would help to sustain smaller rural communities. Small industrial estates on the edge of towns facilitate local enterprise and entrepreneurship would help prevent both drift to larger urban centres and the construction of one-off units around domestic properties in rural areas.

The countryside within the County provides for rural economies and rural communities, based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural enterprise. Traditional sectors such as agriculture, tourism, extractive industries and forestry are complemented by diversification in sectors such as food, renewable energy and opportunities provided from improved digital connectivity. The agri-food sector plays a significant role in Ireland's rural economy and this sector is supported through the implementation of *Food Wise 2025*. The forestry sector is another significant contributor to the economy. Also, energy production, including renewable energy in the form of wind, solar and biomass have to date largely been provided in rural areas and the location of future renewable energy production is likely to be met in rural areas. (see *Chapter 9: Rural Enterprise*).

Another significant contributor to the economy is the tourism sector and the development of greenways, blueways and peatways to provide an alternative visitor experience. The RSES supports tourism development and promotional branding to ensure that areas associated with *Ireland's Hidden Heartlands* and *Ireland's Ancient East* are developed and promoted to tap into the economic potential of rural areas (see *Chapter 9: Rural Enterprise* and *Chapter 10: Tourism* in relation to the development of tourism in the County). In this regard Longford has a rich cultural heritage with potential to develop as a recreation and tourism hub, building on its proximity to attractions such as Centre Parcs, the Royal Canal, the proposed Dublin-Westport Greenway, the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park, and also key assets within Longford town such as St Mel's Cathedral, the River Camlin, the Back Stage Theatre and walking routes such as the Rebel and Literary Trails. It is recognised that delivering on County Longford's walking and cycling strategy will provide links to national and cross regional walking and cycling trails, which will also provide economic benefit and regeneration. There is also potential to build on significant investment in the nearby flagship Center Parc's holiday village and the investment by the local authority in tourism and recreational infrastructure. It is recognised that the provision of suitable accommodation is essential in order to maximise the return from visitors to the county.

In keeping with the NPF, and the EMRA RSES, Longford County Council will support the longer-term strategic planning for industrial peatland areas. This may include support, where appropriate, for a Transition Team and preparation of a comprehensive after use framework plan for the peatlands and related infrastructure, which addresses environmental, economic and social issues, including employment and replacement enterprise reflecting the current transition from employment based around peat extraction. In terms of the disused bogs, their use for tourism, aquaculture and market gardening / herb growing will be considered. The reuse of the Lanesborough power plant as a potential opportunity site for tourism or enterprise is also recognised.

<b>Rural Regeneration – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.35	Collaborate with all relevant stakeholders in the promotion of rural regeneration in County Longford.
CPO 6.36	Encourage in rural areas that have experienced decline or stagnation, sustainable growth, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.
CPO 6.37	Support the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of regeneration projects for rural villages and rural areas and utilisation of appropriate funding opportunities.
CPO 6.38	Support the recommendations of the RIAI's <i>Toolkit for Towns and Villages</i> in relation to rural regeneration.
CPO 6.39	Encourage provision of serviced or serviceable sites in a manner that provides a structured space for new enterprise in order to sustain smaller rural communities.
CPO 6.40	Support the development of small industrial estates on the edge of towns in order to facilitate local enterprise and entrepreneurship.
CPO 6.41	Support and protect existing rural economies and valuable agricultural lands to ensure sustainable food supply.
CPO 6.42	Support the diversification of rural economies to create additional jobs and maximise opportunities in emerging sectors, such as agri-business, renewable energy, rural tourism and forestry enterprise.
CPO 6.43	Support the designation of the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park as a UNESCO Biosphere candidate site in the County.
CPO 6.44	Support the development of Longford as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations in the Region, including Center Parcs, and proximity to natural amenities and recreational opportunities.
CPO 6.45	Support and encourage the provision of additional suitable tourist accommodation in appropriate locations throughout the County.

## 6.5 Mechanisms to Deliver Regeneration

### 6.5.1 Active Land Management

Achieving compact growth targets will require active land management responses to ensure that land and building resources within existing settlements are used to their full potential. In this regard Longford County Council will establish a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites so that brownfield site re-use can be managed and co-ordinated across multiple stakeholders as part of the active land management process. Such Active Land Management may be delivered through a number of mechanisms which are discussed accordingly: -

#### 6.5.1.1 Collaboration with National Land Development Agency

The National Land Development Agency established under the NPF has the objective of maintaining and enhancing the capacity for co-ordinating and developing large, strategically located land banks, in order to promote the delivery of housing and other development in order to provide more affordable homes. The Agency is to have Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers and drive renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential (NPF National Policy Objectives 12<sup>2</sup> and 66<sup>3</sup>). The Agency will access the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund in order to achieve these goals. In this regard Longford County Council will work collaboratively with the National Land Development Agency (LDA) in their role to support the consolidation and development of strategically located land banks, particularly publicly owned lands, to unlock housing and regeneration opportunities.

#### 6.5.1.2 Application of Vacant Site Levy (VSL)

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 is a site activation measure to bring vacant and underutilised land in urban areas into beneficial use, while ensuring a more effective return on State investment by enabling infrastructure and helping to counter unsustainable urban sprawl. It introduced a statutory obligation for all Planning Authorities to establish a register of vacant sites. The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 sets out two broad categories of vacant land that the levy may apply to:

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<sup>2</sup> NPO 12 The Government will establish a National Regeneration and Development Agency to work with local authorities, other public bodies and capital spending departments and agencies to co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands, investment required within the capital envelopes provided in the National Development Plan and to drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential. The Government will consider how best to make State lands available to such a body to kick-start its development role and to legislate for enhanced compulsory purchase powers to ensure that the necessary transformation of the places most in need of regeneration can take place more swiftly and effectively.

<sup>3</sup> NPO 66 A more effective strategic and centrally managed approach will be taken to realise the development potential of the overall portfolio of state owned and/or influenced lands in the five main cities other major urban areas and in rural towns and villages as a priority, particularly through the establishment of a National Regeneration and Development Agency

- Lands zoned primarily for residential purposes;
- Lands in need of regeneration which includes:
  - Mixed Use/Expanded Town Centre zonings as they offer opportunities to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres and where appropriate to consolidate urban areas.
  - All 'Enterprise and Employment' and 'Commercial' zoned lands contained within Tier 1 – Tier 3 of the County's settlement hierarchy.

These land use zonings are subject to the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 with respect to the Vacant Site Levy for 'regeneration' purposes. The application of the VSL needs to be coordinated with the strategic focus on compact growth in the development plan. Longford County Council have identified a number of Vacant Sites to date, which will also be designated as 'regeneration areas'.

<b>Active Land Management – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.46	Promote more active land management and co-ordinate provision of enabling infrastructure particularly on publicly owned lands.
CPO 6.47	Support the National Land Development Agency and other relevant agencies in co-ordinating and developing large, strategically located landbanks, particularly publicly owned lands, in town centres and other locations as deemed appropriate throughout the County.
CPO 6.48	Use, where appropriate, Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) and other incentives including development contributions in combination with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 in order to encourage urban regeneration of brownfield lands over the development of greenfield sites
CPO 6.49	Maintain and update a Vacant Sites Register in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015.
CPO 6.50	Facilitate the implementation of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, by utilising site activation measures, including the provision of the Vacant Site Levy, to assist in bringing vacant and underutilised zoned land into beneficial use.

### 6.5.2 Designation of 'Regeneration Areas'

This Plan sets a framework to identify and secure the redevelopment and regeneration of areas in need of renewal and supports the active land management of vacant sites to address incidents of urban decay and vacancy. The primary objective is to facilitate long-term economic development in the County and the delivery of sustainable housing and the generation of economic activity.

The designation of '*regeneration areas*' in the Development Plan is a requirement for the implementation of the Vacant Site Register under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015. All Vacant sites identified are subject to the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 with respect to the Vacant Site Levy and are

deemed in this Plan for ‘regeneration’ purposes. Further Regeneration areas are identified which correspond with those areas identified as Strategic Sites and having a site resolution objective in the *Longford Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2016-2022* (see Appendix 3).

These areas contain lands that detract from the overall area in which they are situated, either by way of heightened levels of vacancy (commercial, industrial, residential) or through poor maintenance and/or dereliction, or a mix of these attributes. These areas are prominently located and have a significant visual impact that affects the overall image and investment potential of the town and environs. Strategic Site no. 6 is substantially within the floodplain, and as such has to be very sensitively dealt with, and its use for flood attenuation and urban forestry may be more appropriate.

Additional areas such as the Ardnacassa area of Longford Town and the Lanesborough Power Plan site are other areas which are suffering from social and economic deprivation and will also be subject to designation as ‘regeneration areas’ (see Appendix 3).

It is anticipated that additional regeneration areas will be identified in Longford town, in other settlements throughout the County and in rural areas during the lifetime of the Development Plan, as the need arises.

<b>Regeneration Areas – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.51	Promote the appropriate development and regeneration of the designated ‘regeneration areas’ identified in this Plan and to include ‘vacant sites’.
CPO 6.52	Promote the development and regeneration of the strategic sites identified in the Longford Local Area Plan.
CPO 6.53	Identify additional ‘regeneration areas’ as required, to include areas suffering from social and economic deprivation, both within Longford town and throughout the County.
CPO 6.54	Promote innovative solutions to ensure social, economic and environmental gain for communities.

**6.5.3 Master Planning**

This consists of a holistic approach to development through social, economic and environmental initiatives. Masterplans can be used as useful tools to act as a driver for regeneration, in terms of providing a clear strategy for future development which also provides an opportunity to tap into various funding streams. Among the current Masterplans in County Longford are the following:

### 6.5.3.1 *Camlin Quarter Masterplan*

This plan deals with the Development of the Camlin Quarter including Connolly Barracks, Church St. Great Water Street, Little Water Street onto the Albert Reynolds Peace Park, enhancing the public realm, investigation of potential land uses, landbank assembly and connectivity improvements. This plan continues to form the basis of funding applications in support of identified actions, including large-scale development proposals under the URDF.

### 6.5.3.2 *Draft Ballyminion Regeneration Masterplan 2019*

This Draft Masterplan sets out to stimulate physical development that is underpinned by a commitment to community development and environmental sustainability. The Ballyminion area has been recognised as an area of strategic importance in the Longford Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2016-2022. It is believed the area could act as a potential catalyst for the further development of Longford Town. The region is home to a range of commercial, community, and residential activity including Pulse Logistics, the Primary Care Centre, and the Glenn Riada housing estate. However, the area has also been subject to considerable dereliction, flooding, anti-social behaviour and visual disamenity issues. However due to its proximity to the strategic road network and town centre, it is seen as an area of unmet potential (with the exception of some area's within or adjoining a floodplain). As such it offers a significant regeneration opportunity, in addition to flood attenuation and urban forestry reserves.

### 6.5.3.3 *Other Potential Masterplans*

Other areas in the County could also benefit from such Master planning i.e. the Ardnacassa area of Longford town. In this regard Longford County Council will continue to prepare masterplans for areas in need of regeneration throughout the county, as these provide a clear vision for the area in terms of rejuvenation and aid in securing much needed funding streams in order to carry out such projects.

It is anticipated that a masterplan will be prepared for each of the sites identified as Strategic Sites / having Specific Site Objectives as identified in the *Longford Local Area Plan* and as indicated in Figure 6.2 during the lifetime of this Development Plan. Additional areas such as the Ardnacassa area of Longford Town and other areas suffering from social and economic deprivation both within Longford town and throughout the County will also be prioritised.

<b>Master Plans – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.55	Masterplans shall be prepared in consultation with the community and also with relevant statutory bodies.
CPO 6.56	Carry out master planning to ensure that large areas of land are appropriately planned and developed in a sustainable manner, which include provision for phasing, infrastructure provision, community facilities, density, layout, open spaces, landscaping and development design briefs and statements.

CPO 6.57	Promote the development of the strategic sites identified in the Longford Local Area Plan on a masterplan basis.
CPO 6.58	Finalise and agree a masterplan for the appropriate regeneration and renaturing of the floodplain areas of the Ballyminion area of Longford Town.
CPO 6.59	Prepare masterplans for additional areas as required, such as the Ardnacassa area of Longford Town and other areas suffering from social and economic deprivation both within Longford town and throughout the County.
CPO 6.60	Encourage private development in accordance with a detailed and agreed masterplan that fully addresses the potential of the site in its wider context.
CPO 6.61	Seek funding from a variety of local, national and EU sources as part of the dedicated County regeneration initiative.

#### 6.5.4 Securing Funding Streams

In applying a tailored approach to the location of new housing and economic development, the importance of the role of regeneration in the delivery of *Project Ireland 2040* is acknowledged through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). Regeneration will pursue complementary funding streams that support broader aims to achieve these outcomes in the areas of tourism, economic, recreation, heritage, amenity, social inclusion and climate action.

##### 6.5.4.1 Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)

The URDF which was launched in 2018 and is a ten year national programme which sets out to support compact sustainable development, through the regeneration of Ireland's cities and large towns towards more compact and sustainable urban environments in line with national and regional policy. It aims to regenerate urban areas by facilitating the redevelopment of the existing built fabric of settlements in order to strengthen and support towns and cities as attractive and vibrant destinations where people choose to live and work, as well as to invest and visit. The URDF has an overall allocation of €2 billion to 2027.

Longford Town (which has a population over 10,000 persons; CSO, 2016) is the only town within the County of an appropriate population for this fund, which can be secured to regenerate the core area of town centres and bring back vitality and viability as a sustainable town, by accommodating identified social infrastructure and economic needs of the town.

The types of proposals eligible for funding include:

- Strategic development areas;
- Active land management;
- Measures to address building vacancy and refurbishment;
- Public realm improvements;

- Enabling infrastructure;
- Sustainable mobility;
- Transition to low carbon and climate resilience.

#### 6.5.4.2 Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) was established to support job creation in rural areas, address de-population of rural communities and support improvements in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. The Government have committed €1billion to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019 to 2027.

Apart from Longford Town (which has a population over 10,000 persons), other towns and villages within the County would be of an appropriate population for this fund. This fund provides an opportunity to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland, to make a significant and sustainable impact on rural communities, and to address depopulation in small rural towns, villages and rural areas. It will be a key instrument to support the objectives of the NPF, and in particular to achieve Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – one of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

Of the projects which have secured funding in County Longford to date, of particular note is the following: -

##### *The Historic Granard Motte Project*

Under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) approximately €2.9m has been allocated to the Historic Granard Motte Project, to develop a major tourism and amenity attraction at the site of Granard Motte, a national monument at Granard, Co. Longford. The project will develop a heritage park on 15 acres of land and will recreate a living Norman Village and children's amenities. It will complement previous successful funding applications on the site that saw the development of a 'Knights and Conquests' Heritage Centre and an onsite café as part of the REDZ scheme and Town and Village Renewal scheme. The Knights and Conquests Centre is an interpretative centre telling the story of the Norman Knights in Ireland, allowing visitors an opportunity to walk through time and learn about life in Norman Ireland.

The RRDF funds will be used to bring additionality to the overall project, allowing for a tourism product of national and international scale to be opened on the site. This will be a living history village, which will result in an immersive visitor experience on Norman life 800 years ago, where visitors will be transported back to Norman Ireland through a series of innovative living history displays and activities, supported by audio-visual presentations, augmented reality, virtual reality (VR) and print. It will link into the Granard Motte, bringing it back into playing a pivotal role in the development of the town.

This project is a collaboration between Longford County Council, the local community and Fáilte Ireland. The RRDF allowed this project to be significantly scaled up to that of a tourism product that would encourage people to visit, enhancing the visitor experience and therefore the long-term sustainability of the project. This means that this project will have a significant economic impact on the town of Granard and the wider region. It is anticipated that in excess of 40 jobs will be created as a result of this project and 15,000 visitors projected to visit the site yearly, once fully operational. This will benefit existing and new businesses in Granard.

#### **6.5.4.3 Town and Village Renewal Scheme**

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a key initiative under *the Action Plan for Rural Development* and is part of a range of measures to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland under the Government's *Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme*. Towns and villages are at the heart of our rural communities and can play an important role in revitalising rural Ireland. Its aim is to rejuvenate Ireland's rural towns and villages to make them more attractive places in which to live, work and visit. The Scheme will help build the resilience of rural communities in the face of Brexit and can help to contribute to the transition to a low-carbon economy.

#### **6.5.4.4 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)**

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Strategy plays an important part in strengthening rural economies and communities as part of one of the strategic objectives of the Government's *Project Ireland 2040* strategy for rural communities by providing funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for the necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas across Ireland. The scheme seeks to support those sporting and recreational pursuits based on use of the resources of the countryside that contribute to healthy active lifestyles and the economic and tourism potential of the area for both local communities and tourist visitors alike.

### **6.6 Longford Regeneration Opportunities**

Going forward over the life time of the Development Plan Longford County council will identify potential projects under the various funding sources. Among the potential projects for advancement are the following: -

#### **6.6.1 Longford Key Town**

In the RSES, Longford Town which is identified as a Gateway Region 'Key Town' is regarded as having a particularly high ratio of jobs to resident workers, with significant in-commuting and employment in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, agri-food and the pharma sectors. The planned development of a creative and innovation hub and co-working space on the Main Street are also regarded as providing a further

opportunity to drive enterprise development and entrepreneurship in the town. Potential exists to stimulate economic development through the provision of broadband and natural gas within the town.

It is recognised that Longford Town has a number of strategic areas that can act as regenerative catalysts increasing the residential, economic and leisure potential of the town centre, whilst also addressing flooding issues, vacancy, derelict buildings and enhancing the vibrancy of the town. Key areas include the Camlin Quarter and Ballyminion areas, with further strategic sites throughout, including possibilities within the southern quarter of the town. The Strategic sites identified in the Longford and Environs Local Area Plan 2016-2022, and the additional 'regeneration areas' identified in this Plan (including the Ardnacassa area) will be targeted for specific action. The Longford Flood Relief Scheme will address flood considerations and support appropriate use of riverside locations. There are opportunities for improved links between both ends of the town and enhanced rejuvenation of, and connections between, the Royal Canal Greenway, the former location of the canal harbour in the vicinity of the Market Square and the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall).

<b>Longford Town Regeneration Opportunities – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.62	Support and prioritise Longford Town regeneration opportunities and the associated co-ordination of relevant stakeholders in recognition of its 'Key Town' status within the County.
CPO 6.63	Support Longford Town as a strategic portal to the northwest.
CPO 6.64	Support Longford Town in its role as a support centre to the regional growth centre of Athlone.
CPO 6.65	Support Longford town in its role as a strategic employment centre.
CPO 6.66	Support the development of Longford Town as a tourism hub.
CPO 6.67	Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development.
CPO 6.68	Support the plan-led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in the town for residential, employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities.
CPO 6.69	Support the consolidation of the town centre and the enhancement and linking of brownfield and outlying sites to the town centre, with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites.
CPO 6.70	Enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within the town centre by improving links between the core and surrounding areas through the further integration of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.
CPO 6.71	Connect educational, recreational, employment, civic and town centre economic activity, and in particular improve the relationship between the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall) and the town core.
CPO 6.72	Build on tourism investment and the profile of the Camlin River in Longford Town through the strategic development of recreational trails and networks.

CPO 6.73	Create north-south linkages from the Canal to the Camlin River incorporating the Royal Canal Greenway and Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall), linking areas of tourism and amenity potential such as; Connolly Barracks, St. Mel's Cathedral, the Backstage Theatre in relation to the town core.
CPO 6.74	Promote the development of the Camlin Quarter area of Longford Town in accordance with the <i>Camlin Quarter Plan</i> , or other relevant subsequent plan / strategy.
CPO 6.75	Develop the Camlin Quarter (including Connolly Barracks, Church St. Great Water Street, Little Water Street onto the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall), by enhancing the public realm, investigation of potential land uses, landbank assembly and connectivity improvements.
CPO 6.76	Work with elected members and support community capacity building through Town Teams and the URBACT Local Group, in delivering improved regeneration.
CPO 6.77	Recognise the importance of universal accessibility and promote relevant Initiatives in conjunction with representative organisations which will include various interventions in the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall), the progress of the <i>Longford Connected Project</i> to address targeted areas, and the acquisition of ORIS investment or other relevant funding stream for works to the Camlin Bridge.
CPO 6.78	Support the development of projects identified in the <i>Military Assets as Public Spaces Integrated Action Plan</i> and any other relevant plan or strategy for Longford Town.
CPO 6.79	Promote the development of the Ballyminion Area of Longford Town in accordance with an adopted Masterplan for the area, or other relevant subsequent plan / strategy.
CPO 6.80	Address barriers to development in the Ballyminion area, consulting with the Enterprise, Infrastructure and Planning departments on potential land activation and flood control measures, and with other stakeholders in the public and private sector as appropriate

### 6.6.2 Other Locations

There are many other specific areas in need of regeneration outside of Longford Town, which are also addressed in terms of regeneration over the duration of the Plan.

<b>Regeneration Opportunities (Other Locations) – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 6.81	Promote the delivery of resource-based tourism initiatives at Granard, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Lanesborough (in conjunction with Roscommon County Council) and Drumlish and provide enhanced, sustainable links between these in conjunction with the community, Waterways Ireland and Bord na Mona.
CPO 6.82	Ensure a coordinated approach to development of rural and urban areas, Greenways, Blueways, and the development of Longford,

	Ballymahon and Lanesborough as destination towns which are part of wider national and regional networks.
CPO 6.83	Recognise the importance of universal accessibility and promote relevant Initiatives in conjunction with representative organisations, which will include provision of a walkway installation in Drumlish, and universal access to GAA facilities throughout the County.
CPO 6.84	Build on tourism investment in Center Parcs and enhance Longford County as a destination, by enhancing the Royal Canal, Dublin-Westport Greenway, and Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park through the strategic development of recreational trails and networks.
CPO 6.85	Promote the development of Lanesborough – Ballyleague in accordance with the adopted Economic and Enterprise Development Strategy for Lanesborough – Ballyleague, or other relevant subsequent plan / strategy.

### 6.6.3 Climate Change and ‘Just Transition’ Fund Opportunities

Climate Action is a significant theme in national policy. At a national level funding under the National Development Plan 2018-2027 is provided to support positive climate action through the Climate Action Fund, which aims to support climate action projects which will leverage investment by public and private bodies. The Fund will have an allocation of at least €500m over the period to 2027. The Climate Action Fund includes the objective of funding initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland’s climate and energy targets in a cost-effective manner. It also offers the potential for innovative interventions which, in the absence of support from the Fund, would not otherwise be developed.

In terms of the ‘Just Transition’ Fund, this also relates to the provision and encouragement of ecological, environmentally and climate friendly initiatives. As part of the scheme an EU Start Engagement Process, the Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT) is collating proposals for projects which can assist a positive transition from peat harvesting and power generation in affected communities and related groups in the wider Midland Region. In this regard an Engagement Document, ‘*Midlands Engagement Process*’ (May 2020), has been produced which provides guidance on which organisations can make proposals and gives ideas and insights on potential types of projects and activities which could help create a more positive future for communities affected by peat phase out. Registering projects through this Engagement Process, is the first stage in applying for funds from the ‘Just Transition’ Fund. Community based organisations, public, private and third sector organisations can make proposals on potential types of projects and activities which could help create a more positive future for communities affected by peat phase out.

#### Climate Action and ‘Just Transition’ Fund Opportunities – County Policy Objectives

It is the County Policy Objective to:

CPO 6.86	Support the development and delivery of projects in County Longford under the <i>Just Transition Fund</i> and as identified in any related Implementation Plans.
CPO 6.87	Investigate the use of State Agency Lands in County Longford for Green Energy Projects.
CPO 6.88	Examine the potential for using the existing infrastructure in the Lough Ree power plant in Lanesborough for the development of an energy/tourism hub in the midlands.
CPO 6.89	Further expand the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure nationally, including the enhancement of the charging network in County Longford.
CPO 6.90	Support the development of digital Hubs for Remote Working in County Longford.
CPO 6.91	Work with Gas Networks Ireland, Teagasc, Irish Water, Bord na Mona, Just Transition process, and the private sector to develop and deliver renewable energy solutions.
CPO 6.92	Prioritise regeneration proposals that focus heavily on sustainable responses to Climate Change mitigation and adaptation.
CPO 6.93	Seek to utilise the Council response to Climate Change as a catalyst for future regeneration within the county and ensure the alignment of all future proposals with its Climate Change Actions and relevant policy, and <i>Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024</i> .

## 6.7 Regeneration Climate Context and Associated Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan, the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a Climate Context and associated Actions.

Stopping CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fossil fuels today will not reverse the damage already been inflicted on the planet<sup>4</sup>. Climate change will continue to advance but at a slower rate if action is not implemented. Never has regeneration played such a pivotal role in its ability to deliver not just ‘carbon-neutral’, but ‘carbon negative’ development. This challenge is set against a world where more than one million people every week relocate from rural to urban environments, each with the expectation of better access to jobs, education, health care, housing and quality of life<sup>5</sup>.

Urban Regeneration has been defined as “a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area that has been subject to change”<sup>6</sup>. The sustainable delivery of this concept can be simply achieved by, putting brownfield and empty buildings first, applying

<sup>4</sup> Mauristen, T. & Pinus, P. (2017), ‘Committed warming inferred from observations’, *Nature Climate Change Journal*, 31 July 2017. <https://www.nature.com/articles/nclimate3357>

<sup>5</sup> International Organisation for Migration (2015), ‘*World Migration Report 2015, Overview – Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility*’. <https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/syria/IOM-World-Migration-Report-2015-Overview.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Roberts, P (2000), ‘*The Evolution, definition and Purpose of Urban Regeneration*’, *Urban Regeneration Handbook*, London, SAGE Publications, UK. [https://www.scirp.org/\(S\(czeh2tfqyw2orz553k1w0r45\)\)/reference/ReferencesPapers.aspx?ReferenceID=2167998](https://www.scirp.org/(S(czeh2tfqyw2orz553k1w0r45))/reference/ReferencesPapers.aspx?ReferenceID=2167998)

higher densities, engaging with existing communities, encouraging mixed use development, using sustainable energy and causing minimal environmental impact.

In order to make our towns and cities more sustainable, they must be made more compact, better connected and less damaging to the environment; as the less dense our cities, the further the sprawl, the worse the traffic problem. Encouraging and replicating mixed-use, closely knit neighbourhoods ordered around streets and open spaces through good design and planning, intensifying and maximising mixed-use development while protecting the character of existing communities remains constant.

Regeneration has the potential to extend its scope well beyond the traditional realms of urban design and immerse itself into agriculture, technology, waste, and even human behaviour or biophilic design to combat climate change. Biophilic design is based on using nature-based systems, engineering principles (low energy buildings) and design cues to ultimately improve our environment, health and efficiency.

Four funds are available under 'Project Ireland 2040' designed to stimulate renewal and investment in rural and urban and urban areas, the environment and innovation. These consist of the Climate Action Fund, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) and the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, all of which have the potential to play a leading role in addressing climate change.

### ***Regeneration Climate Actions***

Longford County Council shall:

- A6.1** Discourage single land use and typologies within large scale developments, as considered by the Planning Authority.
- A6.2** Require all large-scale developments (as determined by the Planning Authority) to submit supporting and professionally prepared carbon footprint calculations, and an outline of the proposed measure to be implemented to offset same;
- A6.3** Seek an annual flagship Regeneration application, to exclude those relating to trails, exclusively for the benefit of climate change.
- A6.4** Prepare a marketing leaflet for Longford Town and towns within the functional area to encourage development within the serviced settlements.

## Chapter 7: Placemaking

### 7.1 Introduction

Placemaking relates to the interrelationship and connection between people and the spaces they use. It includes how people move around places, the buildings and structures as well as the open space and landscape of an area and place. It therefore requires a people-centred approach to the planning, design and management of our settlements and the built environment. Placemaking is underpinned by good urban design, which seeks to create public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate social interaction and economic growth.

Placemaking is an essential link between spatial planning and improving people's quality of life through the creation of attractive places to live, work, visit and invest. The place or environment in which we live or work, including its physical nature and social environment or community has a profound impact on our physical and mental health well-being. The availability of, and access to, services is key to creating healthier places. This includes access to adequate housing and employment choice, supported by good healthcare and education, quality public realm and access to nature, the arts and cultural heritage.

There are significant national and regional policy requirements, along with section 28 guidelines which relate to Placemaking. In working towards establishing viable and sustainable communities, it is important to ensure that the Development Plan is underpinned by policies and proposals that are consistent with overarching national and regional guidance and policies in respect of social and community development. The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) place a new policy emphasis on renewing and developing existing urban settlements. The importance of healthy placemaking and the provision of adequate social infrastructure are central components of same.

The COVID-19 crisis and subsequent lockdowns have highlighted the need for good placemaking practice. Strong accessible connections to amenity areas and recreational facilities for residents of Longford town core in particular, were essential during this time and provide insight into the development requirements of future proposals to enhance liveability and the maintenance of local economies in the County over the plan period.

In terms of placemaking this overlaps with the concept of regeneration. A central objective of this Plan is to regenerate the County's towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint (see Chapter 4: Core, Settlement and Housing Strategies and Chapter 6 Regeneration for more detail).

### 7.2 Statutory Context

Section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out a list of mandatory objectives to be included in a Development Plan. A number of these objectives relate to social infrastructure, either directly or indirectly. The creation of

healthy, socially inclusive communities is a cross cutting theme of the Development Plan.

### 7.3 Policy Context

#### 7.3.1 National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018

The National Planning Framework (NPF) in Chapter 6 'People, Homes and Communities' outlines how location, place and accessibility influence the quality of life that people enjoy.

#### 7.3.2 Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES)

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) emphasises the concept of Placemaking as a tool to enable sustained economic growth and employment, including the integration of better urban design, public realm, amenities and heritage to create attractive and liveable places that support active lifestyles and human health. The RSES addresses a wide range of issues including education, health, sports and community facilities and attempts to address mis-alignment in the Region across a range of factors including school provision, facilities and child-friendly amenities.

The following Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSO) are of note: -

- *RSO 2:* Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region's citizens.
- *RSO 3:* Support sustainable rural development and strengthen rural networks, economies and communities. Manage urban generated growth in areas under strong urban influence and encourage sustainable growth in areas that have experienced decline or stagnation.
- *RSO 4:* Protect and enhance the quality of our built and natural environment to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling, ensure clean air and water for all and quality healthcare and services that support human health.
- *RSO 5:* Enhance, integrate and protect our arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration.

The County Development Plan has been aligned to the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) and associated relevant Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs).

#### 7.3.3 Framework for Town Centre Renewal, 2017

This sets out key characteristics of a successful town centre and includes an Action Plan for Town Centre Renewal. 'Key Attributes' for successful town centres are also listed which include the following Strategies:

- A Placemaking Strategy – to ensure that a town positions itself as an attractive location for investment, for talent and as a place to enjoy a good quality of life and the need for planning policy to place greater emphasis on placemaking for town centres at the key stages of development of Local Area Plans and Development Plans.

- A Visual Appearance Strategy – to ensure that town centres are attractive places to visit if they are to succeed and thrive and in particular the importance of revitalising existing spaces incrementally rather than depending on large-scale redevelopment.

Longford County Council is committed to ensuring a plan-led and delivery focused approach to securing compact sustainable growth centred on the principles of placemaking and the provision of social infrastructure in accordance with the National Planning Framework, the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the relevant guidance documents.

## **7.4 County Longford Placemaking Strategy**

### **7.4.1 Healthy Placemaking**

Healthy placemaking seeks to protect and enhance the unique identity and character of places and to facilitate improvements to human wellbeing and the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people and their environment. The creation of healthy and attractive places requires ongoing improvements to the physical and social infrastructure of urban centres. Placemaking is underpinned by good urban design, which seeks to create public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate social interaction.

Figure 7.1: Placemaking Strategy (EMRA RSES, p205).



It is recognised that good Placemaking is physical, social and environmental and as such incorporates both tangible and non-tangible elements (see Figure 7.1). It incorporates an appropriate recognition and placement of the role of the town centre, associated good town centre management, public realm works and the creation of creative spaces and the provision of adequate social infrastructure.

A key element of healthy placemaking is the need to ensure the provision of alternatives to the car in the design of streets and public spaces, and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking as active means of transport. The provision of high-quality public transport, greenways and cycleways can enhance areas, contributing to more attractive places and creating opportunities to be physically active, and reduce the negative consequences of car-based commuting.

The Eastern and Midland RSES identifies ‘Healthy Placemaking’ as one of the 3 no. key principles for growth, which aims ‘to promote people’s quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in’. In terms of regional guidance, the EMRA RSES contains a number of *Guiding Principles for Healthy Placemaking* which have been incorporated into the Development Plan.

*EMRA Guiding Principles for Healthy Placemaking*

- Good urban design principles are integrated into the layout and design of new development, as set out in Departmental Guidelines ‘*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*’ and the ‘*Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)*’
- Future development prioritises the need for people to be physically active in their daily lives and to promote walking and cycling in the design of streets and public spaces
- New schools and workplaces are linked to walking and cycling networks
- Exposure of children to the promotion of unhealthy foods is reduced such as the careful consideration of the location of fast food outlets in the vicinity of schools and parks
- Provision of open space should consider types of recreation and amenity uses required
- Public open spaces to have good connectivity and be accessible by safe, secure walking and cycling routes
- Open space to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, Green Infrastructure and key landscape features in their design.

In this regard the Development Plan sets out to protect and enhance the unique identity and character of Longford’s towns and villages and improve quality of life and well-being through the application of Healthy Placemaking, underpinned by good urban design, with the creation of attractive public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate positive social interaction.

It is also recognised that in accordance with Regional Policy Objective (RPO 9.10), there is a need to provide alternatives to the car, and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking in the design of streets and public spaces. Regard has been given to both the ‘*Guiding Principles for Healthy Placemaking*’ and ‘*Integration of Land Use and Transport*’ as set out in the RSES and to national policy as set out in ‘*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*’ and the ‘*Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)*’.

<b>Healthy Placemaking – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7. 1	Support new development which supports public health policy.
CPO 7.2	Promote the development of healthy and attractive places by ensuring exposure of children to the promotion of unhealthy foods is reduced such as through the careful consideration of the location of fast food outlets in the vicinity of schools and parks.

CPO 7.3	Provide alternatives to the car and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking in the design of streets and public spaces.
CPO 7.4	Promote and encourage connectivity improvements to promote sustainable travel in urban and rural areas in accordance with relevant funding initiatives.
CPO 7.5	Encourage sustainable and low carbon transport modes through the promotion of alternative modes of transport and 'walkable communities', whereby a range of facilities and services between residential and employment centres will be accessible within short walking or cycling distance.
CPO 7.6	Have regard to national policy as set out in 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)' and regional policy as set out in the Guiding Principles for 'Healthy Placemaking' and 'Integration of Land Use and Transport' in the EMRA RSES.
CPO 7.7	Cater for all levels of disability, through the appropriate mitigation of the built environment, and in particular for the needs of an ageing population.
CPO 7.8	Promote the development of healthy and attractive places by ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of open space should consider types of recreation and amenity uses required;</li> <li>• Public open spaces to have good connectivity and be accessible by safe, secure walking and cycling routes;</li> <li>• Open space to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, Green Infrastructure and key landscape features in their design.</li> </ul>

## 7.4.2 Elements of Placemaking

Placemaking includes many elements, the principal ones of which are addressed accordingly:

### 7.4.2.1 Public Realm Improvements

Public realm comprises of the public outdoor spaces accessible to everyone, from squares, parks and open spaces to the footpaths and the streets that link them. Effective public realm interventions can dramatically improve human wellbeing and the vitality and viability of town and villages centres by enhancing the attractiveness of places for business investment, as well as for residents, workers, visitors and shoppers. Public realm plays a vital role in presenting the identity, character, image and 'atmosphere' of our towns and villages. Social activity in the public realm is heavily dependent on the quality of the built environment

Poorly considered infrastructure such as overhead wiring, excessive or garish signage and advertising, and an array of street furniture styles can be detrimental to the visual amenity of public spaces. It is essential that a consistent approach is maintained in the selection of street furniture, materials and installations rather than an ad-hoc mix of styles. A simple, uncluttered and consistent design approach is considered as the key to success. For example, in historic quarters, traditional signage, lighting columns

and benches may be more appropriate, whereas a more contemporary modern approach would be suited for new innovative developments.

The concept of creative placemaking presents an opportunity to evolve our existing urban spaces to create attractive and memorable places that interweave and showcase Longford's arts, culture and heritage as part of the urban fabric. Development should contribute to the creation of a distinct sense of place and identity that not only facilitates, but encourages and creates opportunities for activity and interaction, from simple day to day activity to social, seasonal and planned events. It is important therefore that proposals for development show regard to existing features of interest and incorporate such features into design proposals. It is also recognised that the installation of Public Art can provide for interesting and creative focal points within our towns and villages.

<b>Public Realm Improvements – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.9	Prepare Design Guidelines to provide for improvements in the appearance of streetscapes and for revitalising spaces.
CPO 7.10	Promote the value of placemaking in town centres, by preparing a Placemaking Strategy for the towns of Longford, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Granard and Lanesborough, and any other urban areas as deemed appropriate.
CPO 7.11	Seek funding to support the preparation of site-specific Public Realm Strategies to enhance the unique characteristics and assets of Longford's towns and villages.
CPO 7.12	Ensure the best quality of design is achieved for all new commercial and residential development, which respects and enhances the specific characteristics of the different towns and villages in the County, by promoting quality urban design that accommodates creative patterns of use having regard to the physical, cultural, and social identities of individual settlements.
CPO 7.13	Provide for improvements to the appearance of streetscapes and revitalisation of public spaces for example with cost effective, temporary uses that build on the longer-term vision for space.
CPO 7.14	Apply the following key attributes when considering public realm and public space enhancements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible - connected and linked permeable spaces to ensure ease of movement;</li> <li>• Functional - safe, adaptable and social environments to attract and foster activity;</li> <li>• Attractive - visually pleasing spaces with high quality design, materials and installations (lighting, furniture and signage) based on a singular common design theme;</li> <li>• Distinctive - reference to local context and building on the character and identity of place.</li> </ul>

### 7.4.2.2 Universal Design

Universal Design refers to the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by everyone. Successful public spaces are multi-dimensional and appeal to people of all abilities, young and old, for a variety of reasons and purposes with a central focus on improving quality of life. In catering for various cohorts in terms of older persons and disabled persons, families etc., it is important to recognise that successful buildings, urban spaces and public realms should not only be attractive but should serve a functional purpose that is easily accessible to everyone, regardless of age or ability. It is therefore important in the creation of new or adapted built environments that an inclusive universal design approach is undertaken. Quality placemaking should integrate the principles of universal access in the design of buildings, housing, public realm, amenities and transport services to create places that are safe, easy to move around and accessible to all (National Disability Authority *'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach'*).

<b>Universal Design – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.15	Require proposals for public realm and built environment enhancements, include inclusive universal design principles.
CPO 7.16	Require that all new developments and social infrastructure provision, including public open spaces, are accessible and inclusive for a range of users and provide for an age friendly and disability friendly society by way of appropriate design of the built environment.
CPO 7.17	<p>Promote simple and considered design interventions in urban environments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of stepped features to facilitate wheelchair users and to assist people with prams, suitcases or shopping trolleys, those using walking or mobility aids and people with impaired vision;</li> <li>• Use of clear, well-placed signage and way-marking using recognised symbols or pictograms and visual supports to help the visually impaired and people with reading or cognitive difficulties and which can be understood by different language speakers;</li> <li>• Provision of sensory-friendly designs and layouts, with considered lighting and wayfinding installations together with sensory sensitive physical spaces to provide an inclusive and autism friendly environment;</li> <li>• Provision of designated parking spaces for older persons close to shopping centre entrances and any other such places as deemed appropriate;</li> <li>• Provision of outdoor retractable seating for older and infirmed persons;</li> <li>• Provision of seating areas for older persons and infirmed persons in commercial and retail premises.</li> </ul>

### 7.4.2.3 Town Centre Placemaking

Successful town centres are the chosen destinations that attract a variety of people offering retail, business, hospitality and a range of amenities and services, thus playing an important and influential role in supporting and promoting local economic growth. They are the destinations that represent the social and economic heartbeat of our towns with an active role in retaining the vibrancy and vitality of the urban fabric. Successful town centres are people-orientated places - they present attractive and welcoming destinations, where residents and visitors can enjoy a safe, pleasant and vibrant destination and where businesses can thrive, in turn adding value to the vitality and vibrancy. However town centres are facing challenges presented by the growth of online shopping. It is therefore essential that our town centres adapt and offer more than the traditional 'high street' retail offering. As such to maintain and create activity in town centres, ongoing physical and social infrastructure improvements are required. It is important to provide a competitive mix of compatible uses, including retail and non-retail/entertainment (café's, bars, restaurants) providing for a bustling vibrant atmosphere attracting people to work, live and recreate in the same area. This is dealt with in more detail in *Chapter 8: Economic Development*.

The *Town Centre Renewal Framework (2017)* outlines the key attributes of a successful town centre and identifies existing supports and best practice examples from around the country. The Framework includes an Action Plan for Town Centre Renewal which is intended to be a blueprint for towns and villages that also provides a structure for collaborative partnerships among stakeholders to achieve successful town centre renewal, whether a large town or small village.

<b>Town Centre Placemaking – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.18	Support investment in town and village centres so that they can become more sustainable places for communities to live, work and enjoy.
CPO 7.19	Promote a range of complimentary commercial activities in existing buildings previously in single commercial use.
CPO 7.20	Ensure that all town and village centre proposals positively enhance the public realm.
CPO 7.21	Support the key attributes and strategies of the <i>Framework for Town Centre Renewal 2017</i> .
CPO 7.22	Support the use of targeted financial incentives to strengthen the role of town and villages centres.

### 7.4.2.4 Regeneration

In terms of placemaking this overlaps with the concept of regeneration. A central objective of this Plan is to regenerate the County's towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint (see *Chapter 3: Core Strategy and Housing* and *Chapter 6 Regeneration* for more detail). Given the varied nature and attributes of the town and village centres in Longford, these chapters provide a framework to guide new development, regeneration and renewal of our towns and villages.

### 7.4.2.5 Industry and Enterprise Placemaking

While a range of factors is required to attract inward investments such as good access and location, success is hugely dependent on the quality and appropriateness of the facilities provided. In an increasingly competitive business market, investing in design and innovation can serve to assist Longford with a comparative advantage. In order to sustain a competitive business edge, it is important that applications for new business and enterprise sites are accompanied by a Design Statement, which supports the local topography of the area and is underpinned by sustainable and energy efficient development and transportation principles.

Also the Longford Economic Strategy as detailed in *Chapter 8: Economic Development* encompasses the creation of ‘live work’ communities by promoting economic development in tandem with an inclusive and diverse community structure. This will allow people not just to live in the County, but also to invest in, work in and learn in Longford.

<b>Industry and Enterprise Placemaking – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.23	Require all new enterprise / industry proposals to submit Design Statements which provide a positive visual presence underpinned by sustainable and energy efficient principles.
CPO 7.24	Ensure Greenfield Developments integrate with existing landscape features and incorporate natural features into the site layout.
CPO 7.25	Require industry / enterprise proposals to be accompanied with a Mobility Management Plan (in accordance with NRA and TII threshold requirements) to include a site-specific programme to facilitate and promote sustainable operational practices, including the use of public transport services, walking and cycling.

### 7.4.3 Social and Community Infrastructure

Part of placemaking is the provision of adequate social and community infrastructure. Successful places support a wide range of services and facilities that meet local and strategic needs and contribute towards a good quality of life. Such social infrastructure plays an important role in developing strong and inclusive communities and includes facilities in relation to health, education, libraries, childcare, recreation, cultural facilities, burial grounds and emergency facilities. Social infrastructure should be easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Shared use and co-location of facilities should be encouraged, in order to align service provision, use land more efficiently and facilitate opportunities for further inclusion and community participation.

Over the lifetime of the Development Plan population growth and changing demographics will require a policy response to ensure positive health outcomes for children, young people, older people, and families to support the population throughout life stage development. In catering for the provision of adequate social and community infrastructure, the County faces a number of challenges in terms of placemaking and its demographic components. Understanding the County’s demographic structure is central to preparing a strategy which will address future community needs. The CSO figures highlight demographic pressures that will likely remain a feature in the County.

### 7.4.3.1 Growing Population

County Longford has experienced significant population growth. In 2011 County Longford had a population of 39,000 persons, which grew by 4.8% (1,873 persons) to 40,873 persons by 2016. Taking account of the characteristics of the growth categories this has implications in terms of social infrastructure provision.

### 7.4.3.2 Growing Youth Cohort

According to Census 2016, the population aged 19 years and under in County Longford accounted for 12,111 persons, equating to 29.6 % of the to the total county population and an increase of 1.8 % (695 persons) since the 2011 Census. This generates requirements for provision of adequate childcare, educational facilities and other associated infrastructure provision.

### 7.4.3.3 Ageing Population

According to Census 2016, the population aged 65 years and over in County Longford accounted for 5,824 persons (14.3%) of the total population, equating to an increase of 19.3% since the 2011 Census. Nationally the demographic of Ireland's population is changing with an increasing ageing population. By 2026 there will be 1.15 million people in Ireland aged 60 or over, representing almost one out of every four people.

**Figure 7.2: Changing Demographic Profile – Age Structure 2016 to 2031**  
(Source: CSO)

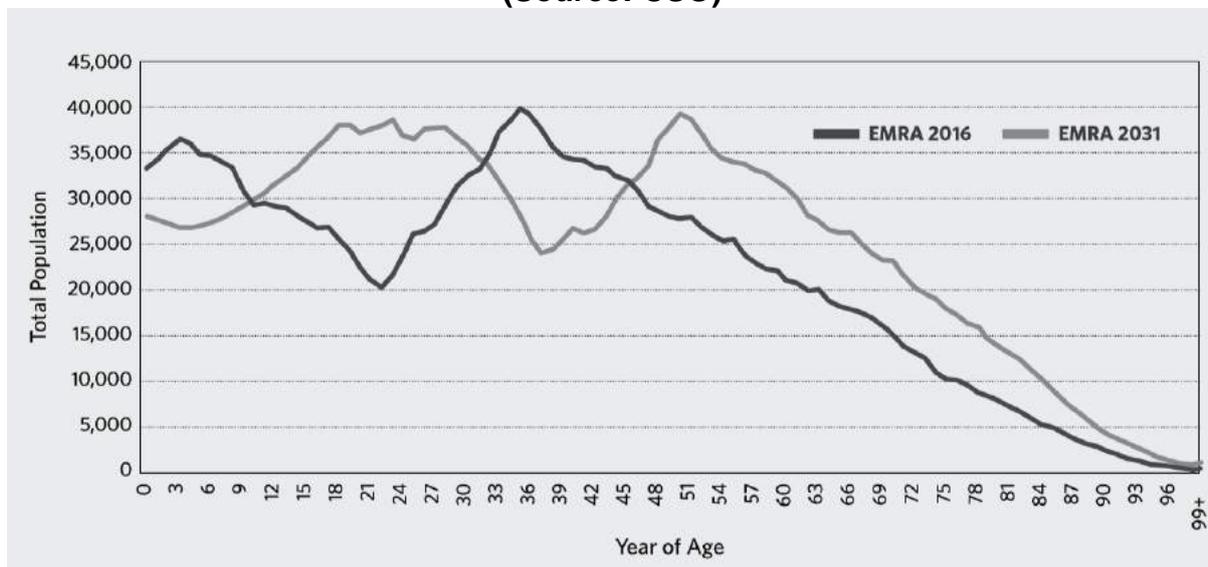


Figure 7.2 shows the largest increases in population are expected in the 50 to 55 age cohort to 2031. The persons aged over 65 is projected to increase significantly in the coming years, with the RSES projecting that growth rates of persons aged over 85's set to almost double. Likewise, the age profile of County Longford, over the coming years it is expected to follow a trend of an increasing ageing population.

#### 7.4.3.4 Disabled Population

There were 5,916 persons registered as living with a disability or chronic illness in Longford equating to 15% of the County's population and representing an increase of 9.5 % on previous 2011 census figures. The Longford figure is also higher than the national figure of 13.5%. This must be acknowledged in terms of the provision of healthy placemaking and adequate social infrastructure provision.

#### 7.4.3.5 Ethnic Groups

Migration is recognised as a key driver of future population growth over the lifetime of the EMRA RSES, with Longford specifically identified as demographically diverse within the State. In fact, Longford is identified as a settlement which has more than a quarter of its residents born outside the State. Between 2011 to 2016, nationally only eight counties recorded an increase in their non-Irish national population, with the County of Longford having the second largest increase where the non-Irish population increased by 502 persons (9.1 %).

Figure 7.3 shows the 10 towns where more than 26 per cent of the population were non-Irish. This shows that County Longford has 3 towns (Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Longford) among the top 10 towns identified nationally with the highest proportion of non-Irish nationals.

**Figure 7.3: Towns with the highest percentage of non-Irish nationals, 2016**

Town	County	Number of residents	% of Irish nationals	Number of non-Irish nationals	The largest non-Irish group (number)
Ballyhaunis	Mayo	2,383	39.5	941	Polish – 159
Edgeworthstown	Longford	2,062	32.3	667	Polish – 163
Ballymahon	Longford	1,866	32.1	599	Polish – 273
Ballyjamesduff	Cavan	2,689	30.2	812	Polish – 311
Monaghan	Monaghan	7,597	30.1	2,287	Lithuanian - 1,004
Saggart	Dublin	3,145	28.9	909	Polish – 326
Longford	Longford	10,011	27.4	2,740	Polish - 1,004
Cahir	Tipperary	3,590	27.3	979	Polish – 340
Gort	Galway	2,951	26.6	785	Brazilian – 397
Cavan	Cavan	10,656	26.2	2,790	Polish – 827

Edgeworthstown with 667 persons representing 32.2 per cent of the total population; Ballymahon with 599 persons representing 32.1 % of the population; and Longford town with 2,740 persons, representing 27.4% of the population. This compared with an average non-Irish population of 14.9 per cent for all towns over 1,500 in 2016.

#### 7.4.3.6 Traveller Community

Nationally the number of usual residents present in the State and enumerated as Irish Travellers in Census 2016 increased from 2011, by 5.1 per cent. Notably the biggest percentage increases were recorded in Longford where Traveller numbers rose by 40.8 %. Nationally Longford had the highest absolute increase in Traveller numbers of any county, and the highest number of Travellers per head of population, with 25.7 Travellers for every thousand people.

Also, the structure of the Irish Traveller population is very different to that of the general population, with a broad base at the younger ages and reducing sharply at higher ages. Nearly 58.1% Irish Travellers were under 25 years of age, compared to just over 33.4% in the general population. In terms of those aged 65; this is significantly lower than the general population.

#### 7.4.4 Social and Community Infrastructure Requirements

As a result of the particular population characteristics, there is therefore potential for mis-alignment in the county across a range of social and infrastructure services in the county, which the Development Plan aims to address. The Development Plan aims to consider demographic trends and patterns in terms of the provision of social infrastructure.

Longford County Council recognises that it is important to work collaboratively with service providers and stakeholders including the local community through LCDCs and the LECs to identify social infrastructure needs and set out an agreed programme of social infrastructure provision.

In terms of housing provision the changing demographic patterns envisaged will require a change in tenure typologies. Changing household formation trends require a range of housing typologies, including smaller units, shared living schemes and flexible designs that are adaptive for people's full life cycle to meet their housing needs today and into the future. The provision of affordable, appropriate, adaptable and quality accommodation is recognised as key to positive health outcomes.

Also in accordance with the RSES, the quality of services and amenities for a diverse and multi-cultural society will be a key determinant in how successful and attractive the County is and will require a planning response to support the integration of traveller and migrant communities, to ensure that diverse needs are met now and over the lifetime of the Strategy.

<b>Social and Community Infrastructure Provision – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.26	Work collaboratively with relevant service providers and stakeholders to facilitate the provision of community services and social infrastructure, where appropriate, in order to meet the needs of new and existing communities.
CPO 7.27	Support the relevant actions of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and the Longford Local Economic and Community

	Plan (LECP) to deliver social infrastructure needs and to reduce poverty and social exclusion.
CPO 7.28	Support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet their needs easily accessible by walking, cycling or public transport.
CPO 7.29	Encourage shared use and co-location of social and community facilities, in order to align service provision, use land more efficiently and facilitate opportunities for further inclusion and community participation.
CPO 7.30	Ensure crime prevention measures are incorporated into the design of community buildings and recreational areas.
CPO 7.31	Ensure the integration of age friendly and family friendly strategies in all design proposals and that provision is made for flexible housing typologies, and that buildings and public spaces are designed for all, including older people, disabled people and people with young children.
CPO 7.32	Support initiatives to increase social integration of minority groups, including non-Irish nationals and Travellers.
CPO 7.33	Secure the implementation of the Council's Traveler Accommodation Programme and to review this programme, if required and/or deemed to be necessary, during the Plan period.

#### 7.4.5 Healthcare and Care Facilities

The availability and access to health services is central to creating healthier places. In addressing lifestyle induced illness and an aging population, the provision of educative and primary health care can support lifestyle adjustments that help people avoid tertiary care, leading to a more effective and less burdened health-care system.

The Council recognises the need to ensure the provision of appropriate care facilities and accommodation for the elderly and other vulnerable people. In addition to universal design standards, the quality of such accommodation is dependent on its location in terms of safe and convenient access to services and amenities. As such, there is a presumption against the development of Residential Respite and Retirement Homes in the open countryside for reasons relating to sustainability, poor accessibility and lack of public transport, social exclusion, isolation and safety.

<b>Healthcare and Care Facilities – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.34	Facilitate the development of primary health care centres, hospitals, clinics, and facilities to cater for the specific needs of an ageing population in accordance with the settlement strategy and core strategy.
CPO 7.35	Support and encourage the development of sustainable retirement villages and sheltered housing for older persons in appropriate serviced town and village locations in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
CPO 7.36	Implement the following criteria when designing proposals for residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location/Placemaking - Locate new developments close (walking distance) to services and amenities;</li> <li>• Physical Considerations – Employment of Universal Design standards;</li> <li>• Technology - Integrate technology into developments, enhancing safety and security, health monitoring, comfort and social connectedness;</li> <li>• Social Supports - Integrate social supports into developments, access to information, find non-health service-based solutions;</li> <li>• Adequate provision of open space informed by the need to cater for all levels of disability and in particular the needs of an ageing population and mobility impaired users, in line with Ministerial and Departmental guidelines;</li> <li>• Apply standards outlined in the Housing Options for Our Ageing Population and the Housing Agency document <i>‘Thinking Ahead: Independent and Supported Housing Modes for an Ageing Population’</i>;</li> <li>• Provision of adequate parking facilities;</li> <li>• Innovative high-quality design and materials;</li> <li>• Potential impact on the residential amenities of adjoining properties.</li> </ul>
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#### 7.4.6 Education

School provision is a key part of social infrastructure to be provided in tandem with housing provision. The Development Plan seeks to prioritise the alignment of targeted and planned population and employment growth with educational investment, including the provision of new schools on well-located sites within or close to existing built-up areas that meet the diverse needs of local populations. It is expected that the number of children will continue to increase until the mid 2020’s and decline only slowly thereafter. This means that the continued provision and enhancement of facilities and amenities for children and young people, such as childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks and sportsgrounds, is a priority and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.

The Council will support the provision of high-quality education and training provision, including the allocation of sufficient sites and the development of childcare facilities, schools, and colleges in appropriate locations to cater for population growth targets, to provide for greater educational choice to facilitate improvement in skills, and to assist in tackling disadvantage.

Car dependency is a significant mode of school transport in the County. In addition to factoring sustainable access as a condition for new schools and educational infrastructure, a programme of settlement retrofit will be encouraged to facilitate safe walking, cycling or ease of access to public transport alternatives. Optimally, schools need to be located along sustainable transport corridors (i.e. walking, cycling, public transport). Co-ordinated decision making on school locations with the Department of Education and Skills will be carried out, with a planned approach to education provision to locate new school facilities within access to public transport and active travel modes.

<b>Education – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.37	Work collaboratively with the Department of Education and Skills and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to ensure a planned approach to education provision and to the location of school facilities within access to public transport and sustainable travel modes (i.e. walking, cycling).
CPO 7.38	Ensure in areas where significant new housing is proposed, an assessment of need regarding schools' provision is carried out in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.
CPO 7.39	Ensure Local Area Plans prepared over the lifetime of the Development Plan, designate new school sites at accessible, pedestrian, cycle and public transport friendly locations.
CPO 7.40	Develop a programme for existing schools to facilitate safe walking, cycling or ease of access to public transport alternatives.
CPO 7.41	To support the intensification of development (for educational purposes) on existing school sites.

#### 7.4.7 Recreation and Open Space Provision

In terms of placemaking, the focus on compact growth and increased densities in urban areas will require a greater alignment between the development of communities and the provision and planning of open space to provide for the recreational and amenity needs of communities. Recreation infrastructure and green spaces which are attractive, rich in biodiversity and well connected are shown to contribute to improved physical and mental health. It is important to consider green space within a holistic framework, as it can be enhanced through other means in the built environment, including the quality of the surrounding environment, density of residences, land-use mix, connectedness and walkability. Green spaces also reduce air pollution, mitigate floods, protect wildlife and improve building energy performance.

Accordingly, the preparation of open space and park strategies and the importance for enhanced cross boundary collaboration to provide for a hierarchy of open space provision, including regional scale open space and recreational facilities is recognised. Also, the importance of planning for recreation and open space in accordance with the *EMRA RSES Recreation and Open Space Guiding Principles*, and the relevant parts of the previously cited *Guiding Principles for Healthy Placemaking* are recognised in the County Policy Objectives contained in this Development Plan.

<b>Recreation and Open Space Provision – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.42	Support the development of recreation and open space in accordance with the <i>EMRA RSES Recreation and Open Space Guiding Principles</i> and <i>Guiding Principles for Healthy Placemaking</i> .
CPO 7.43	Promote the development of a wide variety of high quality accessible open space areas, for both active and passive use, and formal and

	informal activities in accordance with the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy.
CPO 7.44	Provide multifunctional open spaces at locations deemed appropriate providing for both passive and active uses.
CPO 7.45	Assess the existing parks and open space assets in the County over the life of the Development Plan to identify opportunities for improvements where necessary to increase their usefulness as recreational spaces.
CPO 7.46	Resist the loss of existing public open space, unless alternative recreational facilities are provided in a suitable location.
CPO 7.47	Ensure public open space is accessible and designed so that passive surveillance is provided.

#### 7.4.8 Sports Facilities:

Sporting, leisure and recreational facilities are essential to promoting good health, social cohesion, a sense of community and enhancing quality of life and well-being. The provision of facilities for sports and recreation to serve our growing communities is key in supporting healthy and sustainable communities. The County is well served by traditional facilities including sports clubs and leisure centres and the County is developing additional facilities such as greenways, blueways, peatways, cycle routes and walking trails.

<b>Sports Facilities – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.48	Support the provision of multi-purpose sports halls, all-weather playing pitches and associated facilities in appropriate locations and promote the provision, improvement and expansion of sports facilities within the County subject to normal planning criteria and the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.
CPO 7.49	Support local sports groups, community groups and other groups in the development of facilities through the reservation of suitable land, the provision and development of outdoor and indoor sporting and community facilities, and the provision of funding where available and appropriate.
CPO 7.50	Ensure that new leisure facilities, where possible, are located in proximity to public transportation routes and where they can best meet the needs of the community that the facilities are intended to serve.
CPO 7.51	Facilitate the development of children’s play areas and playgrounds in proximity to existing and proposed neighborhoods, where feasible.
CPO 7.52	Support the development of sport and recreational facilities and community-related projects through the Council’s Capital Programme.

#### 7.4.9 Libraries

The library service plays a very important community, information, cultural and outreach facility role within the County. The public library service provides an important means of access to information and to leisure reading facilities, while playing a major role in the advancement of the arts, education and local history throughout the County. Libraries have also become an important venue for cultural activities. The Council

manages and operates the County's public library service from its headquarters in Longford, with 6 no. additional libraries in main settlements in the County. The most recent of these is Edgeworthstown where a new build facility is under construction.

<b>Libraries – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.53	Continue to expand and improve the library service to meet the needs of the community, subject to finance and in line with the objectives and priorities of <i>Our Public Libraries 2022: Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities</i> .
CPO 7.54	Enhance and improve library facilities in County Longford, and to retain and develop the library headquarters for the County.

#### **7.4.10 Fire Services**

The Council is responsible for the provision of the Fire Service in the County, which includes for the provision and maintenance of the network of 5 no. fire stations; Longford Town, Granard, Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough. 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. In Ballymahon the current facility is not considered fit for purpose, and a submission has been made seeking departmental approval to construct a new Fire Station. The remaining network of fire stations are 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 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.

<b>Fire Services – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.55	Acquire and provide an appropriate site for a new fire station in Ballymahon Town.
CPO 7.56	Support the upgrade and extension of fire stations as appropriate to cater for the needs of the County.
CPO 7.57	Ensure communities are adequately serviced by a modern and effective Fire Service and to facilitate the accommodation of fire service facilities in locations that allow ease of access and safe functioning with respect to the road network.
CPO 7.58	Continue to assess and evaluate applications for fire safety certificates through the Chief Fire Officer and pursue its fire prevention programme.
CPO 7.59	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.
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#### 7.4.11 Places of Worship

As the population of the County becomes more diverse there has been an increase in the number of faith communities in the County. This has given rise to demand for worship spaces. Community centres may provide temporary solutions, as communities become more established and/or numbers increase, a dedicated place of worship may be required. The Council will encourage appropriate, easily accessible locations which comply with the Council's standards with regard to design, vehicular movement/parking and landscaping etc.

<b>Places of Worship – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.60	Encourage and facilitate the development of places of worship in appropriate locations in urban centres and proximate to residential communities.

#### 7.4.12 Burial Grounds

Local Authorities are responsible for ensuring that there are adequate burial facilities, including the reservation and acquisition of lands for such facilities, where necessary. The Council 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.

<b>Burial Grounds – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 7.61	Facilitate the provision of traditional burial grounds, eco-friendly burial grounds, crematoria, and the extension of existing cemeteries and associated facilities, as appropriate, to cater for the needs of the County, subject to appropriate planning considerations, including ground and surface water, environmental, noise and traffic impacts.
CPO 7.62	Facilitate and support the development of multi-denominational burial grounds, having an awareness of the needs of multi-faith and non-religious communities.
CPO 7.63	Ensure that the cemeteries and associated facilities for which the Council is responsible are accessible and appropriately maintained.
CPO 7.64	Encourage local community groups to develop, manage and maintain burial facilities.
CPO 7.65	Protect the cultural heritage of historical burial grounds within the County and encourage their management and maintenance in accordance with best conservation practice.

### 7.5 Placemaking Climate Context and Associated Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a Climate Context and associated Actions.

Placemaking is an overarching idea, as well as a hands-on tool for improving spaces. Irrespective of scale, it can refer to a site, a street, a community, a village, a town, or even a county or region. Traditionally the placemaking process has associated itself with the physical, social, ecological, cultural and 'spiritual' qualities of the urban realm. However, in an era of ever-increasing and more severe heat waves, precipitation, droughts, and floods, responding to the impacts of climate change has now firmly positioned itself alongside these considerations.

Public spaces are where physical and social resilience meet and can now be considered a crucial tool in our arsenal to mitigate and adapt to rising temperatures and extreme weather conditions. Local Authorities are increasingly exploring the capacity of 'Greenery and Amenities' to improve our thermal comfort, regulating air temperature, radiation, humidity and wind pattern, and subsequent use and amenity. Public spaces should connect with nature and on a more practical level, encourage us to walk and cycle, while moving away from auto-centric design to place-led development. Mass transit and walkable, bike-friendly cities are among the best to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Our streets must be considered more as spaces and understood as a crucial tool towards improving our sustainable habits and supporting communities.

Communities that are structurally sound, but also socially empowered and connected are more resilient to disaster. Climate Change will put increased pressure on economically constrained communities, many of which have limited resources to respond to the changing conditions. The most successful placemaking initiatives have strong community-based participation at its centre, prioritising the assess of local community and their potential to create quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well-being.

#### **Placemaking Actions**

Longford County Council shall:

- A7.1** Prepare an overarching landscaping plan for the towns of Longford, Ballymahon, Granard, Lanesborough and Edgeworthstown to identify pocket parks, vertical landscaping, and green roof opportunities, and micro-spaces in Council public ownership to be immediately exploited, alongside an ambition to improve connectivity between green spaces, and the implement of same with stakeholder approval;
- A7.2** Prioritise the installation of soft-scaping over hardscaping within our towns and villages wherever possible, and ensure adequate understanding, adherence and address of the maintenance requirements of all existing and proposed surface treatments;
- A7.3** Encourage all large-scale development proposals to actively assess and demonstrate, increased and/or improved quality social spaces, both externally and internally;

- A7.4** The design of all open spaces to be professionally and adequately designed and orientated at its most preferred location within a scheme, and accompanied by a finishes schedule of highest quality and of sustainable materials;
- A7.5** Encourage the installation of awnings and retention of tree canopy cover where practicable, within the commercial areas of the county towns and villages;
- A7.6** Require all future residential developments over 10 no. or more units, to submit a Social and Community Statement, setting out the measures to be implemented that will bring about improved social benefit and amenity to the area (e.g. multiple house typologies, accessible housing, social services community housing, creche, etc).

## Chapter 8: Economic Development

### 8.1 Introduction

Longford is home to a broad economic and employment base ranging from micro-enterprises to large-scale multinational companies. This chapter sets out the economic strategy for County Longford, which aims to encourage employment growth and economic activity, and promote Longford as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism. In developing this economic strategy, cognisance has been taken of the diverse economic and industrial base within the County, as well as the urban and rural contexts that characterise the economic communities of County Longford.

The County Development Plan is therefore a key strategic platform which sets out the economic vision for the County, guided by a range of policy objectives which have been framed in the context of the economic challenges that is envisaged will face County Longford over the plan period. This Plan contains an Economic Strategy which recognises the need to foster and facilitate a resilient and sustainable economy for the County, in a challenging economic climate as a result of Brexit, the re-orientation of traditional industry practices as we transition towards a low carbon society and the COVID-19 pandemic. Such challenges have very real impacts for the Longford economy, particularly given its strong agricultural sector and the longstanding direct and indirect economic benefits associated with Bord na Móna and the peat industry in the County.

This Economic Strategy is supported by a number of key national and regional strategic policy contexts, most notably through the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Eastern and Midland Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy, in addition to other sectoral plans and strategies which are outlined accordingly.

### 8.2 Policy Context

#### 8.2.1 *Project Ireland 2040*

Project Ireland 2040 encompasses two strands: a high-level national spatial plan to 2040 in the form of the National Planning Framework (NPF); and a detailed capital investment plan in the form of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027, which sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the successful implementation of the NPF. Key economic features of *Project Ireland 2040* are addressed under the following National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's):

- NSO 3: This recognises the key role rural economies and communities play in defining our identity and our high-quality environment as well as driving our

economy. It identifies traditional pillars of the rural economy, such as the natural resource and the food sector, as being key to future economic development as well as those emerging from improved connectivity and broadband access which has the potential to yield further rural economic development opportunities.

- *NSO 5*: This advocates investment in world class infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness, enterprise growth and to help develop deeply rooted sectoral clustering driven by effective collaborations built around investments in Higher Education and Further Education and Training (FET).

Given the emphasis placed on building and enhancing Regional Growth Centres such as Athlone and Sligo as regional economic drivers, Longford is well positioned in terms of its geographic location and connectivity with these centres.

### 8.2.2 Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 - 2031

The RSES's economic vision is to facilitate sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient growth. The RSES Economic Strategy focuses on the following key objectives:

- *Smart Specialisation* - Entrepreneurial discovery process for industry, enterprise agencies, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), communities and stakeholders;
- *Clustering* – create, maintain or upgrade economic strongholds in a favourable business ecosystem;
- *Orderly Growth* – strategic employment locations aligned with Growth Strategy.
- *Placemaking* – creation of place for human capital with innovation, infrastructure and access to trade;
- *Future Proofing and Risk Management* - identify and plan for emerging and unforeseen global and domestic challenges.

The RSES also sets out a number of guiding principles for the identification of locations for strategic employment growth which have been considered in the County Longford Economic Strategy presented in this plan.

### 8.2.3 Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government

This seeks to provide local authorities with more autonomy in the support of enterprise and the promotion of wider economic development, thereby creating and sustaining jobs. It contains 4 no. key objectives as follows:

- Doing more for the economy, enterprise and the local economy;
- Building a local government system for the 21st century;
- Local Government that is soundly funded, working better and serving the community;

- Good governance, strong leadership and democratic accountability.

#### 8.2.4 Enterprise 2025 Renewed

This sets out Ireland's national enterprise strategy with a focus on export-led growth, underpinned by innovation and talent to drive economic growth and deliver quality jobs.

Priorities include:

- Developing Irish-owned enterprises and embedding resilience in the enterprise base, enhancing productivity and delivering quality jobs, including supporting companies to navigate Brexit;
- Harnessing the distinctive characteristics of foreign and Irish owned enterprise mix through collaboration and clustering;
- Emphasis on innovation, talent and leveraging strengths in disruptive technologies with more enterprises developing new products, services and solutions;
- Investments in place-making and developing places that are attractive for business investment and people to live and work;
- Provide opportunities for our enterprises supported by the *Global Footprint 2025 Initiative*<sup>1</sup>.

#### 8.2.5 Future Jobs Ireland 2019

Future Jobs Ireland 2019 is part of a multi-annual framework which gives effect to national enterprise policy objectives and leverages all policy areas which relate to job creation and labour force participation, talent development, enterprise growth, innovation and competitiveness and transition to a low-carbon economy.

#### 8.2.6 Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019

This IDA strategy aims to increase foreign direct investment at a regional level, more evenly throughout the Irish economy which positively impacts indigenous business and regional locations. Targets include; 80,000 new jobs; 900 investments; €3bn Research and Development (R&D) investments and balanced regional growth.

#### 8.2.7 Food Wise 2015-2025

The national strategy for the development of the Agri-Food Sector outlines the key actions required to ensure it maximises its contribution to economic growth and exports in an environmentally sustainable manner over the coming decade. It identifies 4 no. elements to deliver growth:

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<sup>1</sup> *Global Ireland – Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025* (2018), Government of Ireland. Available at: <https://www.ireland.ie/media/ireland/stories/globaldiaspora/Global-Ireland-in-English.pdf>

- Human Capital
- Competitiveness
- Market Development
- Innovation

### 8.2.8 Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 (DBEI)

The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan (MREP) presents the following Strategic Objectives of relevance to the economic development of Longford:

- *Strategic Objective 1: Ensuring that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy.*
- *Strategic Objective 3: Position and support the Midlands as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence.*
- *Strategic Objective 4: Enhance the collective offering of the Midlands as a place to live, work, and invest in.*
- *Strategic Objective 5: Strengthen the attractiveness of the Midlands as a destination to visit.*
- *Strategic Objective 6: Harness the potential of the food and beverage industry in the Midlands.*
- *Strategic Objective 7: Ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the region's economic potential and address upskilling requirements.*

### 8.2.9 Just Transition

Under the terms of the 2015 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Paris Agreement, Ireland is required to ensure that policy response to climate change is governed by the principles of a Just Transition to a low carbon economy. 'Just Transition' is an economy-wide process that produces plans, policies and investments that lead to environmentally and socially sustainable jobs, sectors and economies. This transition is underpinned by efforts to create fair and high value work, in a way that does not negatively affect the current workforce and overall economy.

Just Transition has significant implications for County Longford, given the closure of the ESB power station in Lanesborough at the end of 2020. The indirect effect of this has been the cessation of industrial peat harvesting by Bord na Móna in the region which will have a significant economic impact. As a result, the Government has committed to overseeing the implementation of Just Transition for the region with the appointment of a Just Transition Commissioner and a midlands targeted Just Transition Fund (JTF) of €11 million, with the aim of supporting the retraining and reskilling of workers and to assist local communities and businesses in the midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition.

### 8.2.10 Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 & Longford Local Development Strategy

This has goals to encourage diversification of the rural economy. The Local Development Strategy encompasses actions in relation to energy and environmental measures, youth development work, employment generation, social enterprise, transport, town development, tourism generation and broadband provision.

### 8.2.11 Longford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2022

The LECP supports the economic development of the County. Tourism, agri-food, ICT, engineering, biopharma and green enterprise are noted as key sectors in the economic development of the County, providing opportunities for employment and wealth generation, and facilities and infrastructure that enhance the quality of life for residents.

## **8.3 County Longford Economic Context**

### **8.3.1 Strategic Location**

Given its midlands location, Longford is strategically positioned as a portal to the Northern and Western Region, with the county well served by transport links in the form of the Sligo-Dublin railway line, and several strategic national primary and secondary routes traverse the County from east to west and north to south. These include the N4 and N5, both of which are components of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) Comprehensive Network. This high degree of accessibility has helped retain and enhance a range of enterprises within the County, as well as attract new businesses and industries to the locality.

### **8.3.2 Economic Profile**

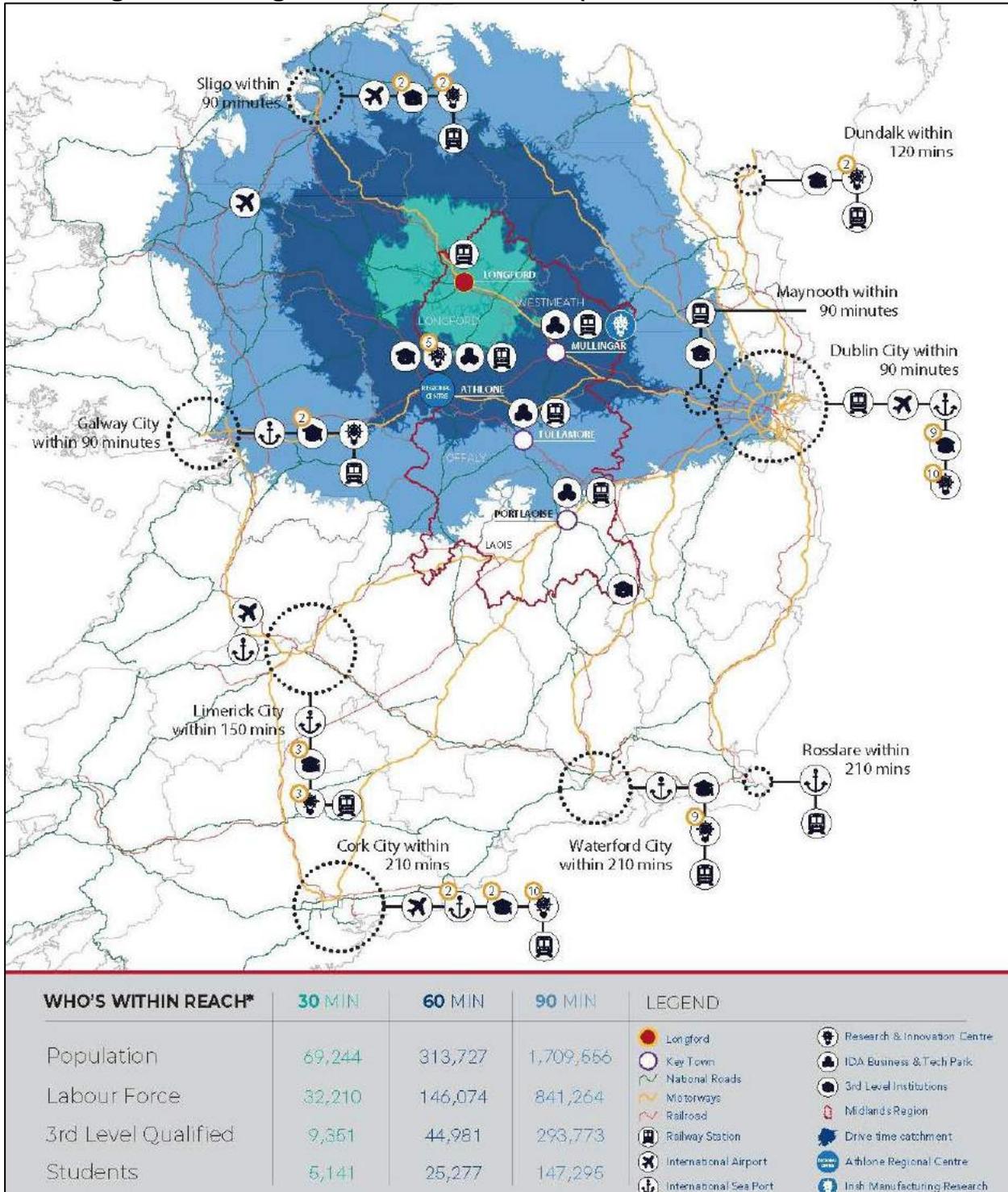
The strategic location of the county has cultivated a sustainable economic environment. Longford boasts a wide and varied economic base which incorporates employment across a range of industries which cater for local, national and international markets. This environment has cultivated strong synergy effects, with a number of local enterprises directly supplying larger multi-national companies in the locality, which has seen significant clustering effects particularly in the biomedical, pharmaceutical and agri-food sectors.

Longford has also seen a significant upscaling of its tourism sector in recent years, most notably through the development of Longford Forest Center Parcs which opened in July 2019, and which is a significant employer with approximately 1,000 employees. Significant expansion of tourism infrastructure throughout the county has also taken place,

spearheaded by a number of regeneration projects undertaken by Longford County Council, in the form of an enhanced network of leisure trails and cycleways. This activity has coincided with the *'Hidden Heartlands'* tourism marketing campaign undertaken by Fáilte Ireland. As a result, the tourism sector in County Longford is now a significant employment source.

Longford Town remains the key economic driver for the county, as reflected in its designation as a 'Key Town' within the Eastern and Midland RSES, which characterises such settlements as *'economically active towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas...and the capacity to act as regional drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres'*. In this regard, Longford Town already boasts a high job to resident workers ratio (1.596 as per 2016 Census), with significant in-commuting and employment in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, pharma and agri-food. Given its strong employment base, its critical mass and its designation within the region under the RSES, Longford Town will be the focus for much of the economic development and projected population growth for the County for the period of this plan.

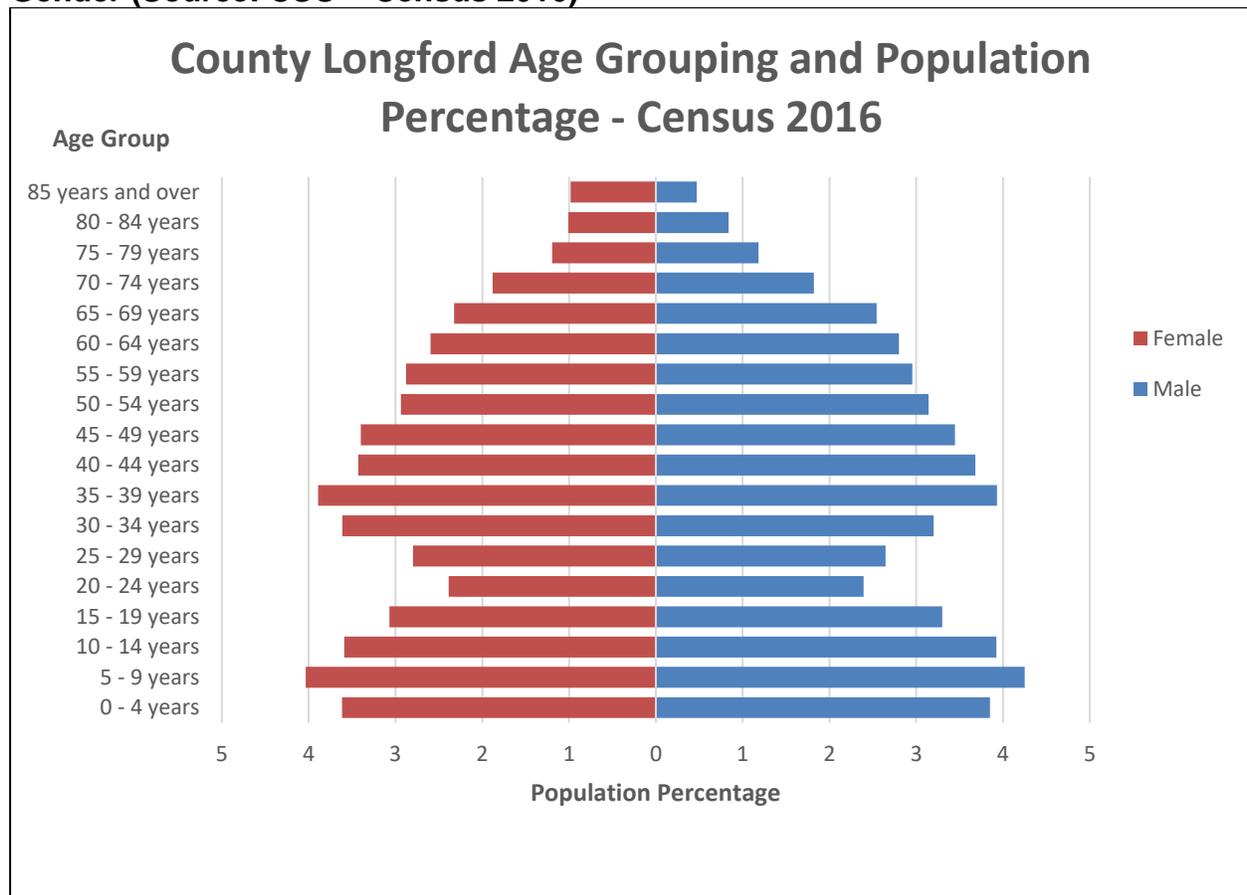
Figure 8.1: Longford Economic Context (Source: midlandsireland.ie)



### 8.3.3 Demographic Context

The 2016 Census recorded a population of 40,873 persons in County Longford and marked a continuation of sustained population growth in the county over the preceding 20-year period to 1996, where the population of the county grew by approximately 35.5%. Moreover, whilst the inter-censal period of 2011-2016 was characterised by significant economic recession across the country, the population in County Longford still maintained a steady population increase (+4.8%), which was also above the State population increase over the same period (3.8%).

**Figure 8.2: Population Pyramid of County Longford According to Age Group and Gender (Source: CSO – Census 2016)**



The County has an average age of 37.4 years, with a substantial proportion of its population, approximately 62.5%, within the working age cohort (persons aged 15-64). Similarly, there is a large family formation age cohort, with approximately 25% of the County population recorded at the 2016 Census within the age grouping of 20-39 years. Moreover, the County has a large youth demographic, with approximately 25% of the population of the County within the 0-19 years age group based on the 2016 Census, with the largest age group in the County comprising of the 5-9 years cohort. Notably, the

second largest age cohort comprises of those within the 35-39 years age group. In terms of more qualitative characteristics, the 2016 Census also captured that 85.3% of the County's population considered themselves to have "Good" or "Very Good" general health.

These statistics indicate a strong current working age population within the County, with a substantial youth population, and a healthy population significant for sustaining future economic activity in the County.

### **8.3.4 Economic Activity in County Longford**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn, the economic landscape in Longford had recovered significantly following the national economic recession and stagnation experienced between 2007 to 2014, albeit not to the same economic or labour market activity evidenced in the Celtic Tiger economic era. National employment before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was at its highest ever level, with 2.3 million people at work and the lowest unemployment rate in 14 years, in spite of the uncertainties surrounding Brexit.

In Longford, the CSO recorded that since 2011, the total number of 'active enterprises' increased from 1,862 in 2011 to 2,022 in 2017. These figures indicate an improvement in enterprise formation levels from that experienced in 2008, prior to the full effects of the economic downturn, when 1,944 active enterprises were recorded in Longford were recorded in that year. It is also notable that the number of employees corresponding to the amount of active business was higher in 2008 (6,820), compared to the number of employees recorded in 2017 (6,341). Figures for 2017 suggest that companies operating in the 'business economy' are the major employers, (6,341 employees). Manufacturing also plays a significant role, with its employee total reaching 1,621, making it the next largest.

## **8.4 Employment**

For the Midlands region, there has been a consistent drop in the numbers of persons on the live register since before 2016. In January 2016 the total for the Midlands was 26,320 persons. By January 2017 this reduced to 22,642 persons, falling further to 18,798 persons in January 2018. Figures for the Midland's live register in February of 2020 recorded a total of 14,167 persons, however, the potential economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were beginning to become apparent following this, with an increase in Live Register figures for each subsequent month up to May 2020 with 15,183 persons recorded on the Live Register for the Midlands sub region.

A similar, albeit less pronounced trend is also occurring in Longford, with Longford Town, which recorded 2,344 persons in February 2020, increasing to 2,529 in May 2020. In terms of unemployment rate, County Longford had the highest recorded in the 2016 Census for the State with 19.6%.

#### 8.4.1 Labour Force Participation Rates and Principal Economic Status

The labour force participation rate, as defined by the CSO, expresses the labour force as a percentage of the total population aged 15 years and over. It is another indicator of unemployment levels, with the State recording a rate of 61.4% in 2016, lowering from 61.9% in 2011, a decline of 0.5%. County Longford's labour force participation rate has seen a decline of 1.3% from 2011 to 2016. The labour force for County Longford in 2016 comprised 18,873 persons, an increase of 440 persons from that recorded in 2011, and a participation rate of 60.2%.

Table 8.1 provides details on the principal economic status of persons over the age of 15 years, which accounts for retirees as well as potential labour force participants.

**Table 8.1: Principal Economic Status of Persons Aged 15 and Over in County Longford (Source: CSO, Census 2016)**

Principal Economic Status	Persons Aged 15 and Over	%
At work	15,172	48.4%
Looking for first regular job	374	1.2%
Unemployed having lost or given up previous job	3,327	10.6%
Student	3,062	9.8%
Looking after home/family	2,873	9.2%
Retired	4,782	15.2%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	1,657	5.3%
Other	118	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,365</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 8.4.2 Disposable Income

Disposable income is also a useful barometer of how well the economy is performing in a particular region. CSO estimates of disposable income in 2017 show that Longford has an average of €18,721 per person. This estimate is lower than the average for each of the other Midlands region of Laois, Offaly and Westmeath, where disposable income is €19,030 per person. However, Longford still has a higher average disposable income per

person than the averaged values for the Border (€17,051 per person) and West (€18,306 per person) regions.

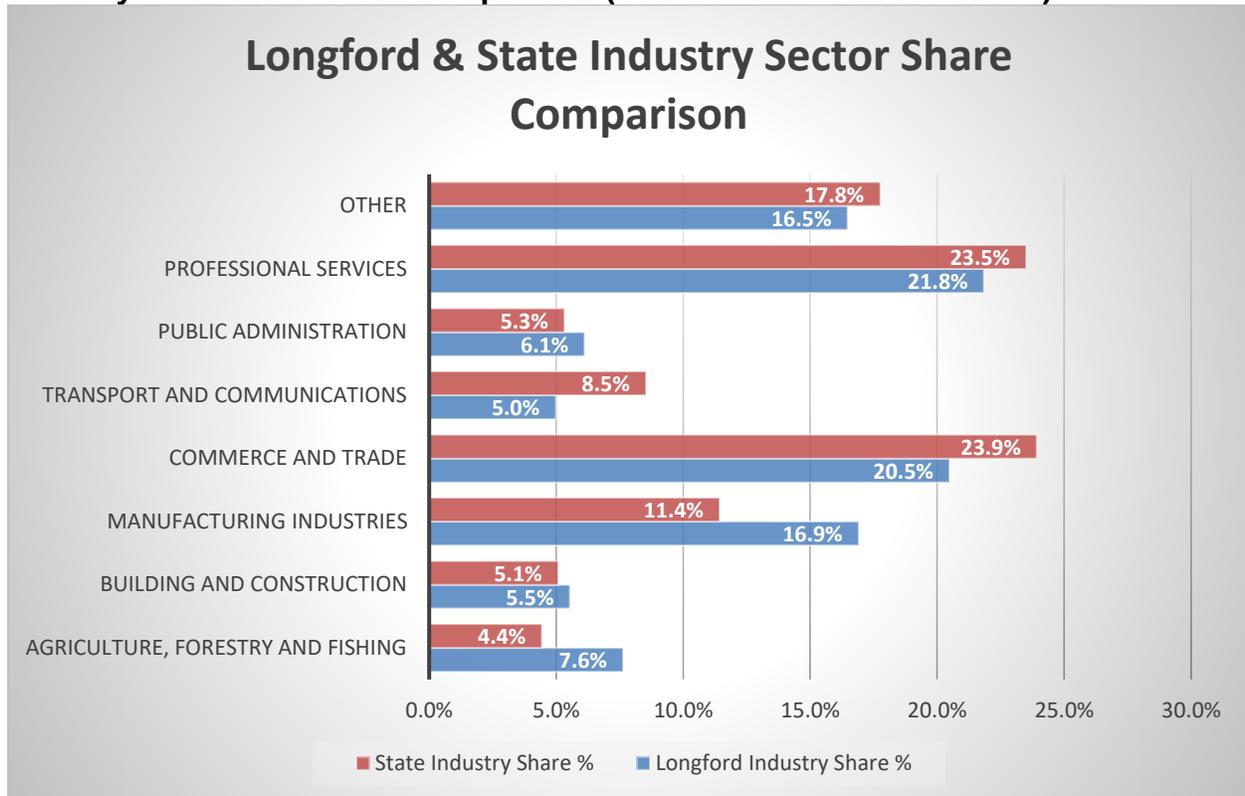
### 8.4.3 Employment Sectors

From analysis of the 2016 Census, the prominent employment sectors in County Longford are professional services (21.8%), commerce and trade (20.5%) and manufacturing industries (16.9%). Table 8.2 and Figure 8.3 illustrate jobs by industry sector share in County Longford with the State comparison.

**Table 8.2: Employment Numbers in County Longford by Industry Sector with State Comparison (Source: CSO, Census 2016)**

Industry	Longford Total	State Total	Longford Industry Share %	State Industry Share %
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1,159	89,116	7.6%	4.4%
Building and construction	841	101,849	5.5%	5.1%
Manufacturing industries	2,566	229,548	16.9%	11.4%
Commerce and trade	3,108	480,117	20.5%	23.9%
Transport and communications	756	171,194	5.0%	8.5%
Public administration	929	106,797	6.1%	5.3%
Professional services	3,314	471,656	21.8%	23.5%
Other	2,499	356,364	16.5%	17.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,172</b>	<b>2,006,641</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Figure 8.3: Bar Chart Illustrating Employment Numbers in County Longford by Industry Sector with State Comparison (Source: CSO – Census 2016)**



#### 8.4.4 Socio-Economic Profile of Persons at Work in Longford

Table 8.3 details the social class of those persons aged 15 years and over at work, as recorded in the 2016 Census. It illustrates that there is a strong representation at managerial and technical and non-manual and classes. Similarly, there is a high level of manual skilled and semi-skilled reflecting the strength of the manufacturing sector in the County.

**Table 8.3: Socio-Economic Profile of Persons Aged 15 and Over at Work in County Longford (Source: CSO, Census 2016)**

Socio-Economic Class	Number of Persons aged 15 years and over at Work	% of Persons aged 15 years and over at Work
Professional workers	836	5.5%
Managerial and technical	4,024	26.5%
Non-manual	3,201	21.1%
Skilled manual	2,836	18.7%
Semi-skilled	2,483	16.4%
Unskilled	643	4.2%
All other gainfully occupied and unknown	1,149	7.6%
All social classes	15,172	100.0%

#### 8.4.5 Educational Attainment

The 2016 Census found that 32.5% of those persons over the age of 15 years in County Longford had completed a course ranked Level 6 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications. The average age education ceased for the population aged 15 years and over for County Longford was 19.3 years in 2016, an increase on the previous census figure which was 18.4 years. Prominent fields of study from the total number of respondents in the County who have completed third level education (6,559 persons) include social sciences, business and law (24.2% or 1,586 persons); manufacturing and construction (17.8% or 1,170 persons); and health and welfare (15.4% or 1,009 persons).

Opportunities for further education and upskilling remain available within the county through the Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board, which provides education and training, ranging from literacy and numeracy skills to QQI certified courses. The proximity of Longford to Athlone Institute of Technology, which is expected to gain Technological University status imminently, also offers key opportunities for further educational attainment.

#### 8.4.6 Commuting

From the 2016 Census, 15,064 persons aged 15 years and over at work commuted in County Longford. Table 8.4 below outlines the means of travel for those commuters within County Longford.

**Table 8.3: Commuting Means of Travel for Persons Aged 15 and Over at Work in County Longford (Source: CSO, Census 2016)**

Means of Commuting and Journey Times in County Longford	
Public Transport	247
Walking	1,193
Cycling	144
Car (Driver)	9,535
Car (Passenger)	753
Van	1,307
Other, including lorry	152
Work mainly at or from home	926
Not stated	784
<b>Total Number Commuting</b>	<b>15,064</b>

The majority of respondents (60.2% or 8,509 persons and excluding those who mainly work at or from home), have a commuting time of under 30 minutes, with 4,671 persons (or 33%) of respondents not working from home having a commute time of less than 15 minutes. In terms of commuting destinations, the vast majority are within County Longford (55.2% or 8,312 persons), with Westmeath (8.6% or 1,299 persons) and the Greater Dublin Area 4% or 562 persons) featuring prominently along with neighbouring counties of County Longford.

### 8.5 Quality of Life

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. County Longford has a significant advantage in the work life balance area where business people can give priority to quality of life issues in investment or relocation decisions. Longford County Council shall continue to protect and enhance the attractive environment of the County and build on this asset for economic development purposes. In this regard, this section should be read in conjunction with *Chapter 7: Placemaking*, and *Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment*.

### 8.6 Impact of COVID-19

The preparation of this Economic Strategy has coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic which has had a severe economic impact internationally, nationally and at a local level. Uncertainty remains in terms of the future viability of certain businesses owing to the introduction of public health measures, such as social distancing, which undoubtedly

impacts on business and services, particularly those without a strong online and virtual presence, and those reliant on in shop footfall and in situ customers, particularly in the retail, food and hospitality sectors.

Prior to COVID-19, economic growth was predicted to continue at modest levels of 3.6% for 2020 and 3.2% for 2021<sup>2</sup>. However, since the pandemic, national economic growth has been significantly revised with the Central Bank, ESRI and the European Commission all forecasting a contraction of on average -8.5% for 2020, followed by growth of 6% in 2021<sup>3</sup>. While this would indicate a swift recovery from a sudden and sharp contraction, the economic outlook is undoubtedly dependent on overcoming the pandemic crisis.

The Covid-19 pandemic also presents a number of opportunities. Remote working (at home and in e-hubs) has had a positive effect in terms of climate change, biodiversity, quality of life and health. The pandemic also provided the opportunity to evaluate the infrastructural capabilities of remote working at a mass-level, in terms of broadband provision to facilitate economic activity. Remote and e-working has been successful across a number of industry sectors. This will have implications for traditional working patterns and major economic centres, with the need for location-specific employment and office floorspace requirements being re-evaluated.

For Longford, this has a significant bearing on this Economic Strategy and marks a key opportunity to promote Longford as an attractive location to live and work with substantial quality of life benefits available. As a result, the Economic Strategy presented in this plan places a heightened emphasis on supporting home or e-working and other micro-enterprises, as well as the provision of infrastructure and supporting services, such as hot desks, casual work spaces and meeting facilities, in order to sustain and enhance this increasingly important area of the economy.

## 8.7 County Longford Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Strategy for the County is principally derived from the RSES and the spatial expression for the development of the County provided in the Core Strategy (see *Chapter 4: Core Strategy and Housing*). The focus is on developing strategic economic growth centres that will act as engines for economic growth throughout the County. The Economic Development Hierarchy is presented in Table 8.4 below.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2020) *European Economic Forecast – Winter 2020* (available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip121\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip121_en.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2020) *European Economic Forecast – Spring 2020* (available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_799](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_799))

**Table 8.4: Economic Development Hierarchy**

Hierarchy of Employment Centres		Sectoral Strengths	
<b>Primary Economic Growth Town</b>	Longford Town	Designated as a 'Key Town' in the RSES and most economically active settlement that provides employment for its surrounding area with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as a growth driver to complement the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Significant in-commuting and employment in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, pharma and agri-food.</li> <li>▪ Main administrative centre for the county</li> <li>▪ Primary retail centre.</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Economic Growth Town</b>	Granard	Important supporting and complementary role in developing regional and county-level economic growth in tandems with the primary economic growth town of Longford Town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Well-established manufacturing base.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Employment Centres</b>	Edgeworthstown Ballymahon Lanesborough	Key settlements proving significant employment for respective urban areas and wider hinterland.	<p><u>Edgeworthstown</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Long-established manufacturing and light-industrial base.</li> <li>▪ Focus on agri-food and the service sector.</li> <li>▪ Excellent transports links through the N4 and Sligo-Dublin InterCity rail line.</li> </ul> <p><u>Ballymahon</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong manufacturing and light-industrial base.</li> <li>▪ Key retail and service-sector centre.</li> <li>▪ Significant growth in tourism-orientated services and tourism</li> </ul>

			<p>accommodation which has coincided with the opening of the nearby Longford Forest Center Parcs resort in July 2019.</p> <p><u>Lanesborough</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Currently in a state of structural economic change with the closure of the Lough Ree power station.</li> <li>▪ Key target area for employment and investment from the Just Transaction Fund.</li> <li>▪ Significant positive impacts on a variety of sectors, ranging from agri-food to tourism to alternative energy sectors.</li> <li>▪ Secured funding for the development of tourism and community development projects, notably a new community enterprise food hub which will create up to 90 jobs.</li> <li>▪ Strong retail and service sectors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local Employment Centres</b></p>	<p>Drumlish Newtownforbes Ballinalee Keenagh Abbeyshrule Ardagh</p>	<p>Small towns and key villages providing employment needs for local hinterlands.</p>	<p>Local investment, generally small-scale industry.</p>

	Clondra Ballinamuck Aughnaclyffe		
<b>Rural Areas</b>	Rural Settlements, Rural Nodes and Rural Countryside	Rural employment in the countryside	Agriculture, forestry, horticulture, silviculture, hydroponics (growing plants without soil), energy production, rural resource-based enterprises, micro-industries and home working.

It is important to ensure that there is an adequate supply of zoned land for employment purposes at appropriate locations to accommodate employment growth. There is a total of 572 hectares of land available for employment purposes in the Primary Economic Growth Town of Longford, the Secondary Economic Growth Town of Granard and the Key Employment Centres of Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough. This offers significant potential for future economic development within these centres.

Adequate infrastructure is essential to facilitate future economic development in the County and Longford County Council will continue to work with infrastructure providers to secure adequate water services, effective public transport, energy, telecommunications, waste management and education facilities to support employment development. Quality of life considerations are also a key component for investment and this Plan will seek to protect the attributes that make Longford attractive. Indicators such as commuting times, availability of key services, recreation opportunities and the quality of the built and natural environment are important.

<b>Economic Development Strategy - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.1	Facilitate and support the growth of the economy in County Longford and the Midland Area in a sustainable manner, to create a viable and favourable economic environment for business and enterprise, whilst delivering sustainable jobs, employment opportunity and an enriched standard of living.
CPO 8.2	Support and facilitate the economic development of the county in accordance with the Economic Development Strategy of the County Development Plan, across a range of sectors. There will be a general presumption against development that would prejudice the achievement of the Economic Development Strategy.
CPO 8.3	Promote and facilitate regional-scale employment development as a priority in the Primary Economic Growth Centre of Longford Town, supported by the

	Secondary Economic Growth Town of Granard, and the Key Employment Centres of Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Lanesborough.
CPO 8.4	Promote small towns and villages as local employment centres where investment can be focused on creating additional employment opportunities that will sustain a local rural hinterland.
CPO 8.5	Ensure that sufficient land is zoned for economic activity through the County Development Plan and any relevant Local Areas Plan. Such land will normally be protected from inappropriate development that would prejudice its long-term development for employment and economic activity.
CPO 8.6	Ensure that zoning for employment uses will be carried out in a manner which protects investment in the national road network, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the DECLG guidelines on ' <i>Spatial Planning and National Roads</i> '.
CPO8.7	Have regard to the County Policy Objectives contained in Section 5.2.3 of this Plan when assessing proposals for economic or employment generating development and their potential impact on the road and street network where the protection of routes of strategic importance within the County from further access creation and intensification of existing accesses and development on national routes is a key consideration. Development on the National and Regional Routes outlined in CPO 5.19 shall be carefully considered to preserve their strategic role and safeguard the strategic function of the national road network, in accordance with the provisions of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012).
CPO 8.8	Collaborate with key agencies in the identification, scope, development and promoting of sites as potential enterprise landing spaces throughout the County.
CPO 8.9	Support economic development at locations that maximise existing infrastructural provision, particularly in relation to locating high employee generating enterprise and industry proximate to high capacity public transport networks and links.
CPO 8.10	Support existing successful clusters in County Longford, such as those in the manufacturing, pharmaceutical, life sciences and agri-food sectors, and promote new and emerging clustering opportunities across all economic sectors within the County.
CPO 8.11	Support and promote proposals for SME business development in centres where existing infrastructural facilities are available or where they can be provided with services and good communications.
CPO 8.12	Support start-up businesses and small-scale industrial enterprises, particularly those that have a creative and innovative dimension.
CPO 8.13	Support the use of town centre locations for new service-focussed enterprises.
CPO 8.14	Identify suitable locations and support the provision of co-working facilities, digital hubs/eHubs and eWorking centres throughout the County that function as outreach hubs for city-based employers and promote flexible working arrangements.

CPO 8.15	Accommodate valid propositions for enterprise development that may emerge for which there are strong locational or asset-based drivers that do not apply to the same extent elsewhere and to promote the development of 'niche' products.
CPO 8.16	Encourage the reuse of sites and/or existing building stock where possible.
CPO 8.17	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.
CPO 8.18	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.
CPO 8.19	Seek to ensure that any significant future employment developments in the vicinity of the strategic road network will be accompanied by a mobility management plan that seeks to provide for an appropriate level of non-car-based transport options, utilising the strategic public transport network.
CPO 8.20	Promote rural economic development by adopting a policy framework that recognises the need to promote the long-term sustainable social and environmental development of rural areas, encourages economic diversification and facilitates the growth of rural enterprises.
CPO 8.21	Promote the development of high-quality tourism, leisure and complementary activities that can build on and complement the existing attractions in the area.
CPO 8.22	Promote the principles of good placemaking with an emphasis on quality employment and residential developments in proximity to each other in order to reduce the need to travel and ensure that suitable local accommodation is available to meet the needs of workers in the County.
CPO 8.23	Ensure a high-quality living environment in Longford which will help to retain the county's indigenous skilled population and to attract additional high skilled labour into the county.
CPO8.24	Collaborate with agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, Connect Ireland and IDA Ireland in identifying key, strategic employment land banks within the County to principally accommodate prospective Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) employment and/or IDA Ireland affiliated enterprises and ensure that priority is given to sites and landbanks within settlement boundaries in the first instance and only where it can be demonstrated that no alternative landbank / landing space can be suitably identified, will a location outside of a defined settlement be considered.
CPO8.25	Facilitate the delivery of strategic employment landing space to principally accommodate FDI employment and IDA Ireland affiliated enterprises where appropriate and ensure that priority is given to sites and landbanks within settlement boundaries in the first instance and only where it can be demonstrated that no alternative landbank / landing space can be suitably identified, will a location outside of a defined settlement be considered.

## 8.7.1 Economic Development Hierarchy

### 8.7.1.1 Primary Economic Growth Town – Longford Town

Longford Town is the dominant settlement in the county in terms of population, economic activity, level of service and infrastructure and connectivity and therefore is the clear choice as the primary growth for the county. Critical mass is a core objective, supported by density levels which enable competitiveness and sustainability and create opportunities for economies of scale to justify strategic infrastructure provision.

A total of 220 hectares of land is zoned and available for employment purposes in Longford Town, across a range of employment land-use types. The zoning allocation of lands for future residential development is highly dependent on demographic modelling and population targets. However, as similar zoning allocation of lands for employment uses is less certain, there is a need for a degree of flexibility in bringing forward lands identified for employment purposes in the lifetime of this plan.

<b>Primary Growth Centre – Longford Town - Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.26	Promote the Key Town of Longford Town as a primary centre of employment in the County and support the provision of increased employment through the expansion of the existing enterprise ecosystem in Longford and smart specialisation.
CPO 8.27	Support the provision of physical infrastructure and zoned lands to realise the delivery of strategic employment lands in central accessible locations.
CPO 8.28	Support and promote Longford Town as a key hub for employment, enterprise and tourism within the Gateway Region, and in its role as an economic driver complementing the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone.
CPO 8.29	Support the development of a creative and innovation hub and co-working space within the settlement
CPO 8.30	Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to promote Longford as a key tourism hub in the Midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland's <i>Hidden Heartlands</i> brand and the <i>Shannon Tourism Masterplan</i> .
CPO 8.31	Develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway, subject to the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan 2017, including measures relating to environmental management and sustainable development
CPO 8.32	Promote the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in Longford Town for employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities
CPO 8.33	Support the economic development and regeneration of the town centre.

### 8.7.1.2 Secondary Economic Growth Town – Granard

Granard is identified as a secondary economic growth town, providing an important and complementary role in developing economic growth and sectoral interests in tandem with the primary economic growth town of Longford Town.

Granard has a well-established manufacturing base with a particular emphasis on the food and agri-feed sectors, with the Pat the Baker manufacturing site and Kiernan Milling both significant employers in the area and contributing to a significant job to resident worker ratio. Similarly, Granard is a key retail and service centre for its inhabitants and surrounding hinterland, as reflected in the RSES where it is recognised as a ‘*Key Service Centre*’ in the retail hierarchy for the Region. Granard also has a growing tourism and heritage sector, driven principally by the Granard Motte historical site, where significant investment in tourism and regeneration funding has been acquired to deliver a world standard heritage tourism facility in the form of a cultural heritage centre and park, ‘*Knights and Conquests*’.

<b>Secondary Growth Centres (Granard) - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.34	Support proportionate economic growth and appropriately designed development in the secondary growth centres which make a positive contribution to regeneration and renewal.
CPO 8.35	Seek to target investment and location of new businesses in the core areas of the Secondary Growth Centre of Granard through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy, encourage economic development and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.
CPO 8.36	Support the development of high-quality e-working communal spaces and offices to facilitate increased levels of remote working.
CPO 8.37	Support the development of tourism and heritage-based enterprises in Granard which complement the natural and cultural heritage value of the town, in particular the Motte and Bailey site.

#### 8.7.1.2.1 Key Employment Centres – Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough

The settlements of Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, and Lanesborough act as key economic centres for their respective hinterlands and have a key role in promoting sustainable and balanced economic growth across the county, thereby complementing the primary and secondary growth centres.

Ballymahon has a strong manufacturing and light-industrial base, with a key retail and service-sector standing within the county, with significant growth in tourism-orientated services such as food and drink hostelry and tourist accommodation. The growth in this

sector, and related service sector employment, can be directly related to the opening of the nearby Longford Forest Center Parcs resort in July 2019, which itself is a considerable employer with approximately 1,000 jobs.

Edgeworthstown has a long-established manufacturing and light-industrial base, with a particular focus on agri-food and the service sector. It also has a key strategic location, with excellent transports links owing to its proximity to transport corridors in the form of both the N4 and the Sligo-Dublin InterCity rail line.

Lanesborough is currently in a state of structural economic change with the closure of the Lough Ree power station having a direct impact on ESB employees, and indirectly on Bord na Móna employees, with peat harvesting being the main source of fuel for the plant. Notwithstanding, the roll out of the *Just Transaction Fund* for affected communities and workers will have significant positive impacts on a variety of sectors, ranging from agri-food to tourism to alternative energy sectors. Funding has also been secured for the development of a new community enterprise food hub which will create up to 90 jobs. Lanesborough also has strong retail and service sectors catering for both its immediate population, as well as its wider hinterland. Similar to Granard, Lanesborough is a key retail and service centre for its inhabitants and surrounding hinterland, extending outside the county.

<b>Key Employment Centres (Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough) - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.38	Promote the proportionate economic growth of the Key Employment Centres, together with the enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities and improved transport links.
CPO 8.39	Support the regeneration of the core areas of the Key Employment Centres through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy, encourage economic development and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.
CPO 8.40	Support the development of high-quality e-working communal spaces and offices to facilitate increased levels of remote working within each of the Key Employment Centres.
CPO 8.41	Support Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough as key tourism hubs within the County and wider region and the further integration of the centres as features of the wider tourism network.
CPO 8.42	Support the development of the food enterprise hub in Lanesborough in recognition of its key economic and direct employment value to the town and as a means of promoting local food production and suppliers.
CPO 8.43	Seek to deliver the targeted economic regeneration of the Lough Ree Power Station site in Lanesborough following its decommissioning in cooperation with local stakeholders, sectoral partners, ESB and Bord na Móna.

#### 8.7.1.4 Local Employment Centres

These centres typically comprise of small towns and key villages which provide employment needs to their respective local hinterlands. In the small towns and villages of Drumlish, Newtownforbes, Ballinalee, Keenagh, Abbeyshrule, Ardagh, Clondra, Ballinamuck and Aughnaclyffe, the Council will seek to encourage local employment opportunities that assist in reducing long distance commuting patterns and support sustainable communities and employment needs for local hinterlands.

<b>Local Employment Centres - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.44	Promote commensurate population and employment growth in the designated Local Employment Centres, providing for natural increases and to become more economically self-sustaining, in line with the quality and capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure available.
CPO 8.45	Support proportionate economic growth of and appropriately designed development in Local Employment Centres that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal.
CPO 8.46	Support the regeneration of the core areas of the Local Employment Centres through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy, encourage economic development and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.
CPO 8.47	Support the development of high-quality e-working communal spaces and offices to facilitate increased levels of remote working within each of the Local Employment Centres.

#### 8.7.1.5 Rural Areas

In the rural areas there are rural settlements and rural nodes which provide opportunities for employment generating uses including green energy projects, resource recovery, food production, forestry and agribusiness, bloodstock, horticulture, hydroponics (growing plants without soil), rural based tourism and resource-based enterprises. This addressed in detail in *Chapter 9: Rural Economy*.

<b>Rural Areas - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.48	Consider proposals for enterprise and employment uses on their merits in rural locations and where their specific location offers amenity, environmental and economic advantage. Such enterprises or considered industrial projects, new or expanded, may sometimes require sites outside settlements because of their size or other specific site requirements. Such projects will be assessed taking account of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The contribution of the proposed development to the county's economy;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The contribution of the proposed development to the county's environment and the principles of sustainable development;</li> <li>▪ Assessment of any potential environmental effects;</li> <li>▪ The economic viability and availability of alternative sites; and</li> <li>▪ National planning policy.</li> </ul> <p>It will be the responsibility of the developer to consider all environmental impacts, both direct and indirect. The Council will consider not only the immediate needs and benefits, but the wider long-term environmental effects of the proposal.</p>
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### 8.7.2 Retail Development

A Retail Strategy has been developed to coincide with the preparation of the County Development Plan (see *Volume 3: Annex 9: County Longford Retail Strategy*). The Retail Strategy was carried out in accordance with provisions set out in the *'Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DoEHLG), 2012).

The Retail Strategy covers both Longford Town and the towns and villages in the County. The key outcomes of the Retail Strategy which were informed by the Retail Planning Guidelines are to:

1. Define the Retail Hierarchy in the County and related retail core boundaries;
2. Undertake a health check appraisal of the key retail centres in Longford, to ascertain the need for interventions in these areas;
3. Identify the broad requirement for additional retail floorspace development in the County over the plan period, to support the established settlement hierarchy, and;
4. Provide guidance on policy recommendations and criteria for the future assessment of retail development proposals over the Development Plan period 2021-2027.

The Retail Strategy sets out to review the broad quantum of additional retail floorspace and its location that is required for the County over the Plan period. The location and extent of new retail development must have regard to the planning framework for the County, particularly the *Retail Planning Guidelines*. 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 Retail Strategy due cognisance must be taken of the strategic policy framework that underpins the specific policies contained therein in relation to the following:

- (i) The respective positions of Longford Town and Granard in the Regional Retail Hierarchy as established in the Eastern and Midland RSES;
- (ii) Identifying the County Retail Hierarchy;
- (iii) The spatial distribution of new retail development as prescribed by the County Retail Hierarchy;
- (iv) The core retail areas (Longford Town);
- (v) The sequential approach; and
- (vi) A consideration of need.

These are dealt with accordingly:

#### **8.7.2.1 Position of Longford Town and Granard in the Regional Retail Hierarchy**

Longford Town is the primary settlement and largest population centre within County Longford. Centrally located within the County, and having the advantage of excellent national, regional and local transport linkages, the town is recognised as being a settlement of regional importance. The scope and scale of functions which Longford Town provides to its residents, as well as those of its hinterland has been recognised in national and regional context. In the *Retail Planning Guidelines*, Longford town is defined as a Level 3 Settlement, assigning it the role of providing retail support at a sub-regional level<sup>4</sup>. The importance of Longford Town has also been recognised in the Eastern and Midland RSES, which has classified the town as a Level 2 centre (Major Town Centres & County (Principal) Town Centres).

In terms of Granard, the RSES recognises the key role played by its retail function to its inhabitants and wider hinterland in designating it as a Level 3 retail centre (Town and/or District Centres & Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres)). In this regard, it is acknowledged that Granard, given its proximity to the Longford-Cavan border, performs as a key service provider and retail centre for a broad hinterland which extends beyond the County boundary.

The designations for both Longford Town and Granard, prescribed by the RSES Regional Retail Hierarchy, has informed the Retail Hierarchy adopted in the County Longford Retail Strategy. The Retail Strategy sets out to review the broad quantum of additional retail floorspace and its location that is required for the County over the Plan period (The

<sup>4</sup> *'Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities'*, (DoECLG, 2012), Section 2.2.3, page 11.

Council has undertaken an interim review of projected floorspace requirements to provide an evidence-based quantum of retail floorspace requirements for the Plan period, this is included in Annex 9: Retail Strategy). The location and extent of new retail development must have regard to the planning framework for the County, particularly the Retail Planning Guidelines. 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.

### **8.7.2.2 Identifying the County Retail Hierarchy**

The purpose of the retail hierarchy is to indicate the level and form of retailing activity appropriate to the various urban centres in the County. Taking a criteria-based approach enables the Council to protect each centre's overall vitality and viability, whilst allowing each centre to perform its overall function within the County's settlement hierarchy. The retail hierarchy proposed in the Retail Strategy adopts a methodology, whereby the ranking of each retail centre has taken account of their respective placing within the settlement hierarchy of the County, as outlined in *Chapter 4: Core Strategy, Settlement and Housing Strategies* of this Plan, as well as the regional retail hierarchy provided in the RSES. This is set out in Table 8.5.

### **8.7.2.3 Spatial Distribution of Additional Retail within the County Retail Hierarchy**

This Longford County Retail Strategy provides a strategic policy framework, in accordance with the provisions of the *Retail Planning Guidelines*, for the spatial distribution of retail development in the county. While there is a focus on the upper levels of the hierarchy level, it does not inhibit appropriate scale retail development in other identified centres, specifically smaller settlements, where such development would enhance the sustainability, vitality and viability of such centres. Strategic guidance on how the Retail Strategy defines the distribution of strategic and non-strategic retail floor space within the county's retail hierarchy is provided in Table 8.5.

**Table 8.5: Longford County Retail Hierarchy**

Hierarchy Level	Retail Hierarchy Settlement Designation	Settlements	Appropriate Retail Type
Tier I	Principal Town	Longford Town	Major convenience and comparison.
Tier II	Key Service Town	Granard	Large to Medium scale convenience and medium scale comparison
Tier III	Service Towns	Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon	Medium scale convenience along with small to medium scale comparison.
Tier IV	Local Service Town	Lanesborough	Medium to small scale convenience, along with some limited comparison, including tourism related comparison.
Tier V	Villages, Rural Serviced Settlements and Hinterlands	Village, small settlements and the Open Countryside of County Longford	Predominantly lower order convenience, but not excluding tourism related comparison.

#### 8.7.2.4 Core Retail Areas (Longford Town)

A key policy objective of the *Retail Planning Guidelines* is the promotion of greater vitality in town centres through the implementation of a sequential approach to the location of all retail development. This ‘sequential approach’ prioritises core areas within town centres over edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations, which may in some cases, have poorer functional and spatial linkages with the core. This approach recognises the importance of core areas as the most suitable locations for higher order fashion and comparison goods, as they are easily accessible for the majority of the catchment population and also provide a compact and sustainable critical mass of commercial activity and public amenities, thereby reducing the need to travel.

Given its scale and dominance of retail development and uses relative to other settlements in the County, Longford Town is the most pertinent settlement to be subject to a defined core retail area. The assessment of the County’s retail centres carried out under the previous Longford Retail Strategy 2015-2021 recognised the curtailment of retail activity from the commercial core of Longford Town, realised in the most extreme terms by the levels of commercial vacancy experienced in the economic downturn

preceding the strategy. Despite the expectation that the levels of commercial vacancy would recede over the period of the previous Retail Strategy, a considerable level of commercial vacancy remains in the town.

Given the level of commercial vacancy within the settlement, coupled with a relative underperforming commercial and retail market, the Core Retail Area of Longford Town remains that which was defined under the previous Retail Strategy, namely the dense clustering of key commercial activities, bounded by the primary thoroughfares of Main Street to the West and Dublin Street to the South, and the secondary thoroughfare of Ballymahon Street to the South West. In accordance with the guidance on the location of all new retail activity set out in the *Retail Planning Guidelines*, Longford Town's Core Retail Area is to be the focus and preferred location for retail development during the plan period. The associated map can be viewed in *Volume 2: Appendix 4: Retail Strategy*.

Furthermore, while Longford Town has a vibrant retail core, it 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. 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.

#### **8.7.2.5 The Sequential Approach**

The locations of retail development will be assessed against the principles of the Sequential Approach. In accordance with the *Retail Planning Guidelines*. The Sequential Approach for Longford is defined as follows:

1. The overall preferred location for new retail development is *within town centres*;
2. Only where the applicant can demonstrate, and the Planning Authority is satisfied, that there are no sites or potential sites within the town centre, should an *edge-of-centre* be considered;
3. Only in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that there are no sites or potential sites available, either within the centre or on the edge of these centres, should an *out-of-centre* site be considered.

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 locations outside of the core shopping area.

### 8.7.2.6 Consideration of Need

The *Retail Planning Guidelines* advise that Retail Strategies should “*assess the broad requirement for additional development over the plan period... these assessments of future retail requirements are intended to provide broad guidance as to the additional quantum of convenience and comparison floorspace provision. They should not be treated in an overly prescriptive manner, nor should they serve to inhibit competition*”. For this purpose, it is not the intention of the Retail Strategy to present figures as some form of cap on retail permissions in the County, but rather to guide the general scale of the overall retail provision. A summary of additional floorspace requirements over the period 2021-2027 is set out in Table 8.7 below.

**Table 8.7: Summary of Additional Floorspace Requirements 2021-2027**

Retail Category	Floorspace (sqm)
Additional Convenience	2,100 – 3,200
Additional Comparison	2,000 – 2,650
Additional Bulky	2,200 – 4,850

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 Eastern and Midland RSES as a ‘*Key Town*’ with the capacity to act as a driver of growth to complement the ‘*Regional Growth Centre*’ of Athlone. 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 floorspace. The improvement of the retail offer of these centres needs to be encouraged and facilitated.

### 8.7.2.7 Evening Economy

The evening economy is a significant contributor to the economic performance of town centres, however, its full potential to the vitality and viability of town centres has, traditionally, been underutilised owing to rigid trading hours and singularity of uses operating during the day. The Council recognises the need to encourage a range of vibrant uses to promote the evening economy, whilst also taking into consideration the recreational and amenity needs of local residents. In this regard, the Council supports the standards for evening and night-time economic activity established in the *Purple Flag*

*Programme*, which is an accreditation and award programme run by the Association of Town and City Management in recognition of excellence in the management of the evening and night-time economy.

### **8.7.2.8 Consideration of Vacancy**

Longford County Council has sought to take a proactive approach to addressing the issue of retail floorspace vacancy, while remaining cognisant of its responsibility to facilitate growth in retail and general economic activity within the County. As such the Retail Strategy has taken a cumulative approach to depleting vacant floorspace, while accommodating additional floorspace where it is required.

As identified in the Retail Strategy, a survey of existing floorspace in the county was undertaken (between October 2018 and September 2019), which identified a cumulative total of 5,618 square metres of vacancy across convenience, comparison and bulky retail categories (9.34 % of the total retail floorspace in the County). Based on market insights, a frictional vacancy rate of 10% was held across the respective categories in order to foster competition in the market. This results in a negative requirement for additional retail floorspace in this year across all three categories of retail which, along with existing vacant floorspace across convenience, comparison and bulky goods retail categories, negates the theoretical requirement for additional retail floorspace to cater for projected retail spend until the years 2024 (in the case of convenience retail floorspace development), 2023 (in the case of comparison retail floorspace development) and 2026 (in the case of bulky goods retail floorspace development). However, it should be emphasised that this does not signify that no additional retail development should take place before these respective years, but rather demonstrates the impact of economic volatility on projected retail floorspace development.

### **8.7.2.9 Online Retail**

Online shopping, or ‘e-commerce’ has a major presence in the Irish retail market, with most multiples having a significant online presence. E-commerce Europe estimates that 84% of Ireland’s population of 15 years and older use the internet and 2.86 million of this population shop online, spending €7.7bn in 2019<sup>5</sup>. Online shopping is therefore one of the most significant growth areas in the retail market in the past decade. While this represents an opportunity for retailers as an additional sales platform, many traditional retailers have suffered loss of sales and in this way, online sales or ‘e-commerce’ represents a significant competitor. In recognition of this, many retailers are adapting by

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ecommerce-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/European-Ecommerce-Report-2019-full-versionFinal-version-37.png>

co-locating leisure uses (particularly food and beverage) alongside retail to provide an ‘experience’ that cannot be replicated in an online setting. On the main street where floorplates are generally not large, leisure uses such as restaurants and cafes have tended to replace vacant former retail units. While online shopping is a major factor in loss of sales, there is an opportunity for town centres to provide something that is not possible online, a market-place where experience and social interaction is possible.

#### 8.7.2.10 Retail County Policy Objectives

The goal of the Longford County Retail Strategy 2021-2027 is to encourage the development of a healthy, vibrant and sustainable retail environment within the urban centres of County Longford. The key outcomes outlined in the County Longford Retail Strategy 2021-2027 (see section 8.7.2) will inform Development Plan policy to:

- i. Ensure that County Longford possesses a clear policy framework that will inform future retail development proposals, as well as their assessment and help to secure the strategic and local retailing needs of the County;
- ii. Maintain and, where possible, enhance the existing competitiveness of the County’s main centres by facilitating the development of additional retail floorspace where it can be clearly established that such development will result in tangible improvements to the retail offering of the County;
- iii. Encourage reductions in floorspace vacancy, taking account of suitability, obsolescence, and the identification of alternative uses for existing vacant floorspace within the urban centres of the County;
- iv. Facilitate the regeneration of areas with scope for improvement or when there may be a high-level of vacancy, obsolescence or emerging issues of dereliction, subject to the provisions of the Sequential Test;
- v. Engage with relevant stakeholders and incentivise to ensure that the environmental attractiveness of town/local centres is enhanced; and
- vi. Address the issue of retail expenditure leakage out of the County to competing centres by looking to develop the retail offering in the County within key retail sectors where this leakage occurs.

Accordingly, the policies relevant to retail development are categorised under the following 3 no. policy themes:

Policy Category	Focus of Policy
<b>Strategic Policies:</b>	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.
<b>General Policies:</b>	Policies that establish planning principles which should be applied throughout the County Retail Hierarchy.
<b>Longford Town Specific Policies:</b>	Policies which address specific issues relating to the county’s Tier I retail centre that need to be addressed.

All proposed new retail developments will be assessed on the basis of the following County Policy Objectives and against the criteria that are set out in *Chapter 16: Development Management Standards*, where relevant.

#### 8.7.2.11 Strategic Retail County Policy Objectives

The strategic policies developed through the County Longford Retail Strategy and the County Policy Objectives required for their successful implementation are outlined below.

<b>Strategic Retail - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.49	Promote and encourage major enhancement of town centre activities within Longford town to enable it to maintain its strategic role as defined in the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
CPO 8.50	Build upon the strong services function of Longford town and encourage an increase in high-end high street comparison retailing in the core shopping areas.
CPO 8.51	Encourage the growth and development of retail floorspace and other town centre services/functions in Granard, Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown in order to support their transition into more self-sustaining centres within the county's settlement and retail hierarchies.
CPO 8.52	Consolidate, promote and encourage the provision of local scale retail development in Lanesborough, with a view to strengthening its position as a Local Service Town which provides important local service functions, which will be actively encouraged.
CPO 8.53	Assist and encourage small scale retail development throughout the villages and serviced settlements of the County in recognition of their important role as defined in the County Retail Hierarchy.
CPO 8.54	Support local level retail development in villages and serviced settlements, where this is consistent with the capacity and critical mass of such centres to sustain retail development and subject to the directions of the sequential approach.

#### 8.7.2.12 General Retail County Policy Objectives

The general retail policy objectives are outlined below.

<b>General Retail - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.55	Ensure that all retail development permitted accords with the relevant requirements and criteria as established within the <i>Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012</i> and the Longford County Retail Strategy 2021-2027.
CPO 8.56	Permit retail development of a size and scale which is appropriate to the level of the town/settlement, including its population, as defined within the County Retail Hierarchy.

CPO 8.57	Encourage, in the first instance, developments which promote and protect the Longford Town Core Shopping Area as the primary location for high order comparison and large-scale convenience retail development in the County, subject to the criteria of the <i>Retail Planning Guidelines 2012</i> .
CPO 8.58	Discourage new retail development if such development, either by itself or cumulatively in conjunction with other developments, would seriously damage the vitality and vitality of existing retail existing retail centres within the County.
CPO 8.59	Consolidate and reinforce all existing retail enterprises within the County and permit the development of additional retail floorspace where such development is deemed to be appropriate by Longford County Council.
CPO 8.60	Guide retail development where practical and viable in accordance with the framework provided by the 'Sequential Approach', in order to enable the vitality and viability of existing town and village centres to be sustained and strengthened.
CPO 8.61	Evaluate the introduction of business improvement district type initiatives to the principal settlements of County Longford in order to establish the contribution that such proposals could make to the viability and vitality of town centres within the County.
CPO 8.62	Encourage and facilitate retail innovation, where appropriate, to help diversify the County's retail profile and offer. Where possible, this retail innovation should be directed towards existing urban centres and settlements in the first instance but will not preclude the development of retail enterprises in other locations, where the retail innovation in question cannot be sustained within any alternative location. Such development proposals will be assessed on their own merits and must satisfy the assessment criteria of the <i>Retail Planning Guidelines</i> .
CPO 8.63	Encourage and facilitate an appropriate range of day and evening activity thereby creating a vibrant, active and attractive in town and villages centres.
CPO 8.64	Facilitate LEO in supporting all existing retail business with an on-street presence in core retail areas to establish an online sales platform.
CPO 8.65	Promote the reuse of vacant retail floorspace. Where no viable retail use can be sustained, alternative uses will be assessed on their own merits against the requirements of the proper planning and sustainable development of the areas within which they are located.
CPO 8.66	Encourage the consolidation of other non-retail based services within the town centres of the County utilising existing vacant retail floorspace where necessary.
CPO 8.67	Identify under-utilised and obsolete areas for potential renewal and encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings in the county's main towns, villages and smaller centres. The Council will use its statutory powers, where appropriate, to facilitate this and will consider such buildings and lands for inclusion in the Register of Derelict Sites or the Vacant Sites Register.

CPO 8.68	Undertake measures to improve the accessibility of town centres by developing a pedestrian and cyclist friendly environment, which improves safety and limits traffic congestion where possible.
CPO 8.69	Encourage the further improvement and development of commercial, service, social and cultural functions which its town and village centres perform, while ensuring the protection of the important heritage and architectural quality of their streetscapes. This will apply to the skyline, shop fronts and advertising structures.
CPO 8.70	Have regard to the principles provided in the Shopfront and Signage Design Guidelines 2021-2027, prepared by Longford County Council and included in <i>Annex 8: Shopfront Design Guidelines</i> of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, and the Retail Design Manual 2012 (Department of arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) in the assessment of any retail development.
CPO 8.71	Require that any proposals for the creation of new retail floorspace shall be accompanied by an assessment by the applicant of the quality and suitability of existing and available floorspace in the County relative to the circumstances of their proposals.
CPO 8.72	Have regard to the findings of the capacity assessment contained in the Longford County Retail Strategy 2021-2027, including the ability to counteract expenditure leakage, when assessing retail planning applications.  <i>The onus will be on any applicant to demonstrate in a Retail Impact Assessment that the proposed floorspace is appropriate, having regard to the quantum of floorspace required within that specific urban centre or settlement, in addition to evidencing all other relevant variables as specified within the Retail Planning Guidelines.</i>
CPO8.73	Impose a presumption against the provision of large scale out of town retail development located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Planning Guidelines (2012).
CPO8.74	Prohibit the provision of comparison and convenience retail uses within all employment generating land uses on edge and out of edge centres unless such land is sequentially preferable and could contribute to compact growth.
CPO8.75	Conduct a review of the Longford County Retail Strategy within two years of the adoption of the County Development Plan

### 8.7.2.13 Longford Town Specific County Policy Objectives

The following County Policy Objectives are devised to address issues related to retail development in Longford Town, given the primacy of its function as the main retail centre in the County.

<b>Longford Town Specific Retail - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.76	Permit retail development which is of an appropriate size, scale and type to a town centre location in Longford Town's core shopping area.
CPO 8.77	Facilitate the expansion of high-end, high street comparison retailing in Longford Town.
CPO 8.78	Improve the retailing environment of Longford Town by improving the public realm and facilitating a resolution to the centre traffic congestion problems.
CPO 8.79	Establish a dedicated Longford Town Team to promote and encourage appropriate evening and night-time economy uses to improve the vitality and vibrancy of Longford Town in accordance with the standards of the <i>Purple Flag Programme</i> , with the aim of achieving Purple Flag status for Longford Town.

### 8.7.3 Smart Enterprises

Ireland has developed a world-leading reputation for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector development. This has cultivated a number of indigenous enterprises and service providers, ranging from research and development (R&D) enterprises, to large-scale manufacturing of ICT-related components in the fields of medical and life sciences. There will be opportunities to build on the existing enterprise base and develop strengths in emerging digital segments and in the strategic growth area of analytics and 'big data'<sup>6</sup>. Improvements in technology also make County Longford an attractive location in terms of data centres.

Improvements in technology and ICT infrastructure such as fibre broadband and in particular, the roll out of the National Broadband Plan, will exploit 'smart' technologies, with concepts such as 'smart towns' and 'smart communities' (communities which build on, and enhance their existing strengths and assets through creative thinking, and by embracing innovation, to create desirable places for people to live and work) no longer limited to urban settings. There is an opportunity for Longford to capitalise on existing key assets, that include its strong industrial base, to develop 'smart communities' throughout the County. While not limited to the key settlements of Longford Town, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Granard and Lanesborough, these locations can be the focal point for innovative activities and enhancing existing synergies and clustering effects.

The Council also supports innovation and technology as vital to the diversification and strengthening of the rural economy. The Council will seek to leverage the *EU Action for Smart Villages Initiative* which aims to develop the potential offered by improved rural connectivity and digitisation and to build on local enterprise and infrastructure assets to

<sup>6</sup> Data that contains greater variety arriving in increasing volumes and with ever-higher velocity.

drive innovations around energy, transport, agri-food, tourism, e-services, and remote working. The Council will seek to support the development of ‘smart communities’ by allowing use of public assets where possible, to support increased local connectivity.

<b>Smart Enterprises - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.80	Engage and collaborate with key stakeholders, relevant agencies, and sectoral representatives to develop the ICT sector in the main settlements of County Longford and to ensure that the economic potential of the sector is secured for the benefit of the local and national economy.
CPO 8.81	Support and identify flagship projects that would benefit from public-private partnerships involving experiments with emerging technologies, innovative industries and networks to leverage the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund or other relevant fund,
CPO 8.82	Support the development of sites where high-tech and high potential start-ups can thrive, in conjunction with institutes of technology and universities, to create collaborative and innovative growth.
CPO 8.83	Support the development of data centres in suitable locations, subject to other planning, environmental and ecological considerations.
CPO 8.84	Promote the development of Smart Villages to develop and diversify the rural economy to build on local enterprise and infrastructure assets to drive innovations around energy, transport, agri-food, tourism, e-service and, remote working.

#### **8.7.4 Tourism**

Tourism remains a significant employment sector for Longford, with the county well-endowed with several high-class cultural and natural heritage assets, as well as the location for one of Ireland’s most popular tourist destination, Longford Forest Center Parcs. *Chapter 10: Tourism* of this plan sets out the relevant tourism assets and associated county polices objectives in more detail.

This Economic Development Strategy seeks to further promote and develop tourism, having regard to national and regional tourism policy, taking full advantage of national and regional initiatives and funding schemes and maximising the potential of our unique natural, heritage, cultural, and amenity assets. A strong emphasis will be placed on securing sustainable tourism growth, whereby the quality of our landscapes, natural environment and cultural heritage is protected and safeguarded for the long-term enjoyment of assets.

<b>Tourism Economic Development - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.85	Promote tourism as an integral part of County Longford’s overall economic profile supporting urban and rural enterprise, recognising the key strategic location of the County and promoting access to tourist sites and attractions.
CPO 8.86	Promote the development of sustainable tourism as part of our economy, that recognises our landscapes, cultural heritage, environment and linguistic heritage.

### 8.7.5 The Green and Circular Economy

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, the Green Economy is defined a low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive<sup>7</sup>. The concept of the Green / Circular Economy and the overall transition towards a low carbon economy is supported by a number of policy instruments in respect of sustainable food production, tourism, green financial services, green products and services, waste and water management, renewable energy and energy efficiency. This is a key feature of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 (MREP), wherein one of its Strategic Objectives is to “*ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy*”. The Council recognises the significant role the ‘Green Economy’ has to play in the competitiveness of the county and the country as a whole. The growing international emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving resource efficiency presents a major opportunity for indigenous enterprises to grow and export innovative products and services. This is further supported in the National Planning Framework, where the transition towards a low carbon and climate resilient society is identified as one of 10 no. National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

The transition towards a low carbon economy will act as a catalyst for significant economic development, employment and investment opportunities in the fields of disruptive technologies, renewable energy, building retrofitting, enhanced construction smart technologies and agriculture.

<b>Green and Circular Economy County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.87	Ensure that the County is well positioned to capitalise on the economic benefits associated with the transition to a low carbon economy.
CPO 8.88	Engage with all relevant government stakeholders, enterprise agencies and sectoral representatives in pursuing ‘green’ approaches to economic development, and actively collaborate with key industry and educational bodies to promote Longford based initiatives across the economic sectors.

<sup>7</sup> *Green Economy*, United Nations Environment Programme. Available at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/green-economy/about-green-economy>

CPO 8.89	Support the development of industries that create and employ green technologies and take measures to accelerate the transition towards a low carbon economy and circular economy.
CPO 8.90	Support rural diversification through sustainable rural development practices, investment in rural towns and villages, and provision for access to technology and skills development networks.

### 8.7.6 'Just Transition'

Ireland is required to ensure that policy response to climate change is governed by the principles of a Just Transition to a low carbon economy. The concept of 'Just Transition' is an economy-wide process that produces the plans, policies and investments that lead to environmentally and socially sustainable jobs, sectors and economies.

Just Transition has significant implications for County Longford, given the closure of the ESB power station in Lanesborough at the end of 2020. The indirect effect of this has been the cessation of industrial peat harvesting by Bord na Móna in the region, which will also have significant indirect economic impact on the wider area. The Government has committed to overseeing the implementation of Just Transition for the region and a midlands targeted Just Transition Fund (JTF) of €11 million, with the aim of supporting the retraining and reskilling of workers and to assist local communities and businesses in the midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition.

Other measures announced associated with 'Just Transition' include:

- €5 million for bog restoration and rehabilitation which will restore non-Bord na Móna bogs to their natural habitat. This programme will support the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to restore 1,800 hectares of bog in 7 counties and will create 70 jobs in year one, rising to 100 as the programme develops.
- €20 million to deliver a new model of group housing upgrades as set out in the Climate Action Plan. Targeted at the Midlands, this will support an estimated 400 jobs directly and indirectly

The JTF is also operating in parallel with a regional MRTT (Midlands Regional Transition Team) START process. START (Secretariat Technical Assistance to Regions in Transition) is an EU technical assistance programme to support regions in transition across Europe. It aims to leave a legacy of enhanced transition-related expertise, capabilities, and capacities in the coal and peat regions that receive support. Just Transition also forms a major policy pillar of the EU 2030 Climate and Energy Framework targets in its overall aim of moving towards a low carbon society. This is underpinned by a €30 billion investment fund to aid territories and regions most affected by the transition

to a climate-neutral economy, prioritising those that have less capacity to deal with the costs of the transition.

Given its substantial policy and financial support, both nationally and at EU level, ‘Just Transition’ marks the most significant catalyst for economic and social change in the midlands since the formation of Bord na Móna and the industrialisation of peat harvesting in 1946. It represents a significant step forward in the transition towards a low carbon economy.

<b>‘Just Transition’ - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.91	Engage with all relevant government stakeholders, sectoral representatives, ESB and Bord na Móna in developing and supporting sustainable alternative economic development, guided by the principles of ‘Just Transition’, for those employees and communities affected by the closure of the ESB Lough Ree Power Station and associated Bord na Móna peat harvesting practices.
CPO 8.92	Identify, in collaboration with all relevant government stakeholders, sectoral representatives, ESB and Bord na Móna, potential uses for the ESB Lough Ree Power Station site as part of an overall regeneration programme for the site underpinned by the principles of ‘Just Transition’.
CPO 8.93	Support the use of the former Lough Ree Power Station site in Lanesorough for energy generation and transmission, tourism, industrial, commercial or other suitable alternative use, subject to other planning considerations and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
CPO 8.94	Support in principle the rehabilitation and restoration of bog habitats and any associated eco-tourism development underpinned by the principles of ‘Just Transition’, subject to other planning, environmental and ecological considerations.
CPO 8.95	Support in principle, measures relating to the retrofitting of existing residential units, as part of the ‘Just Transition’ process, subject to other planning considerations.

### **8.7.7 Home Based Economic Activity and Remote Working**

A number of variables dictate where we live and work ranging from economic activity, affordability, connectivity, personal circumstances and quality of life. Longer commuting times from major economic centres is to the detriment of personal quality of life, as well as contributing to climate change and infrastructure pressures. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a growing trend of remote or home working, facilitated by advances in ICT and telecommunications infrastructure, with the roll out of fibre broadband and increased broadband access in rural locations. The subsequent COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to evaluate the concept of remote working. In this regard, remote

working is seen to be a success across a number of industry sectors, therefore reducing location-specific employment requirements in many sectors.

This provides a key opportunity to promote Longford as an attractive location to live and work with substantial quality of life benefits available in terms of the quality of its natural environment, its high standard of physical infrastructure, affordable housing market and wide range of social infrastructure. Many of the quality of life aspects are detailed in various chapters throughout this Plan (namely *Chapter 6: Placemaking*, *Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment* and *Chapter 13: Green Infrastructure*).

<b>Home Based Economic Activity and Remote Working - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 8.96	Facilitate and enhance the collective offering of County Longford as an attractive place to live, work and invest in.
CPO 8.97	Engage with all relevant stakeholders and broadband infrastructure providers to ensure the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan in County Longford, as well as supporting in principle improvements to existing broadband networks.
CPO 8.98	Facilitate home-working and innovative forms of working which reduce the need to travel.
CPO 8.99	Encourage local partnership, Town Team or community organisations to develop and implement local economic initiatives which enhance towns and villages.
CPO 8.100	Give consideration to the establishment, or suitable expansion, of small-scale home-based economic activity where the main use of the dwelling remains as residential, subject to compliance with normal development management requirements and technical criteria.

## 8.8 Economic Development Climate Context and Associated Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a climate context and associated actions.

Economic development plays a crucial role in improving our overall living standards while making society a better place. However, the negative effects of climate change, including damage to property and infrastructure, lost productivity, mass migration and threats to security are set to increasingly challenge our stable development.

Unabated climate change is likely to cost the world economy a minimum of 5% GDP every year, increasing to 20% if more dramatic predictions come to pass, and yet a 1% GDP investment in reducing GHG emissions has the potential to completely offset this very cost<sup>8</sup>. The solution is easily transferred into an Irish context, whereby the Irish Government has committed to a €80 per tonne carbon tax by 2030, when an investment of €25 per tonne on reducing carbon emissions would eliminate this problem ever occurring. In fact, 30% of GHGs can be reduced at negative or zero cost to the global economy<sup>9</sup>.

Encouragingly, the European Commission launched the ‘Green Deal’ programme in 2019 with the very aim of the European Union (EU) becoming a carbon neutral economy by 2050 and entering into a legally binding commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 2030 by 40%. Prior to this, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018 -2027 made the €500m Climate Action Fund available to support initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland’s climate and energy targets in a cost-effective manner, supporting innovation and generation of wider socio-economic benefits such as job creation, reduction in fuel poverty and community development. The Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment’s followed with the launch of the ‘*Future Jobs Ireland 2019*’ framework, aligning to three of the five CAP ‘pillars’ including:

- ‘*Embracing Innovation and Technological Change*’;
- ‘*Improving SME Productivity*’ and;
- ‘*Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy*’.

In the same year and originating out of Budget 2020 the ‘Just Transition Fund’ was created by Government to retrain and reskill workers, and assist local communities in transitioning to a low carbon economy.

According to the European Commission’s ‘*Innovating for Sustainable Growth – A Bioeconomy for Europe*’ (2012), Ireland’s ‘*National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy*’ (2018), the NPF, and transformed into policy under the EMRA RSES (Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 7.43), the concept of the ‘bioeconomy’ holds many of the answers in the promotion of more efficient use of renewable resources, including sustainable land

<sup>8</sup> Stern, N. (2006), ‘*The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review*’, 27 November 2006

[http://mudancasclimaticas.cptec.inpe.br/~rmclima/pdfs/destaques/sternreview\\_report\\_complete.pdf](http://mudancasclimaticas.cptec.inpe.br/~rmclima/pdfs/destaques/sternreview_report_complete.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> McKinsey & Company (2009), ‘*Pathways to a Low-Carbon Economy*’, Version 2 of the Global Greenhouse gas Abatement Cost Curve, 2009.

[https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/dotcom/client\\_service/sustainability/cost%20curve%20pdfs/pathways\\_lowcarbon\\_economy\\_version2.ashx](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/dotcom/client_service/sustainability/cost%20curve%20pdfs/pathways_lowcarbon_economy_version2.ashx)

management that supports economic development and employment in rural areas. National Policy Objective (NPO) 21 and RPO 6.5 of the EMRA RSES further establish the need for local authorities to play a greater role in supporting innovation and rural economic development through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.

### ***Economic Development Climate Change Actions***

Longford County Council shall:

- A8.1** Require all future commercial and/or industrial development applications to be accompanied by a signed statement outlining the current and any future environmentally friendly / sustainable activities – prioritising energy efficiency, replacement of fossil fuels, careful management of materials and waste, and carbon abatement (e.g. in-house green team, carpooling, working-from-home, etc).
- A8.2** Consider planning applications for multiple and complementary use classes to encourage greater use of our existing infrastructure, and in support of the day/night economy.
- A8.3** Support enterprise and Local Enterprise Office (LEO) on the development of industries that create and employ green technologies and take measures to accelerate the transition towards a low carbon economy and circular economy.
- A8.4** Apply the principles of the voluntary Green Public Procurement (GPP) initiative in accordance with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) across all local authority procurement, wherever feasible.
- A8.5** Seek Environmental Management Systems accreditation (e.g. ISO 14001 and similar) within the lifetime of the plan, as part of the European Union's Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).
- A8.6** Provide community/public, 'hot desking' provision in Longford Town, Ballymahon, Lanesborough and Granard.

## Chapter 9: Rural Economy

### 9.1 Introduction

In contrast to recent demographic trends towards urbanisation experienced by other counties, Longford remains, in population terms, a predominantly rural county with over 65% of the County's population identified as living in a rural setting (Census, 2016). This illustrates the longstanding rural demographic and economic base within the county, with Longford home to a diverse range of and uses including agriculture, silviculture, renewable energy, the equine industry, local food production, micro and home enterprises, recreational and tourist activities, as well as rural housing. The sustained social and economic fabric in Longford's rural areas combine to provide residents and visitors with a quality environment to live, work and recreate. Advances in technology and the increased roll out of communication infrastructure such as fibre and mobile broadband, as well as the provision of key tourism infrastructure such as greenways and trackways, have revitalised rural areas and facilitated increased levels of rural diversification in areas which had largely been dependent on farming as the main employment source.

The restrictive workplace measures introduced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic have illustrated the effectiveness of remote working as a viable alternative for many to traditional office-based employment, and the advances in remote working technologies will ensure that home-working will be an increasingly significant workplace for many into the future. Such trends will have a significantly positive impact on sustaining and revitalising rural communities, with issues such as quality of life, reducing personal carbon footprint and health benefits featuring more prominently in the choices in relation to where people live and work.

### 9.2 Policy Context

#### 9.2.1 *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework*

The National Planning Framework (NPF) acknowledges that *'rural areas have a major role to play in Ireland 2040 and encourages Local Authorities to ensure that connectivity gaps are addressed and that planning and investment policies support job creation in the rural economy'*. Improved coordination of existing investment programmes dealing with social inclusion, rural development and town and village renewal are sought, as is planning for the future growth and development of rural areas.

National Strategic Objective (NSO) 3 identifies traditional pillars of the rural economy, such as the natural resource and the food sector, as being key to future economic development as well as those emerging from improved connectivity and broadband access which has the potential to yield further rural economic development opportunities.

### 9.2.2 Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Eastern and Midland RSES gives regional expression to the policy and objectives contained within the NPF in providing a long-term, strategic development framework for the physical, economic and social development of the Eastern and Midland Region and subsequently gives direction to policy making decisions at a local level through the County Development Plan.

The Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) recognises the major contribution that rural areas make towards regional and national development in economic, social and environmental terms. The RSES aims to strengthen the fabric of rural Ireland, supporting rural towns and communities as well as the open countryside, improving connectivity, and supporting job creation, particularly in a more diverse range of sectors. The RSES supports the consolidation of the town and village network, to ensure that development proceeds sustainably and at an appropriate scale, level and pace in line with the Core Strategies of County Development Plans.

It requires that planning for rural areas must provide a balance between managing demand in the most accessible rural areas in proximity to larger towns, whilst supporting the sustainable growth of rural economics and rural communities. It also highlights the fundamental importance of planning the distribution of activity (for example where people live and work) in a manner which reduces the need to travel and achieves a move towards a low carbon society having regard to the impact which transport has on carbon emissions.

### 9.2.3 Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development (2017)

This government strategy introduced in 2017 (Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs) is aimed at delivering real change for people living and working in rural Ireland. The objective of the Action Plan for Rural Development is to *'unlock the potential of rural Ireland through a framework of supports, at national and local level, which will ensure that people who live in rural areas have increased opportunities for employment locally, and access to public services and social networks'*. A number of key initiatives proposed as part of the Strategy include the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and the delivery of the 2014-2020 EU LEADER Programme. The Action Plan for Rural Ireland builds on the commitments contained in the Charter for Rural Ireland (referenced below) and sets out a clear roadmap for its implementation.

### 9.2.4 Energising Ireland's Rural Economy (2014)

The Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) was established in 2012 following the severe impact of the economic downturn on rural areas. The REDZ (Rural Economic Development Zone) initiative was a recommendation contained within the CEDRA and is intended to complement the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and cater for projects between the towns and surrounding hinterland that maximise local assets in areas such as tourism, culture, heritage and other areas that support rural economic activity.

CEDRA's task was to identify strategic initiatives that would ensure rural areas contribute to sustained and sustainable national economic growth and development into the future. The process confirmed that there is an abundance of natural, physical, human and capital resources and a wide variety of high quality, (including dormant assets) in many rural communities that could be leveraged to support national economic growth and the development of these communities. The need for higher speed broadband is supported. CEDRA recommendations relate to building of community capacity, integrated rural town planning, development of the social economy and supporting the growth of indigenous renewable energy businesses and relate to specific actions within both the Longford Local Development Strategy and the County Longford Local and Economic Community Plan (LECP).

### 9.2.5 *Food Wise 2015-2025*

The national strategy for the development of the Agri-Food Sector outlines the key actions required to ensure it maximises its contribution to economic growth and exports in an environmentally sustainable manner over the coming decade. It identifies 4 elements to deliver growth:

- Human Capital
- Competitiveness
- Market Development
- Innovation

Food Wise 2025 identifies growth projections for the sector including:

- 85% increase in the value of agri-food exports to €19 billion;
- 70% increase in value added in the agri-food, fisheries and wood products sector to in excess of €13 billion;
- 65% increase in the value of Primary Production to almost €10 billion;
- 23,000 additional direct jobs in the agri-food sector all along the supply chain from primary production to high valued added product development.

Sustainability is key to the strategy, which states that *'environmental protection and economic competitiveness are equal and complementary – one cannot be achieved at the expense of the other'*. Food Wise 2025 also supports technology and processes that result in a more efficient use of resources.

### 9.2.6 *Delivering a Connected Society – A National Broadband Plan for Ireland (2012)*

The National Broadband Plan (NBP), together with its intervention strategy document, *'Connecting Communities'* (2015), is the government's initiative to deliver high speed broadband services to all premises in Ireland. This will be delivered through investment by commercial enterprises coupled with intervention by the State in those parts of the country where private companies have no plans to invest. The State Intervention area includes:

- 537,596 premises
- 1.1 million people
- Over 54,000 farms

- 44,000 non-farm businesses
- 695 schools

The NBP is a key aspect of government strategy across a number of key areas including climate, agriculture, education, transport, tourism, sustainable growth, jobs and health. A key principle of the NBP is to support and stimulate commercial investment. Since the publication of the NBP in 2012, the commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2.75 billion. This was spent primarily on upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile telecommunications services. Significant additional investment is expected over the coming years. Today over 1.78m or 75% of premises in Ireland can access commercially available high speed broadband services. The roll out of high-speed broadband access, to be completed by 2026, represents the largest investment in rural Ireland since rural electrification.

### 9.3 County Longford Rural Economic Development Strategy

In devising this Rural Economic Development Strategy, the Council recognises the importance of supporting sustainable sources of income and enterprises such as rural tourism, farm diversification, silviculture, rural based enterprise to complement the agri-food sector and an increasing potential for the growth of the renewable energy sector. In terms of rural settlement, the Longford countryside is a living and lived-in landscape with supporting rural economies and rural communities. There is a continuing need to balance housing need for people to live and work in the countryside, while at the same time avoiding unsustainable patterns of development and protecting the environmental and ecological integrity of our landscapes. Encouragement and support for restoration and refurbishment of the existing built fabric in rural areas is essential to retain its core identity.

This Rural Development Economic Strategy sets out the policies and objectives required for the sustainable development of rural Longford, in a manner that is consistent with the guidance, strategies and policies at national and regional levels based on the following principles:

- A focus on supporting vibrant rural communities focused around a network of rural towns and villages.
- Facilitating the transition towards a low carbon and climate resilient society and encouraging a spatial pattern of development which reduces and discourages unnecessary trip generation.
- Supporting sustainable agriculture and food production practices that safeguard the environmental and ecological elements of our rural setting, with a particular focus on encouraging less intensive farming practices and catering for localised food markets in a bid to reduce our over-reliance on overseas food producers.
- Supporting the continued development of eco-tourism in Longford, including the on-going development of a connected networks of greenways, blueways and peatways, and associated trails and trackways.
- Protecting the integrity of key environmental and ecological assets and landscapes from any significantly adverse impacts arising from rural development.

- Recognising the need to provide for a resilient rural economy that is flexible to changes in typical rural development industries and open to emerging, non-traditional sectors which can be adequately accommodated in a rural setting without giving rise to any significant adverse impacts.
- Enhancement of the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services.

### 9.3.1 Rural Enterprise and Economy

The rural economy of County Longford has undergone significant change characterised by an increase in the diversification of traditional rural economy sectors such as agriculture. The Council is committed to promoting balanced and inclusive rural communities, to achieving an appropriate scale of development supporting farming and other rural-based economic activity such as equine development, agri-food, forestry, energy production and carbon reduction, tourism, recreation, mineral extraction and/or other new and emerging rural based enterprises. These enterprise fields represent viable sources of income, while also fostering sustainable economic diversification and development in rural areas.

In accordance with the *Economic Strategy* for the overall county (see *Chapter 8: Economic Development*), employment servicing the rural areas should, in general, be directed to local employment centres, small towns and villages catering for local investment and small-scale industry. Within the rural settlements and countryside, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, tourism and rural resources-based enterprise should be facilitated.

The promotion and facilitation of micro enterprises is a key area for sustainable employment opportunities in rural areas. The Council will seek to facilitate the development of this sector by ensuring that incubator units for micro enterprises are provided in lower tier centres (Towns and Villages and Rural Service Settlements). Moreover, the Council will seek to facilitate the provision of serviced or serviceable sites in similar lower tier centres and edge of village and town centre locations, with the aim of encouraging new enterprise development to further sustain these rural communities. In particular, the reuse of redundant agricultural buildings and the development of new buildings to accommodate such diversification/enterprise within an overall farmyard complex will be considered on their individual merits.

It is acknowledged that some enterprise and employment uses may not always be appropriately located on Enterprise and Employment Zoned lands. In this regard, some new enterprise and employment projects may require sites outside settlements because of their size, type or specific site requirements. Such developments, as with all rural-based developments and enterprises, will be subject to the policy objectives contained in Chapter 5 of this Plan with particular emphasis on those policy objectives contained in Section 5.2.3 in relation to development accessing national roads, in the context of traffic safety and the protection of the national road network.

Key considerations for rural enterprise will be:

- Existing commercial or industrial activities in towns or villages, unencumbered by their location and nature of their business, will be generally discouraged in relocating to unserved rural areas.
- Horticulture, forestry, tourism, energy production and rural resource-based enterprises will be facilitated in the rural areas, subject to proper planning considerations.
- Where established authorised rural based enterprises seek to expand beyond their existing capacity and, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the expansion proposed would seriously affect the rural nature or amenity of the rural areas and surrounding countryside, they will generally be encouraged to locate in serviced zoned lands.
- One-off enterprises in the rural area may be located in the open countryside only where the Council is satisfied that:
  - the enterprise is suitable for that location in the first place;
  - it will enhance the local rural economy;
  - there is a social and economic benefit to being located within a rural area;
  - the proposal will not adversely affect the character and appearance of the landscape or the amenity of neighbouring properties;
  - the local road network and other essential infrastructure can accommodate extra demand generated by the proposal; and
  - all advertising should be kept to a minimum and be suitable in design and scale to serve the business.
- Commercial / industrial developments in rural areas may be acceptable subject to proper planning considerations, where the Council is satisfied that the proposed development is required to be located in the rural area, due to its dependence on an existing local resource or source material that is required for the carrying out of the industrial process / commercial activity / service. The local resource or source of material shall be in close proximity to the location of the proposed development.
- Where an area is not within an identifiable settlement and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Plan, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agricultural. However apart from rural housing, there are other land-uses which may be considered in the rural countryside subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

<b>Rural Enterprise and Economy County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 9.1	Liaise and co-operate with statutory, local development, sectoral community / voluntary agencies and groups to develop economic, social and cultural benefits for the rural community.
CPO 9.2	Support and facilitate the work of Teagasc and other farming / local bodies within the county in the promotion of the rural economy, including agriculture development, rural diversification and in the development of initiatives to support farming, create inclusive rural communities and improve access and services in rural areas.

CPO 9.3	Support the provision of a high-quality rural environment, encourage diversification and improved competitiveness of the rural economy, sustain the livelihood of rural communities and promote the development of the wider rural economy, all within the context of the sustainable management of land and resources.
CPO 9.4	Promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.
CPO 9.5	Support farm diversification, where a proposed business initiative is subordinate to the primary agricultural use of the site, subject to traffic and environmental safeguards.
CPO 9.6	Protect agriculture and traditional rural enterprises from unplanned and/or incompatible urban development.
CPO 9.7	Promote resource efficiency and support the shift toward a low-carbon and climate resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors.
CPO 9.8	Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.
CPO 9.9	Prioritise the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of significant regeneration projects for rural villages and rural areas which could harness untapped assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment, including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.
CPO 9.10	Explore mechanisms for the emergence of a diversified sectoral mix in rural areas. This includes the identification of appropriate locations to drive regeneration of rural towns and villages for example by the provision of serviced sites for housing and co-working/ incubator space.
CPO 9.11	The development and expansion of appropriate new businesses in rural areas will normally be encouraged where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The scale and nature of the proposed new business are appropriate to the rural area and are in areas of low environmental sensitivity.</li> <li>▪ The development will enhance the strength and diversification of the rural economy.</li> <li>▪ The development involves the use of redundant or underused buildings that are of value to the rural area.</li> </ul>
CPO 9.12	Have regard to the County Policy Objectives contained in Section 5.2.3 of this Plan when assessing proposals for rural economic or employment generating development and their potential impact on the road network, where the protection of routes of strategic importance within the County from further access creation and intensification of existing accesses and development on national routes is a key consideration. Development on the National and Regional Routes outlined in CPO 5.19 shall be carefully considered to preserve their strategic role and safeguard the strategic function of the national road network, in accordance with the provisions of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012).

### 9.3.2 Agriculture

Given the rural predominance of Longford in terms of its population settlement and land use, agriculture remains a vital sector to the economy of Longford and its social fabric. In recent years the rural economy of County Longford has experienced rapid change. While traditionally, agriculture sustained much of the rural economy, the restructuring of this sector has resulted in a diversification of traditional farm practices, an increase in part time farming / off-farm employment and a decrease in the number of individual farmsteads.

This is evident in the full-time employment statistics for the working population engaged in the agriculture, forestry and fishing broad industrial group presented in Table 9.1 below which depicts numbers of the labour force engaged in this sector between 2002-2016. While the 2011 Census recorded an increase in the numbers of people employed in the sector from the preceding 2006 Census, the 2016 Census reverted to the historical decline in employment within the sector.

**Table 9.1: Persons Employed in Farming, Fishing and Forestry and Total Labour Force (Source: CSO Census 2002, 2006, 2011 and 2016)**

Census Year	Total Persons in Labour Force	Farming, Fishing and Forestry	% of Farming, Fishing and Forestry in Labour Force
2016	18,873	1,159	6.14%
2011	18,433	1,300	7.05%
2006	16,400	1,176	7.17%
2002	13,233	1,415	10.69%

Notwithstanding this decline in direct employment, agriculture remains a significant sector and catalyst for a number of indirect, agri-food related jobs in the County and the wider region, in relation to the provision of feedstores, livestock marts, meat and dairy processing plants, agriculture machinery sales and maintenance and animal welfare amongst many other indirect employment sources.

The gradual decline in agricultural employment is replicated in the historical decline in the numbers of farm holdings, with a trend towards the amalgamation of larger farm holdings and more intensive farming practices driven principally by EU subsidies which encouraged such practices since the 1990s. More recently, significant focus has been placed on reducing the environmental impacts of such intensive practices with a focus on steering subsidies towards less intensive agricultural measures, cultivating higher biodiversity values within landholdings and compensatory measures to offset more carbon intensive agriculture measures.

Traditional farming practices, such as beef and dairy production, are and will be central to agriculture development. However, the sector faces a number of immediate

challenges, not least of which is the low profitability of some farming activities, which leaves the sector exposed to potential negative shocks such as Brexit, future reductions in subsidies through reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and climate change. Considering these challenges, there is a need to promote farm diversification and new employment opportunities to ensure the viability and sustain existing rural communities. The Council will support diversification of the rural economy and in particular will seek to develop the potential of the agri-food sector, forestry, the sustainable exploitation of natural resources and consideration of alternative on-farm and off-farm activities.

These measures coincide with a cultural shift in agricultural practice across the EU and in Ireland where rural diversification and specialised agricultural practices are gaining popularity and providing more sustainable forms of agricultural employment, whether as standalone businesses or complimenting existing traditional farming practices. These include non-traditional farming practices relating to aquaculture, rural tourism, horticulture, organic farming, herb cultivation, renewable energy generation and the cultivation of biomass energy crops.

Such diversification is also occurring in the post-industrial peat harvested landscapes, with Bord na Móna investing significantly in its vast lands banks to provide sustainable employment for its employees in the midlands, with its model underpinned by the ethos of *Just Transition* towards a low carbon economy. Investments in established renewable energy projects as well as its portfolio of proposed solar and wind energy projects, highlight the progress the company has made in this area. In a further illustration of the scale of its diversification, Bord na Móna plans to establish an aquaculture and herb growing facility in its County Longford bogs, developing fish and herb farms within previously harvested peat lands.

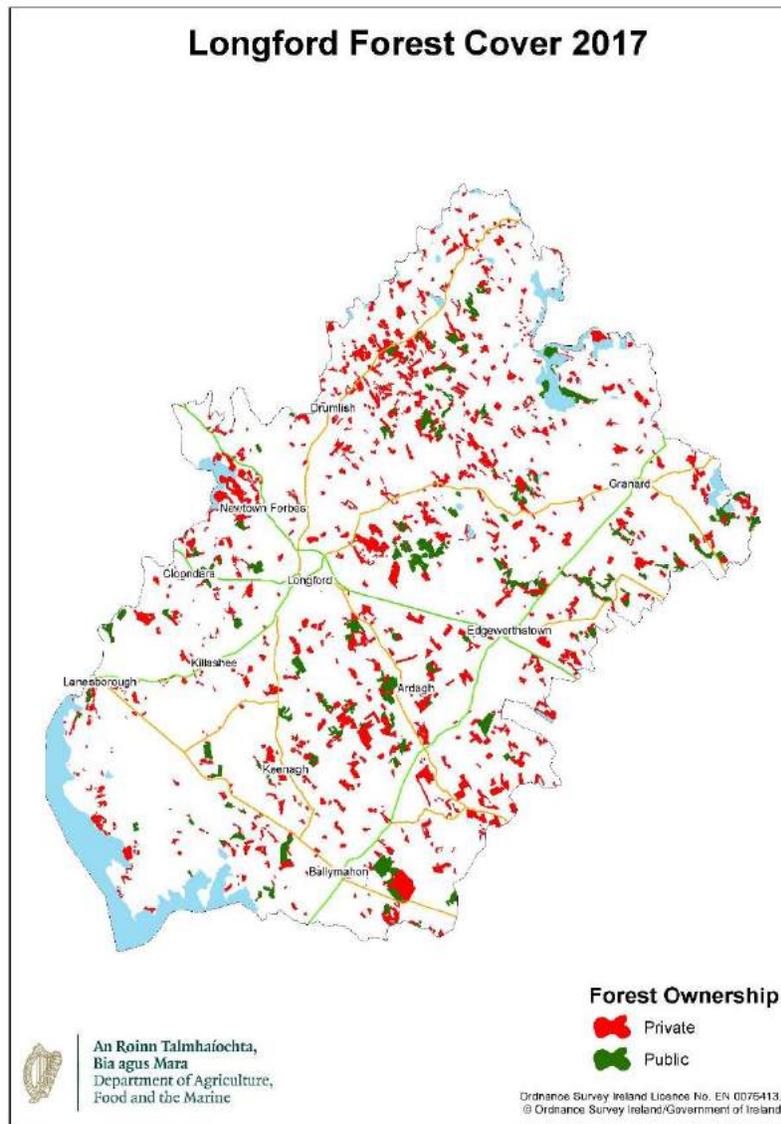
<b>Agriculture - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 9.13	Maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development, whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.
CPO 9.14	Support agricultural development as a contributory means of maintaining population and sustaining the rural economy, whilst maintaining and enhancing the standing of the rural environment through application of the EU Water Framework Directive and EU Habitats Directive.
CPO 9.15	Encourage and facilitate agricultural diversification into agri-businesses such as organic foods, rural tourism and small to medium sized enterprises, subject to the retention of the holding for primarily agricultural use and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area
CPO 9.16	Support the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification, agri business, rural tourism and renewable energy so as to sustain employment opportunities in rural areas
CPO 9.17	Facilitate the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural activities, whereby natural waters and watercourses, wildlife habitats,

	conservation areas and areas of ecological importance and other environmental assets are protected from the threat of pollution, and where development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside.
CPO 9.18	Ensure that agricultural-related development proposals do not give rise to any adverse negative impacts to archaeological and cultural heritage features of importance.
CPO 9.19	Support local employment and training opportunities, particularly where existing farm income is in decline and requires alternative skills and enterprises.
CPO 9.20	Support those who live and work in rural areas and who wish to remain on the landholding. Favourable consideration will be given to on-farm based diversification, which is complementary to existing agricultural practices, is operated as part of the farm holding and is intended to supplement existing farm income such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Specialist farming practices e.g. horticulture, equine facilities, poultry, mushroom growing, specialised animal breeding and bee keeping and honey production;</li> <li>▪ Farm enterprises such as processing, coops, farm supply stores and agri-business;</li> <li>▪ Production of organic and speciality foods to meet the increase in demand for such products;</li> <li>▪ Conversion of redundant farm buildings of vernacular importance for appropriate owner-run enterprises, such as agri-tourism.</li> </ul>
CPO 9.21	Encourage proposals for farm shops where it can be clearly demonstrated that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the products to be sold are primarily produce grown on the farm holding;</li> <li>▪ the scale and scope of the retailing proposed will not harm the viability or retail facilities in any nearby town or village; and</li> <li>▪ the proposed shop is operated by the owner of the farm and is ancillary to the main use of the property for agricultural activities.</li> </ul>
CPO 9.22	Ensure that agriculture development is in compliance with the EU “A Farm to Fork Strategy” 2020 and parallel to the 14 point EU Nature Restoration Plan in the EU “Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives.

### 9.3.3 Forestry

Forests and woodlands play an important role in terms of supporting rural employment and rural diversity, climate change management and carbon sequestration, biodiversity and as a source of renewable/alternative energy sources. Forests and woodlands also have a significant recreational and amenity value. Based on the 2017 National Forest Inventory Results from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), forestry accounted for 9,160 ha. or 8.4% of total land cover in County Longford, with 69.6% of forestry privately owned in the county.

**Figure 9.1: Forestry Cover and Ownership in County Longford based on 2017 National Forest Inventory Results (DAFM, 2017)**



The introduction of large-scale forestry areas, particularly conifers can have negative impacts on an area if they are not in harmony with the surrounding environment. Also they provide low biodiversity and ecological value if dominated by one single species. Therefore forestry activities must be appropriate in terms of nature and scale to the surrounding area, so they are not visually obtrusive or cause damage to important habitats or the ecology of the area. Planting of native woodlands will increase biodiversity value in the landscape.

Accordingly forestry is encouraged in appropriate areas, where it will not significantly impact upon designated habitats, archaeology, high amenity areas, protected views or scenic routes, be unacceptably obtrusive in the landscape, or present a risk to sensitive

ecosystems or water quality. This plan aims supports the sustainable growth of forestry as an economic activity whilst affording maximum protection to the rural environment, landscape and its ecological integrity. This plan acknowledges the tourism and amenity potential of afforested lands. This Plan supports the development of tourism and amenity facilities at such locations, subject to obtaining all relevant consents and the satisfaction of other technical planning requirements. In addition, the Council will encourage the provision of public access to new forests through walking and bridle paths, recreational areas and other similar facilities. This is further addressed in *Chapter 13: Green Infrastructure* of this Plan.

<b>Forestry - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 9.23	Encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on European Sites (SACs and SPAs); and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.
CPO 9.24	Promote forestry development of appropriate scale and character while ensuring that such development does not have a negative impact on the countryside, (including public access/rights of way, traditional walking routes and recreational facilities), or cause pollution or degradation of wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance.
CPO 9.25	Promote the avoidance of deforestation or commercial afforestation within European Sites unless directly relating to the management of the site for its qualifying interests.
CPO 9.26	Encourage the provision of public access in conjunction with relevant stakeholders to new forests through walking and bridle paths, recreational areas and other similar facilities.
CPO 9.27	Encourage private forestry developers to provide access through their forests for walking routes, bike trails, bridle paths, and other non-noise generating activities as part of an integrated development.
CPO 9.28	Actively partake in the Neighbour Wood Scheme (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) and identify areas at a local level that are suitable for woodland which are accessible and attractive to the local community.
CPO 9.29	Encourage the planting of diverse and native species, with higher proportions of broadleaf, to ensure rich and varied biodiversity value, particularly in areas where there is evidence of a dominant conifer species planted cumulatively within the landscape.
CPO 9.30	Require the repair of any road damaged due to forestry work by the forestry company responsible.
CPO 9.31	Ensure that buffer zones or exclusion zones are applied to aquatic zones and sites of archaeological importance respectively as deemed appropriate by the planning authority.
CPO 9.32	Support the development of appropriate and sustainable tourism development within forestry locations.

### 9.3.4 Horticulture

The production of fruit, vegetables and plants, or horticulture, is a significant element of the national economy, with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) sources estimating that the Horticulture Industry was worth €477m (farm gate value) in 2019. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest sector in terms of gross agricultural commodity output value with only beef, dairy and pigs larger sectors. This sector is expected to grow further as the demand for fresh local produce increases.

Further development in horticulture and in value added food and agricultural production in the county could provide opportunities for growth in this highly sustainable sector. This is particularly the case in the context of traditional intensive farming practices coming under increased scrutiny in terms of carbon emissions and adverse environmental and ecological impacts from such practices.

Local farmer and country markets also make important contributions to the food sector and local economy with markets held throughout the county on a weekly basis.

<b>Horticulture - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 9.33	Encourage the development of environmentally sustainable horticultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.
CPO 9.34	Support the horticulture and nursery stock industry as a means of diversifying agriculture and contributing to maintaining population in the rural area.
CPO 9.35	Support the development of country and farmers' markets as key trading areas for the sale of local agricultural and craft produce and to support their role as visitor attractions.

### 9.3.5 Equine Industry

The equine and bloodstock industry is a burgeoning sector in the rural Longford economy with the potential for further development within the county owing to its proximity to established meeting venues such as Kilbeggan, Roscommon and Sligo as well as a number of stud farms operating within the midlands area. In recognising the importance of the potential of the bloodstock industry, both in land use and in terms of direct and indirect employment generated by it, the Council will support and encourage the development of a vibrant bloodstock industry.

<b>Equine - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 9.36	Support equine related activities (e.g. farriers, bloodstock sales etc.) of an appropriate size and at suitable locations.
CPO 9.37	Ensure that equine based developments are located on suitable and viable landholdings and are subject to normal planning, siting and design considerations and related establishments.
CPO 9.38	Protect the equine industry from inappropriate development which would adversely affect its continued operation.

### 9.3.6 Renewable Energy

Rural areas have the potential to be harnessed for renewable energy projects – including wind, hydro and solar energy. In addition, waste to energy projects, such as biomass, anaerobic digestion and dry digestion may be suitable subject to planning and development considerations. The Council will support renewable energy projects in rural areas. However, it is mindful of the need to protect landscape sensitivities, residential amenities, views or prospects, public rights of way, wildlife, habitats, special areas of conservation, protected structures, bird migration paths etc. *Chapter 5 - Infrastructure* of this Plan outlines policies and objectives for renewable energy within the county, which includes rural areas.

### 9.3.7 Extractive Industries

The Council acknowledges the need for extractive industries in terms of supply of aggregate materials for the construction sector, transport infrastructure projects, and for the export market. However, the potential for conflict in the operation of these industries with wider environmental issues needs careful consideration.

The County contains a variety of raw materials critical to the construction industry in the form of sand, gravel, stone reserves including high purity limestones and shale used in cement and magnesia manufacture and base metal deposits. The potential of these resources to underpin construction output and provide employment and economic growth in the local and regional economy is recognised, as is the need to exploit such resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner.

By their nature, aggregates can only be worked where they geologically occur. In County Longford, these resources are concentrated in the northern uplands, transitional lands in the centre of the County and along the shoreline of Lough Ree<sup>1</sup>. The northern uplands, due to their elevated and conspicuous nature along Lough Ree are considered sensitive in landscape terms, particularly in the context of the generally flat topography and open character of Longford landscapes. The generally upland or elevated location of quarries has the potential for significantly affecting the local landscape by visual intrusion, especially when the development reaches primary ridgelines. Major ridgelines (i.e.

<sup>1</sup> *Aggregate Potential Mapping*, Geological Survey Ireland (2014). Available at: <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ee8c4c285a49413aa6f1344416dc9956>

skylines) are visible over a wide area and consequently are vulnerable features, because any development on, or in the vicinity of skylines has the potential to affect the visual integrity of a wide area.

Other potential adverse environmental and residential amenity impacts associated with extractive industries include traffic generation, vibration, dust, noise, water pollution, visual intrusion, loss of ground water supplies and impacts on the structural integrity of the road network.

In the assessment of planning applications related to the extractive industry, including related buildings and restoration/rehabilitation of existing pits, the Council will have regard to the policy objectives for the specific landscape character of the area (see *Chapter 14: Landscape Character, Annex 11: Landscape Character Assessment* and *Chapter 16: DM Management Standards*). Similarly, worked out quarries shall be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Planning Authority, which could include recreational, amenity and end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to inert waste as defined in the Waste Management (Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations, 2002 and shall be authorised under the provisions of the Waste Management Act, as amended.

The suitability of any extraction enterprise shall be assessed on the basis of the sensitivity of the local environment to such impacts, the scale of the development proposed and the capacity of the road network in the area to accommodate associated traffic. The Council will endeavour to ensure that those extractions which would result in a reduction of the visual amenity of areas of high amenity or damage to designated areas of scientific importance or of geological, ecological and other natural significance including all designated European Sites shall not be permitted.

The Council will also have regard to *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Quarries and Ancillary Activities 2004* (DoEHLG), and any updated guidance, when assessing applications relating to the extraction industry in the county. In this regard, bonds or levies will be required by the Council as a condition of any planning permission granted to ensure satisfactory reinstatement on completion of extraction. Also the Council will require the payment of a contribution towards the cost of road improvement and reinstatement works necessitated by permitted developments.

Aggregate development usually results in steep rock faces and a flooded pit. With reasonable and economic design, these can become valuable local habitats and even recreational amenities. Sand and gravel workings on the other hand can easily be restored to agricultural use. However, post closure uses must have regard to the likely land use context at the time of closure. Allowing rehabilitation of quarry faces to take place parallel to extraction operations and providing planting on earth mounds at quarry entrances significantly reduces visual impacts while allowing for ecological and habitat recovery. Road reinstatement should also be on-going during operations, rather than after the site has been exhausted, in the interests of road and traffic safety.

<b>Extractive Industry - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 9.39	Recognise the role and facilitate the exploitation of County Longford's natural aggregate resources in a manner which does not unduly impinge on the environmental quality and the visual and residential amenity of an area, while continuing to regulate the extraction of aggregates and to seek the delivery of environmental benefits in the form of sustainable habitat creation in conjunction with the restoration phases of development.
CPO 9.40	Facilitate the sourcing of aggregates for and the operation of the extractive industry in suitable locations, subject to the protection of landscape, environment, road network, heritage, visual quality and amenity of the area.
CPO 9.41	Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Existing and Candidate European Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and/or Special Protection Areas (SPAs))</li> <li>▪ Existing and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)</li> <li>▪ Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna and biodiversity value</li> <li>▪ Zones of archaeological potential</li> <li>▪ Important aquifers and sensitive groundwater resources</li> <li>▪ The vicinity of a recorded monument</li> <li>▪ Sensitive landscape areas</li> <li>▪ Established rights of way and walking routes</li> </ul>
CPO 9.42	Consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), with regard to any developments likely to have an impact on Sites of Geological Importance listed in the County Development Plan ( <i>Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment and Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment</i> ).
CPO 9.43	Ensure that extraction activities address key environmental, amenity, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation. <p>In the assessment of planning applications for new development, intensification of use or diversification of activity, the Council will have regard to the nature of the proposal, the scale of activity proposed, the impact on the adjoining road network, the effect on the environment including important groundwater and aquifer sources, natural drainage patterns and surface water systems and the likely effects that any proposed extractive industry may have on the existing landscape and amenities of the county, including public rights of way and walking routes.</p>
CPO 9.44	Ensure that all extractions shall be subjected to landscaping requirements and that worked out quarries should be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Planning Authority which could include recreational, biodiversity, amenity or other end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to inert waste and sites shall be authorised under the appropriate waste regulations.

### 9.3.8 Rural Tourism

Tourism is a growing sector within Longford's rural economy. The natural environment and landscape of the county together with key tourism assets such as the Royal Canal and its associated greenway, the Shannon Blueway, and a network of walkways and cycle tracks are significant attractions to a wide ranging consumer profile. Rural tourism has the potential to support and augment the county's economic profile. The Council will endeavour to facilitate the development of the tourist industry in rural areas in accordance with the policies and objectives outlined in *Chapter 10: Tourism*.

## 9.4 Rural Economy Climate Change Context and Associated Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a climate change context and associated actions.

### **Agriculture**

We live in a world with a population of 7.7 billion, expected to rise to 9.7 billion by 2050<sup>2</sup>. Agricultural production will need to increase by an estimated 70% to meet this projected demand. The associated demand for water will also be high, with the United Nations predicting a 40% worldwide water shortfall and a 55% increase in demand within the next 15 years; while 18% of the European population is already water stressed<sup>3</sup>.

The Irish Farmers Association (IFA) has announced that feeding the world while addressing climate change will be one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century. We must seek to diversify our diets and eliminate food waste, and we must deliver action across all sectors to ensure future food security. The future for agriculture is in the development of sustainably grown, local sourced, predominantly plant-based produce. The current farming model and its related industries consumes almost 40% of the world's habitable surface, whereas a vegan system would require a tenth of that, while reduced CO2 levels and protecting biodiversity and habitats<sup>4</sup>.

In Ireland we continue to import €79 billion of food each year, including foodstuff easily grown in<sup>5</sup>. Improving our self-sustainability will leave Ireland in a more resilient position during times of crisis, including those relating to climate change and/or pandemic, akin to the Covid-19 outbreak of 2020.

Encouragingly, Ireland's climate and grass-based production systems enables it to deliver the lowest carbon footprint of milk and fifth lowest for beef production in Europe<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (2019), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/world-population-prospects-2019-highlights.html>

<sup>3</sup> Irish Farmers Association (2015), 'Wider Debate Required Regarding Impact Water Scarcity is Having on Food Security', IFA, Environment and Rural Affairs, Brussels, 25 March 2015.

<https://www.ifa.ie/wider-debate-required-regarding-impact-water-scarcity-is-having-on-food-security/#.XqK0y1dKhPY>

<sup>4</sup> Owen, J. (2005), 'Farming Claims Half Earth's Land, New Maps Show', National Geographic, 9 December 2005

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/12/agriculture-food-crops-land/>

<sup>5</sup> Central Statistic Office (2017), 'Ireland's Trade in Goods 2017'

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-ti/irelandstradeingoods2017/food2017/>

<sup>6</sup> Webb, E., Soiles and Environment Advisor Tuam and Teagasc Galway/Clare (2019), 'Climate Change and Irish Agriculture', Media Article, 20 December 2019.

It plays an important role in our economy, employing 7.7% of the population and contributing 7.5% to Gross National Income (2018)<sup>7</sup>.

However, this exposure generates a third of Ireland's total GHG emissions, which as a proportion of overall emissions is higher than any other EU member state and expected to rise even further over the next five years.

Referenced within the RSES EMRA (2019), the concept of 'Smart Farming' in its application of resource efficiency through cost saving and environmental benefit is seen as an appropriate response at reducing our carbon emissions. CAP (2019) meanwhile supports the diversification within agriculture and land use to develop sustainable and circular value chains and business models for lower carbon intensity farming, including, organic production, protection and enhancement of biodiversity and water quality, and the production of bio-based products and bioenergy through the Common Agricultural Policy and implementation of the '*National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy*' (2018). If current farmland practices shifted to regenerative, organic approaches, 100% of the annual global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would be sequestered.

Teagasc have published 'Improving Farm Sustainability – Practical Tools for Farmers' (2019) setting out the following seven actions to deliver improved 'farm sustainability':

- Improving Economic Breeding Index (EBI) and extending the grazing season;
- Substituting clover for chemical fertiliser;
- Changing to protected urea;
- Reducing losses from slurry;
- Improved energy efficiency and renewable energy;
- Incorporating forestry and hedgerows on farm;
- Using the Agriculture Sustainability Support and Advice Programme (ASSAP) Advisors to help improve water quality.

More locally and within a country with a high percentage of peatland cover, collaboration with Bord na Mona as one of Ireland's largest landholders, must not be underestimated or underdeveloped. Aside from their key goals that include the rehabilitation of our peatlands, advancement in solar and wind power, and innovative waste regeneration, Bord na Mona's agricultural portfolio includes organic and sustainable aquaculture and the cultivation of willow, medicinal herbs and energy crops.

### **Forestry**

The depletion of forests in Ireland from approximately 80% land cover to 1% at the start of the 20th century has been largely due to the exploitation of timber, competition from agricultural enterprises and the development of human settlements. Today 11% of Ireland is covered with forestry, mostly non-native species<sup>8</sup>. The main objective of these

<https://www.teagasc.ie/publications/2019/climate-change-and-irish-agriculture.php>

<sup>7</sup> Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2019), '*Annual Review and Outlook for Agriculture, Food and the Marine 2019*'.

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/foodindustrydevelopmenttrademarkets/agri-foodandtheconomy/publications/annualreviewandoutlook2019/chapter-1.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.teagasc.ie> (2020), '*History of Forestry in Ireland*'.

<https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/advice/general-topics/history-of-forestry-in-ireland/>

forests has been to develop Irish grown timber that can be used for construction, furniture or energy production, and thereby reducing the reliance on wood imports. Ireland's forests continue to play an important role in helping with climate change mitigation, through carbon sequestrations and the provision of renewable fuels and raw materials.

Irish forestry is a major carbon sink and afforestation is the most significant mitigation option that is available to Ireland's land use sector. Ireland is committed to the practice of Sustainable Forest Management, which, under the Helsinki and Lisbon Agreements, is understood to mean:

*“The stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regenerative capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions as local, national and global levels and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems”.*

A key objective of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's 'Growing for the Future – A Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in Ireland' (1996) has remained *“to develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to national economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment”.*

Today the industry employs an estimated 12,000 people, set to increase to 12,000, and generates €170m per annum through the forest recreational sector<sup>9</sup>.

### ***Rural Economy Climate Change Actions***

Longford County Council shall:

- A9.1** Require high-speed broadband connection for commercial and/or industrial developments applications, where proposed in rural areas.
- A9.2** Require all agricultural applications to be accompanied by evidence of valid GLAS (Green Low Carbon Agri-Environmental Scheme) or equivalent scheme, where available.
- A9.3** Require all future agricultural applications to be accompanied by a 'Soil Fertility and Soil Nutrient Management Plan', unless deemed otherwise by the Planning Authority.
- A9.4** Encourage the development of agriculture under the following:
  - The scaling up of cereal, fruit and vegetable production
  - Training people in the proper stewardship of the land
  - Protection of our environment
  - Elimination of all chemical use
  - Remediation of our freshwater lakes
  - Recovery of biodiversity
  - The building of regenerative systems

<sup>9</sup> Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (2016), 'Annual Report 2016'.

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/publications/2017/FinalDAFM2016AnnualReport090817.pdf>

- Educating people on home economics
- Incentivising food technologists to create better systems for managing scarce resources.

**A9.5** Require forestry applications to adhere to the Department of Agriculture's '*Forest Biodiversity Guidelines*' (2000) including:

- Favour broadleaf where appropriate site conditions exist, planted in swathes;
- Provide for a minimum 80/20 mix of silvicultural compatible tree species;
- Designate 15% of the forest area (including neighbouring land use in sites less than ten hectares as 'Areas of Biodiversity Enhancement' (e.g. 5/10% open space alongside 5/10% retained habitats).

**A9.6** Professionally prepare an implement the recommendation therein of a county wide Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Plan, to include protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increased efforts to prevent forest degradation.

**A9.7** Seek access permission and use to all existing or planned service access routes and entranceways within a forestry development, for the sole amenity of Local Authority developed trackways or similar, wherever considered advantageous to improved connectivity across its functional area.

## Chapter 10: Tourism

### 10.1 Introduction

Longford is an attractive rural County with a network of small towns and very dynamic active communities. It's people, history, culture and natural assets lend themselves to the development of a Tourism Sector as one of our great untapped resources. Strategically located in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Longford is well placed to exploit opportunities in slow and experiential tourism, offering both indoor and outdoor experiences. A vibrant tourism offer has the potential to bring economic benefits to the County in terms of jobs and investment.

Since the adoption of the County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, County Longford has made significant and substantial progress in developing its Tourism infrastructure within the County. The Council in partnership with its people communities and external agencies has taken the approach of developing sustainable and climate friendly tourism infrastructure that also benefits its people in terms of employment, health and recreational amenities. Developments such as Center Parcs, the Granard, Edgeworthtown and Corlea Visitor Centres, the Royal Canal Greenway, and a network of walking and cycling routes throughout the County has opened up the area for both visitors and locals alike.

As tourism knows no borders Longford actively works towards a cross regional approach by working with its neighbouring Counties, Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland on Tourism initiatives and strategies. The development of new tourism infrastructure in the Region is increasing the numbers of people visiting the County. Local businesses, accommodation and food providers have seen the benefits of this. There is now a need to continue this good work of developing tourism infrastructure, while developing itineraries and increasing the level of profile and marketing, accommodation and related facilities to cater for these new and increasing visitors.

### 10.2 Aim

The aim of this section is to encourage and provide for the continued expansion of the tourism sector. This shall be achieved by the continued development and enhancements of visitor attractions and activities capitalising on our natural and cultural assets in a sustainable manner. Our local communities, towns and villages in partnership with the Council shall be supported and encouraged to continue their great work in developing destination locations and activities to enhance the visitor experience.

Longford County Council is committed to working with other relevant statutory agencies, private sector groups, community associations and individuals to develop a coherent and sustainable approach that is necessary to successfully develop and market County Longford on a national and global tourism stage. It is critically important that all Tourism developments and activities are nature enhancing, carbon neutral and climate friendly. Longford puts substantial emphasis on sustainable tourism with

priority projects for walking, cycling, exploring the outdoors, immersing in arts, culture and heritage and experiencing nature.

The approach of the County Development Plan Tourism Strategy is to position Longford as 'a go' to County in terms of protecting and enriching our natural environment while encouraging healthy and sustainable means of tourism and transport.

## 10.3 Background

### 10.3.1 Tourism in Ireland

National tourism policy falls within the remit of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport; while national agencies, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, deliver and implement the adopted policy. Ireland is promoted nationally and internationally using 'Brand Ireland', under which four distinct experience propositions are used to define the appealing characteristics of each region. Longford sits within the newest of the four brands, 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands'. Longford County Council has its own Tourism Committee and tourism strategy which it uses to develop and promote tourism in Longford.



### 10.3.2 Tourism in County Longford

Longford is a county with considerable human, heritage and cultural assets, along with a rich and scenic natural environment. Coupled with our vibrant towns, villages, active communities and easily accessible location, it is evidently a county of high potential for tourism.

Historically Fáilte Ireland and CSO visitor research has included County Longford as part of a Midlands region, which has not experienced a growth in visitor numbers commensurate to other parts of Ireland. To promote the region Fáilte Ireland in 2018 launched '*Ireland's Hidden Heartlands*' as its fourth regional experience brand which includes all of County Longford. It promises visitors a slow-paced experience, immersed in the natural environment and culture of the region.

Activities such as walking, cycling, kayaking, boating, bird-watching, fishing, and watersports are central to this *Hidden Heartland* theme, along with the chance for visitors to engage with local communities, their culture, crafts and local food. Our welcoming Longford people together with the woods, bogs, and waterways of Longford are some of our major assets to support and promote this tourism theme. The development and opening of Longford Forest Center Parcs also represents a substantial investment in the County and a vote of confidence in Longford as a natural tourism and people orientated County.

## 10.4 Policy Context

The development of the Tourism sector in Longford supports the provisions of the National Strategies on Tourism, the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and supports the Settlement Strategy for the County as detailed in the Core Strategy. Key to this is creating a tourism product that provides increased linkages and targeted integration of key tourism potential opportunities with the settlement structure and its hinterland, and thereby optimising economic benefits for the County.

### 10.4.1 People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2015

This National Strategy aims “*to facilitate a vibrant, attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country; is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas, and is a sector within which people want to work*”. Implementation of this strategy is being realised through a series of Three-Year Action Plans.

### 10.4.2 Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2018

The current National Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 places an emphasis on regional growth and season extension and on helping to build the attractiveness of some of our less well-known attractions and regions internationally, thereby creating a more even spread of tourism growth across the country and supporting less-developed tourism areas.

#### 10.4.3 Tourism Development & Innovation, A Strategy for Investment 2016- 2022, Fáilte Ireland, 2016

This Strategy includes a strong focus on building memorable visitor experiences, developing a world-class industry, and creating visitor-friendly infrastructure and communities throughout the country. Much of the capital investment nationally is focused on the four regional experience brands, with an emphasis on increased revenue generation from tourism and alignment with the brands.

#### 10.4.4 National Planning Framework (NPF), 2040

Tourism is part of National Strategic Outcome 7 of the NPF, 'Enhanced Amenities and Heritage' which requires investment in well-designed public realm, recreational infrastructure and rural amenities including activity-based tourism and trails such as Greenways, Blueways and Peatways, with the development of a strategic national network of these trails highlighted as a priority (NPO 21). In addition, NPO 22 notes the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

Longford is primarily a rural and agricultural county. The NPF clearly states that Tourism and Agriculture are inextricably linked in rural areas, given that agriculture, in many places, creates and maintains the landscape upon which tourism trades. The maintenance of access to our landscape and the creation of new accesses are dependent on maintaining good links with the agricultural sector. Likewise, the built, cultural and natural assets which constitute the 'raw material' of the tourism industry are also essential to the production capability of the agricultural sector. This is relevant in Longford as a rural county. Tourism has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland.

#### 10.4.5 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, (RSES) Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly, 2019

The Strategy identifies growth enablers for the region which includes supporting rural areas by harnessing natural resources to develop renewables, recreation and tourism opportunities including green infrastructure planning and the development of an integrated network of Greenways, Blueways and Peatways while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced. The RSES recognises Longford as having a rich cultural heritage with potential to develop as a recreation and tourism hub, building on its proximity to attractions such as Center Parcs, the Royal Canal and the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park. Longford Town has the potential to expand its role as a hub for enterprise, employment and tourism.

In regard to rural areas the RSES sets out a number of Regional Policy objectives which include (RPO 4.84) supporting the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification, agri-business, rural tourism and renewable energy so as to sustain the employment opportunities in rural areas. It also supports the longer-term strategic planning for the industrial peatland areas. The RSES also seeks to support tourism development and promotional branding to ensure that areas associated with *Ireland's Hidden Heartlands* and *Ireland's Ancient East* are developed and promoted to tap into the economic potential of rural areas. In this regard, the RSES makes specific reference to the proposed Granard Motte Heritage Park as a case study in the use of

the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) to develop a major tourism and amenity attraction at the site.

#### 10.4.6 Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, (Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport, 2018)

This Strategy recognises the high potential of Greenways as economic contributors to rural communities through increased tourism. In order to ensure the maximum benefit in this regard, future greenways funded under this strategy will be required to be ‘strategic, scenic, sustainable, offer lots to see and do and substantially segregated from vehicular traffic and offering shared use between pedestrians and cyclists’.

#### 10.4.7 Action Plan for Rural Development, Realising our Rural Potential (DAHRRGA, 2017)

This Plan by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA) highlights the potential of activity tourism to contribute to economic growth in rural areas.

#### 10.4.8 Longford Tourism Strategy 2017-2022

The County Tourism Strategy was prepared by Longford County Council working in partnership with County Longford Tourism Committee, the representative body of all tourism interests within County Longford. The Strategy sets out the overall Vision for tourism in County Longford over the relevant period. The primary goal of the Longford Tourism Strategy is to achieve positive outcomes in a set of identified actions over the year life of this strategy. This will be achieved through the fulfilment of the following key objectives:

- Developing tourism infrastructure
- Delivery of visitor centric experiences
- Development of a Longford Tourism Brand
- Generating greater awareness of Longford as a tourism destination.

#### 10.4.9 The Shannon, Mighty River of Ireland, A Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 – 2030 (Feb. 2020)

In April 2018 Fáilte Ireland set up a new marketing brand for the Midlands including Longford called the *Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands*. The purpose of this new brand is to encourage more visitors and tourists to explore the region’s natural assets such as the River Shannon and its walking trails, boating, fishing, greenways and woodlands. As part of this a new plan called ‘*The Shannon, Mighty River of Ireland, A Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 – 2030, Feb. 2020*’ has been prepared by Fáilte Ireland in association with Waterways Ireland and the relevant Local Authorities. The objective of this plan is to reposition the River Shannon as a key destination in Ireland identifying visitor experiences based on the region’s natural and cultural assets.

Longford is identified as part of ‘Discovery Zone 2; Mid Shannon’ in the Shannon Tourism Masterplan. This area stretches from Clondra in the north to Portumna in the south of the region. The area is described as an elemental zone where lakes, rivers and canals meander through wetlands, peatlands and lowland farms, creating the distinctive ‘soft’ landscapes of the region. Lough Ree is described as the beating heart

of Mid Shannon, a wonderful mosaic of open waters, hidden bays, monastic islands and wooded shorelines, renowned for angling, cruising, sailing and kayaking.

Specifically, for Longford and the Mid Shannon zone the Shannon Tourism Masterplan recommends Priority Project DZ2.3 Wet'n'Wild Peatlands of Mid Shannon. This involves developing an integrated Discovery Zone focused on peatlands, environmental and industrial heritage, recreational opportunities such as walking, hiking, cycling, guided tours and outdoor classrooms to demonstrate nature, biodiversity and the impact of climate change.

The Shannon Tourism Masterplan also identifies for the Mid Shannon zone that proposals are afoot to create a dedicated Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve, celebrating the natural heritage of the lake, raised bogs and wetlands, as well as proposals for rewilding of (post-production) peatlands. The proposed Biosphere Reserve project is a collaboration between the relevant Local Authorities including Longford County Council, Bord na Móna and the National Parks and Wildlife Services, Waterways Ireland and Failte Ireland. It is intended to achieve the UNESCO Biosphere status during the life time of this plan. (see *Appendix 5: Tourism - Biosphere Reserve Map*).

#### 10.4.10 *Just Transition (2020)*

With the end of peat production, the future use of the Bord na Móna Bogs is currently being considered under the Just Transition program. No doubt this will produce many innovative projects as well as rewilding large sections of cut away bog land. The Cutaway bogs have potential for beneficial uses including renewable energy, herb, fish and food production, birch water, biodiversity, amenity uses, water storage and other infrastructure. Corlea Amenity Park is an example of a cutaway area that has been developed as an amenity with high biodiversity value, with restored wetland and woodland habitats. As part of the Development Plan this progress is to be developed and built upon.

## 10.5 Policy Objectives

### 10.5.1 General Tourism Development

Having regard to national and regional tourism policy, the Council is committed to supporting the growth of tourism in the county. To achieve this, it shall take full advantage of national, regional and local initiatives and funding schemes to maximise the potential of our people, rich natural, heritage, cultural, and amenity assets. In reaching this potential, it is essential that a coordinated and collaborative approach is taken with relevant agencies, tourism businesses and communities throughout the county.

The Council will continue to collaborate with relevant agencies and stakeholders through the County Tourism Committee and other established working groups and will continue to support collective development and marketing initiatives underway, including the Royal Canal Greenway. A strong emphasis will be placed on securing sustainable tourism growth, whereby the quality of our landscapes, natural environment and cultural heritage is protected and safeguarded for the long-term enjoyment of these assets.

Council policy is to support tourism while also facilitating the protection of the County's environmental assets that tourism is dependent upon including lakes, green infrastructure and places of cultural heritage which are further outlined in *Chapter 6: Regeneration*, *Chapter 9: Rural Enterprise*, *Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage* and *Chapter 13: Green Infrastructure* of this plan.

The outdoor Activity and Adventure Tourism Market can be developed in Longford by building upon the opening of Center Parcs in the County. Given that the activity and adventure tourism market is considered to be potentially one of the most significant for the County, with an array of many opportunities that promote and facilitate this type of development include walking, cycling, water sports, camping and glamping. The various Longford Greenways, Bogs, Woods, Rivers, Lakes and rural countryside among others all fall within this category.

The potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes shall be monitored and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration shall include not only impacts on natural heritage but also potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals. Visitors to Longford shall be encouraged to arrive by sustainable means of transport and to leave their private vehicles at home.

### **10.5.2 Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism Principles for Tourism Development.**

It is intended to encourage the use of Sustainable Tourism and where relevant Ecotourism principles in the development of Tourism products in Longford. The intention of the Council is to encourage car free tourism and to encourage more longer area-based stays, based on enhanced promotion and development of safe greenway cycling routes, and attractive walking and hiking routes for all ages and abilities. There is an established criterion which must be met in order to qualify for the ecotourism label. These cover a wide range of practices in eight key components of ecotourism as follows:

- Environmentally sustainable practices
- Natural area focus
- Interpretation and Education
- Contributing to Conservation
- Benefiting local Communities
- Visitor Satisfaction
- Responsible Marketing and Communication
- Cultural Awareness and Respect.

Longford County Council promotes and encourages the use of the above ecotourism principles in its approach to tourism in the County. The Council shall develop its tourism products and projects to educate the visitor about our natural environment, heritage and local culture. Every effort shall be made to make all our activities carbon neutral, climate friendly and contributing to protect and enhance our natural and community environment.

### 10.5.3 General Tourism Development Policy Objectives

<b>General Tourism - County Development Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO10.1	Continue to support the implementation of the County's Tourism Strategy in line with national and regional policy in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, EMRA, adjoining Local Authorities, tourism businesses and communities and other supporting agencies. As part of this process Longford County Council will liaise with Fáilte Ireland as required on the development of its strategy, as well as any smaller scale plans or programmes that are prepared to give effect to that strategy. Any such plans, programmes or policies shall be screened or assessed in full compliance with EU Directives including the SEA Directive and the Habitats Directive.
CPO 10.2	Ensure all tourism developments shall integrate climate change adaptation, the enhancement of nature and biodiversity measures and the protection of the natural environment and the County's heritage into their activities, plans and proposals.
CPO 10.3	Utilise the County's natural and heritage resources to foster the development of tourism in a sustainable manner which complements the scale, quality and unique features of the location and the County. Protecting and enhancing these sensitive resources shall be the primary aim of any tourism development.
CPO 10.4	Engage and collaborate with key stakeholders including Fáilte Ireland, relevant agencies, sectoral representatives and local communities to develop the tourism sector in Longford to ensure that the economic potential is developed for the County, to support local business development and encourage new enterprise opportunities.
CPO 10.5	Promote the development of sustainable and high-quality visitor attractions, activities and infrastructure, enabling an increase in the overall capacity, encouraging longer area-based stays and long-term development of the county's tourism industry, subject to appropriate siting and design criteria and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.
CPO 10.6	Identify all funding opportunities, including local, national and European funding schemes and seek to maximise the benefit of such funding opportunities for the County.
CPO 10.7	Protect and conserve the natural, built recreational and cultural heritage features which add value to the visitor experience in County Longford and seek to restrict and prevent developments which would damage or detract from the quality of scenic areas and identified natural and cultural heritage assets. Particular care shall be taken in regard to the siting of noise generating sports and golf course development so as not to conflict with the enjoyment of areas used for informal recreation and existing public rights of way and walking routes.
CPO10.8	Promote increased access to state and semi-state lands such as Bord na Móna Bogs, Coilte Forests, Waterways, etc., together with monuments and historic properties, for recreation and tourism

	purposes, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive, National Monuments Act and other provisions and policies to protect and safeguard these resources and the relevant local infrastructure.
CPO10.9	Support the Shannon Tourism Masterplan and tourism projects as a result of the Just Transition process and to support an application for UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for the Lough Ree area during the lifetime of this plan. Continue to support the development and expansion of tourism-related enterprise including visitor attractions, services and accommodation, food and craft businesses.
CPO10.10	Prepare and update a comprehensive tourism mapping and signage plan for the county, in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland, ensuring that new signage is consistent and complementary to signage planned for <i>Ireland's Hidden Heartlands</i> Regional Experience Brand. Signpost and waymark walking and cycle routes with appropriately designed quality signage and information boards and public lighting where appropriate shall be developed.
CPO10.11	To support the future development of Destination Experience Development Plans (DEDP's) which may be developed by Fáilte Ireland during the lifetime of this development plan and to ensure continued collaboration and alignment with Fáilte Ireland and tourism stakeholders to ensure successful implementation and delivery of these DEDP's.
CPO10.12	Support opportunities for increased local tourism and the move to more sustainable home holidays as a result of climate change and warmer summers, within limits of existing infrastructure and sensitive habitats.
CPO10.13	Monitor and manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant detrimental impacts, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.
CPO10.14	Consider applications for tourism development in line with the planning criteria as set down in this plan (see <i>Chapter 15: Development Management Standards</i> ), and which will also be subject to high standards of design and materials particularly given their sensitive locations.
CPO10.15	Support and promote the use of the Sustainable Tourism and where appropriate, ' <i>Ecotourism Principles of Tourism Development</i> ' in all proposed tourism activities in the County.
CPO10.16	Ensure the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.

### 10.6 Destination Towns

Visitors to Longford can be assured that there will be plenty of quality activities for them to see and do along with a range of accommodation options and restaurants. Longford's destination towns and villages including Longford, Granard, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Lanesboro all offer high-quality visitor services

incorporating a range of accommodation, restaurants, cafes, visitor attractions and guided tours. To attract increasing numbers of visitors, the provision of these facilities to serve tourism will need to be promoted and increased.

#### Longford Town:

Longford Town is the primary destination for visitors with its strong commercial, arts and cultural scene. It has many must-visit attractions including St. Mels Cathedral, the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (commonly and historically referred to as ‘the Mall’ Park and the Royal Canal Greenway. High-quality local food and beverage is available, with a concentration of many restaurants, pubs and its very own craft beer brewery. There is an historic walking trail around Longford Town to compliment a visit to Longford Cathedral and highlight the many buildings and locations of interest in the county town.

#### Granard:

The vibrant market town of Granard has a rich history and legacy since the earliest of times including the Norman period, the rebellion of 1798, the Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan story, and in more recent times Eddie Macken and his prize-winning horse ‘Boomerang’. All have the potential of telling this great towns story to visitors and locals alike.

Granard Norman Motte Visitor Centre, ‘*Knights & Conquests*’ is currently being developed to present a unique experience of Norman life in Ireland adjoining the Motte, a National Monument in close proximity to the town centre. The Motte site itself and public access to it, and given its sensitivity, shall be managed by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Office of Public Works.

#### Edgeworthstown:

Edgeworthstown is another attractive town at the gateway to Longford from Dublin. *The Maria Edgeworth Festival* is held every May and the visitor centre in Edgeworthstown gives an interesting insight into the history of the town and its role in the development of education in the world. This centre has been developed to give a glimpse into the life of Maria Edgeworth and her ground-breaking development of education provision as well as her writings and novels. The fine town of Edgeworthstown with the estate house, rectory and its new library offers a wonderful visitor experience to learn the story of this unique town.

#### Ballymahon:

*The Goldsmith Festival* and Centre in the Library in Ballymahon presents an insight into the life and career of Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), a literary genius and a native son of Longford. There is an annual festival associated with Goldsmith in Ballymahon every June bank holiday weekend and a celebration of his birthday in November. The town itself with its fine Georgian layout and architecture, River Inny, Bog Lane theatre, pubs restaurant and community is primed to be developed as a tourism and cultural centre for the Midlands Region.

#### Lanesborough:

Lanesborough is a beautiful town located at the top end of Lough Ree where it links into the River Shannon. As well as its vibrant main street it has the Commons North Amenity Park running along the lake shore with native woodland and reed beds. A

Lough Ree Visitor Centre shall be developed in the town to tell the storey of Lough Ree and its unique position not only in human life and experiences but also as a nature reserve for common, rare and endangered wildlife species and biodiversity.

Lough Ree Power Station and the Bord na Móna work depots in Lanesborough offer opportunities for repurposing for tourism opportunities. With the ending of peat harvesting by Bord na Móna and the impending closure of the power station at Lanesborough the potential of the related industrial heritage sites for tourism is being investigated and should be considered as part of the Just Transition process. The Bord na Móna work depots offer opportunities for reuse as visitor centres, in addition to the provision of tourism and glamping facilities on the Bogs and associated peatlands. The power station has the potential for utilising the existing station for various activities including a museum, zip wire and a viewing tower across the Shannon. This ties in with *Chapter 6: Regeneration* and *Chapter 9: Rural Enterprise*.

Other Towns and Villages:

Other towns and villages such as Newtowncashel, Kenagh, Ardagh, Ballinalee and Ballinamuck etc. all offer unique experiences for the visitor to enjoy. The Ardagh Heritage and Creativity Centre provides educational facilities and training particularly for the young.

<b>Destination Towns – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 10.17	Continue to support the development and promotion of Longford and its destination towns as urban tourism destinations, providing memorable and high-quality visitor experiences in their own right and providing services for visitors to the range of attractions and activities in the surrounding area. Support and promote Longford's destination towns by maximising the impact of branding and marketing through providing and sharing resources.
CPO10.18	Encourage the celebration of the unique attributes of our towns and villages in the design and delivery of all visitor interpretation, signage and public realm schemes in order to provide tourists with a strong 'Sense of Place' and a more memorable visit.
CPO10.19	Support the development and promotion of Longford town as the principle visitor services centre and hub for Fáilte Ireland's <i>Hidden Heartlands</i> in the County. Promote and develop its historical and cultural attractions and its recreation and amenity potential having regard to its natural amenities including the River Camlin, the Royal Canal and its links to the Longford Bogs and River Shannon.
CPO10.20	Facilitate the enhancement and development of Longford's Camlin Quarter, as a location where cultural heritage and artistic visitor attractions can be clustered, offering a unique and marketable tourism proposition. Promote the location of the Camlin River, Connolly Barracks and the unique Mall Park on the town trail as part of the Longford Rebel Trail.
CPO10.21	Support community projects and industry-led collaborative tourism initiatives which aim to enhance and promote the visitor offering in towns and villages. These shall include trail heads for the Rebel Trail, Literary Trail and Mid Shannon Wilderness Park (see <i>Appendix 5: Tourism - Literary &amp; Rebel Trail Map</i> )
CP010.22	Support the development and promotion of Granard's Knights & Conquests Heritage Centre, Edgeworthtowns Maria Edgeworth Centre, Ballinalee, Corlea, Ballinamuck visitor centres and Ardagh Heritage and Creativity Centre.
CPO10.23	Support the local community and businesses to expand and enhance the visitor offering at Lanesborough, taking account of the natural heritage at this location and to animate the story of Bord na Móna and the power station.
CPO10.24	Support the repurposing of the Lough Ree Power Station and Bord na Móna Mount Dillon infrastructure and associated work depots for alternative uses in association with the Just Transition process. A Lough Ree Visitor Centre shall be developed in Lanesboro to tell the storey of Lough Ree and its unique position not only in human life but also its importance for natural heritage.
CPO10.25	Support the development of a strong evening and night-time tourism economy, in collaboration with arts and music venues, festivals and events committees, the Longford and local Chambers of Commerce and Town Teams. This shall include support for various festivals

	including the Marquee in Drumlish, the Padraic Colum, the Goldsmith and Edgeworth Literary Festivals and Lanesboro's food festival ' <i>The Taste of the Lakelands</i> '.
CH10.26	Develop public open spaces in all of Longford's towns that have good connectivity and are accessible for safe, secure walking and cycle routes.
CH10.27	To facilitate, where appropriate, proposals to improve access for all at existing tourism sites and facilities, and to require all new tourism related developments to ensure the development is accessible to everyone, regardless of their age, or ability. It is an objective of the Council to support the provision of accessible tourism and to achieve this, all projects and improvements will adopt the principles of Universal Design. The Council shall undertake an Accessibility Audit within the lifetime of the Development plan to inform Accessible Tourism priority investments at key tourism hubs subject to the necessary resources.

### 10.7 Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services

The provision of appropriate and high-quality infrastructure to meet the needs of visitors is fundamental to Longford reaching its potential for a thriving tourism sector. In general, such developments shall be encouraged to locate within or in close proximity to existing towns and villages where they can avail of existing public services, commercial and community facilities providing for a suitable range and critical mass of services. It is recognised, however, that sometimes tourism developments are more appropriately located in alternative locations subject to the provision of the relevant required infrastructure.

The Council recognises the potential for pressure being placed on the County's natural and heritage amenities through increased tourism. In this regard it is important that our precious heritage is protected and that the provision for increased tourism activity is in line with the provision of the required infrastructure to support such development. The Council shall ensure that our natural amenities are enhanced and remain protected and unspoiled. Tourism-related development proposals will be required to demonstrate a high standard of design, with strong consideration given to a proposal's potential impact on its surroundings in terms of scale, intensity and the potential for the proposal to add significantly to the quality of the visitor experience.

The Council recognises that the provision of accommodation such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels, and glamping sites are essential to enable growth in the tourism sector. The Council shall support the development of tourism in the county by encouraging the provision of a wide range of tourist accommodation types and restricting development that would be likely to reduce the capacity of the resource and/or have a detrimental impact on the local environment.

<b>Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO10.28	Facilitate the development of high-quality tourist accommodation such as hotels, hostels, B&B's / guesthouses, camping and glamping etc. at suitable locations, in both urban and rural settings throughout the county, subject to ensuring a high standard of design, layout, landscape and environmental protection, the provision of adequate infrastructure.
CPO10.29	Encourage the upgrade of existing accommodation facilities including to meet Fáilte Ireland's Standards' as appropriate, subject to development management standards as set out in this plan, ensuring that new and existing developments do not negatively impact on sensitive environments.
CPO10.30	Facilitating the development of visitor infrastructure linked to natural physical, geological and heritage environments, while ensuring that it does not detract from the status, quality and value of these environments.
CPO10.31	Support, implement and require best-practice environmental management and climate proofing of tourism related developments and activities, such as accommodation, restaurants, activity providers, festivals and events and tourism enterprises, to include zero climate impact, energy efficiency, waste management, and recycling.
CPO10.32	Support rural tourism initiatives such as agri-farm tourism, health and wellbeing centres, glamping, trekking and trails together with new opportunities to promote food and nature tourism, in order to sustain employment in rural areas.
CPO10.33	Encourage land owners and private businesses to cooperate with the development of off-road tracks and trails and tourism infrastructure in rural areas. Where necessary to ensure the provision and completion of this infrastructure the Council shall use its CPO powers to acquire the required property. The Council will endeavour to exhaust all options of voluntary agreements before considering using these CPO powers.

### **10.8 History, Heritage and Ancient Sites**

Many of Longford's heritage and cultural assets which are of significant importance and value and are already open to the public including St. Mels Cathedral, Corlea Trackway Centre, Granard's Knights & Conquests, Edgeworthtown's Maria Edgeworth Centre and the Ballinamuck Visitor Centre. Increased marketing, investment and support is required in order to increase revenue generated to the local economy from these attractions, both directly and indirectly. The creation of stronger linkages between attractions, activities, visitor services and accommodation is critical to increasing visitor dwell time and encouraging multi-day visits to the county with resulting economic benefit.

The *Rebel Trail* presents North Longford's wonderful and unique history of involvement in insurrections and rebellions from the time of the Normans up to the

War of independence. The Rebel Longford Trail identifies all of the important locations and presents their history in an easy and enjoyable way to follow. The trail can be joined at any of the key locations such as Edgeworthstown, Granard, Clonfin, Ballinalee, Longford Town and Ballinamuck. There is an annual celebration of The Táin Trail which passes through Clondra, Longford Town and on to Granard.

The *Literary Trail* presents the rich literary tradition of County Longford which encompasses connections with Jane Austin and Oscar Wilde. Also the renowned author Maria Edgeworth was based in Edgeworthstown and her story is well presented in the Old School House in the town. Oliver Goldsmith is represented in Ballymahon Library. There is also a John Keegan Casey trail identifying the various locations where he wrote poetry and the various schools where he thought. Padraic Colum, poet, novelist, collector of folklore and one of the leading figures of the Irish Literary Revival, is celebrated in Longford Town as his place of birth.

Longford's natural heritage cannot be underestimated for its tourism value. Our well-preserved natural environment, and traditional farming can be found in abundance along our waterways, lakeshores, bogs, greenways and trails. Activities such as back to nature, bird- watching and foraging are becoming increasingly popular as 'slow and experiential tourism' becomes more prevalent internationally. Visitors targeted under the *Ireland's Hidden Heartlands* brand proposition are those who want this more relaxed pace of holiday, where they can attune with nature and go 'off grid'.

Adequate recognition of the value of investing in heritage conservation will reduce the potential conflict with loss of authenticity and appreciation of a place, tourism provision and more informed planning decisions. Investing in heritage in terms of placemaking will benefit not just tourism but the local citizen. The protection and conservation of the County's heritage assets and features will be of paramount importance, including natural and cultural heritage, in order to safeguard the quality of assets into the future. (see *Chapter 11; Built and Cultural heritage and Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment*).

<b>History, Heritage and Ancient Sites - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO10.34	Support the implementation of the County Heritage Plan by encouraging sustainable tourism enterprise development associated with rural life style, landscape, natural and heritage locations to develop the Longford's infrastructure and gain the benefit from increased visitors, subject to development management standards.
CPO10.35	Prepare and implement a strategy for access to heritage routes by identifying, promoting and supporting the development of a network of heritage trails, with a focus on publicly accessible heritage sites and attractions in co-operation with community groups, landowners and other stakeholders incorporating features of heritage interest.
CPO10.36	Identify locations where heritage interpretation would add to the visitor experience and take account of Fáilte Ireland's <i>Toolkit for Storytelling</i> Interpretation in the design and delivery of interpretation media, with a focus on animating stories and encouraging greater engagement with our heritage.
CPO10.37	Continue to promote and develop the Corlea Trackway Centre as a sustainable visitor offering and enhanced access to the site, including an extension to the premises and the creation of walking and cycling connections with Ballymahon and Lanesborough across the proposed Bog Greenway.
CPO10.38	Promote the enhancement and development of Granard's <i>Knights &amp; Conquests</i> , Edgeworthtowns <i>Maria Edgeworth</i> and Ballinamuck Visitor Centres as world-class visitor attractions, enabling visitors to have an enjoyable and engaging experience, while protecting the cultural heritage, natural environment and landscape value.
CPO10.39	Continue to develop and promote the <i>Rebel Trail</i> , <i>Literary Trail</i> , <i>Tain Trail</i> and the <i>Mid Shannon Wilderness Park</i> as part of Longford's primary tourism offer and experience (see <i>Appendix 5: Tourism - Literary &amp; Rebel Trail Map and Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park Map</i> ).
CPO10.40	Support appropriate protection and conservation works to planned/designed landscapes heritage structures, historic properties, historic urban centres and other built heritage assets, in order to safeguard these amenities for the long term. In this regard the five themes of the National Policy on Architecture shall be taken into account including mitigating the negative impact of new developments on the historic character of areas and buildings.
CPO10.41	Support the conservation and development of Newcastle House, Carriglass Manor and demesnes and other heritage structures by way of facilitating appropriate development that contributes to their economic viability and tourism potential.
CPO10.42	Support sustainable initiatives and projects that enable visitors to enjoy and connect with our natural heritage, including walking or cycling trails, glamping, viewing points, facilities for bird-watching and angling, tours and events, subject to the requirements for protecting this valuable and sensitive heritage.

CPO10.43	Support enhanced access to state, semi-state and private lands such as Bord na Móna bogs, forests, waterways, together with National Monuments and Historic Properties, for recreation and tourism purposes. Access should be planned and managed in a sustainable manner that protects heritage, environmental sensitivities, ecological corridors, and the ability of local infrastructure to support increased tourism.
CPO10.44	Continue to engage with the Waterways Ireland, NPWS, Coillte, ESB, Bord Na Móna and other stakeholders and agencies with regard to tourism related uses of Lough Ree, forests, cut-away peatlands, restored bogs and related infrastructure and support the development of greenways/peatways and blueways at appropriate locations (see <i>Appendix 5: Tourism - Longford County Trails Map</i> ).
CPO10.45	Support the diversification and innovation of our tourism product with opportunities arising for the development of new tourism offerings such as nature, culturally curious and slow tourism.

### 10.9 Lakes, Bogs, Forests and Waterways

Longford is well known for its bogs, rivers and lakes dotted throughout the County. Lough Ree and the *Mighty Shannon* form the western boundary of the County while Lough Gowna and the chain of 'Neck Lace' Lakes along the Leitrim county border form the northern boundary. The value of the lakes from a tourism and amenity perspective is significant having regard to their scenic beauty, serene environment and natural heritage and habitat value. The county's rivers are also of great value with the *Mighty Shannon* running north to south and the River Inny and Camlin meandering east to west. The historic Royal Canal traverses the county on its journey from Dublin city to Longford and is navigable on its route through the county.

The Mid Shannon Wilderness Park and proposed Biosphere represents one of Longford's primary tourism offerings going forward (see *Annex 10: Mid Shannon Wilderness Park*). The Corlea Amenity Park represents a first step in the development of the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park. Much of the land involved is in State ownership. Existing natural amenity areas such as Lough Ree, the Shannon, the Royal Canal and the future rehabilitated Bord na Móna bogs, can be combined to create the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park. This sustainable development project shall be mutually inclusive of any future uses that Bord na Móna might pursue for their land bank including renewable energy projects. The use of the existing bog rail banks as additional walking/cycling tracks are currently being investigated and developed (2020).

Public amenity areas have been developed at numerous locations along our waterways, many of which include car parking, information panels, toilets, viewing points and boat mooring. Boating facilities along the Royal Canal have been developed and the Royal Canal Blueway in Clondra was launched in 2015. Visitors to Derrycassin Wood on Lough Gowna and the Commons North Park on the shoreline of Lough Ree at Lanesborough can enjoy beautiful walks along the lake shoreline through native woodland. Newcastle Woods Forest Walks have also been developed to enable exploration of the River Inny with its associated greenway linking directly to the Royal Canal. Abbeyshrule and Ballymahon on the Inny have their Kayak clubs and

white-water facilities. As part of this water-based experience in the county, leisurely cruises, watersports, bird watching, angling and kayaking can be enjoyed.

Longford has some of the best inland fishing rivers and lakes in Ireland which are relatively unknown. The River Inny is a top-class coarse fishery and also between Ballymahon and Abbeyshrule the Inny is a productive wet and dry fly trout fishery. Lanesborough and the North Longford lakes have been traditionally popular for international fishing visitors. This has great potential to be developed as a tourism resource. Angling in the North Midlands also requires a cross regional approach which is currently focus of USEFE, the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project in association with Inland Fisheries Ireland, Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland.

The Council will seek to facilitate increased visitor access and enjoyment of Longford's lakes and waterways, through encouraging developments which provide visitor services and / or create stronger connections with towns and villages which can provide those services. Such services may include bike, boat and watersport equipment hire, changing and toilet facilities and guided tours, along with general services such as accommodation and restaurants etc. This will require support for the establishment of small-scale enterprise development in a sustainable manner. This poses a challenge, given the inherent environmental sensitivities at such locations. However, the Council will encourage and seek to create stronger connections between water-based amenities and nearby population centres, and the reuse of existing structures where visitor services can be best accommodated. The quality of our water resources is of paramount importance to realising the potential of these assets for tourism. All tourist related development in the vicinity of any of the lakes in the County shall be subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

**Lakes, Bogs and Waterways – County Policy Objectives**

It is the County Policy Objective to:

CPO10.46	Facilitate increased access to Longford's waterways, from towns and villages where visitor services are located, with an emphasis on providing a strong visitor experience associated with the lakes and waterways and their heritage and amenity value, including trails, bird hides, and water sports facilities, subject to the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and the requirements of the Habitats Directive.
CPO10.47	Support the provision of infrastructure to enable increased tourism activity associated with Longford's waterways, including boating, marina/berthing, kayaking, angling, blueways and harbour amenities while ensuring that such provision does not negatively impact on sensitive environments and subject to the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives.
CPO10.48	Provide for small-scale enterprise development that will provide for visitor engagement in water-based activities, subject to development management principles, the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directives and the protection of sensitive environments.
CPO10.49	Prioritise development proposals which support the <i>Shannon Tourism Masterplan's</i> Gateway, Towns and villages and utilise existing infrastructure and disused structures in close proximity to Longford's waterways for the provision of visitor services, including changing facilities, boat storage, glamping, where appropriate. (See <i>Appendix – Tourism Map No. 5 Longford County Waterways</i> ).
CPO10.50	Support development, in co-operation with various stakeholders to promote, preserve, improve, encourage public access to lakes, islands, riversides, uplands and other areas that have been traditionally used for outdoor recreation and extend recreational amenities including riverside and canal walks and walking and cycling routes. This shall include the provision of walking and cycling links between lakes, rivers, bogs and nearby towns, villages and visitor attractions, provided such developments do not negatively impact on sensitive environments.
CPO10.51	Continue to work with Waterways Ireland and local communities in the enhancement and promotion of the Royal Canal, including the provision of ancillary infrastructure and services for blueway and greenway users, such as water access, bike and boat storage, rest areas, shelters, toilets, wet rooms, changing and other facilities which will enhance the user experience (see <i>Appendix 5: Tourism - Longford County Waterways Map</i> ).
CPO10.52	Continue to work closely with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and neighbouring counties to realise the potential of Lough Ree and the Mid-Shannon region for tourism, taking account of recommendations arising from the <i>Ireland's Hidden Heartlands 'Shannon Tourism Masterplan'</i> and <i>'Spirit Level'</i> and the <i>Longford Tourism Strategy</i> .

CPO10.53	Promote and encourage the recreational use of rivers and the development of blueways which provide opportunities for walkers, cyclist and canoers. Examine the potential for development of fishing and canoe trails on the rivers and the inner lakes of Lough Ree and work with Waterways Ireland to develop facilities where appropriate, subject to the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives.
CPO10.54	Continue to work with Waterways Ireland and Inland Fisheries to develop mooring points for boats and facilities for kayaking and fishing along our waterways including at the Red Bridge, Ballymahon.
CPO10.55	Continue to work closely with Bord na Móna, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, NPWS, Coillte, <i>Just Transition</i> related groups and neighbouring counties to realise and develop the potential of the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park and Lough Ree Biosphere Nature Reserve. In this consideration shall be given to Bord na Mona's integrated land use-strategy and be mutually inclusive of any of Bord na Mona's future uses of their land banks.
CPO10.56	Support the development and expansion of tourism/recreation facilities including forest-based tourism accommodation at appropriate locations while ensuring minimum impact on the natural environment, biodiversity and public recreation.
CPO10.57	Support and develop opportunities to access, enjoy and understand Longford's significant archaeological, early Christian Heritage, natural heritage and historical locations including the lake Islands which contain many of these sites.
CPO10.58	Cooperate with NPWS in the preparation of Habitat Management Plans for Lough Ree and Longford's protected areas where particular sensitivities occur, in order to support the protection and conservation of our natural environment resources.

### 10.10 Greenways, Cycling and Walking

Longford County Council is strongly committed to the development of greenways in the county, in recognising their strong potential for generating tourism activity and associated positive wellbeing, quality of life and economic benefits. Since 2015, working with strategic partners at a national, regional and local level, large tracts of greenway have been provided within the county. More extensions are planned which should provide Longford with the greatest concentration of greenways for any county in the country. Longford will effectively be the 'Greenway Capital of Ireland' (see *Appendix 5: Tourism - Longford County Waterways Map and Longford On Road Cycleways Map*).

By 2020 within County Longford, a total of 85 km of greenways had been developed for the enjoyment of walkers and cyclists. Of these the Royal Canal Greenway traverses the county from Abbeyshrule to Clondra (36.5km) with a branch line to Longford town from Kilashee (8km). Additional extensions to the Greenway have been provided at Corlea (10km), a link from Clondra to Lanesborough (20km) across the bogs and also a River Inny Link to Newcastle Woods (10km). Additional links (40km) are being constructed at present on the old Bord na Móna rail lines traversing the re-wilded bogs. The conversion of the Bord na Móna rail crossing over the Shannon at Kilnacarrow for greenway purposes will facilitate the opening up of the Roscommon

Bord na Móna rail line network to allow added links to Roscommon town, Strokestown, Roosky and beyond. In addition, walkways have been developed at Drumlish and Cairn Hill (see *Appendix 5: Tourism - Longford County Trails Map*).

The Royal Canal is also now designated as the National Famine Way from Strokestown, Co. Roscommon to the Liffey Quays in Dublin. The possibility exists to interconnect Dublin to Westport through Longford via the Royal Canal to form the Croagh Patrick to Croke Park Greenway, and a north south route linking Sligo to Limerick along the Shannon. When completed these national greenway routes would provide substantial international-scale tourism offerings with Longford acting as the central cross roads.

The Mosstown Mill and mill race walk at Kenagh offers great potential to add a major attraction to the local amenity walk connected with the Royal Canal Greenway. The addition of the Limetree Avenue from the old Mosstown estate would create a looped walk of natural and heritage interest.

<b>Greenways, Cycling and Walking – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO10.59	Continue to develop the greenways in the county and to augment the visitor experience through the provision of infrastructure, including car parking and access barriers, having regard to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport various Guidelines along with high quality signage and links to nearby visitor attractions and places of interest.
CPO10.60	Support the provision of visitor services within existing towns and villages, such as cafes, accommodation, and changing facilities, by providing linkages with greenways and trails where appropriate.
CPO10.61	Continue to support the development of the Longford Bogs Greenway, the Royal Canal Greenway, the National Famine Way, a River Shannon Greenway and a Longford to Westport Greenway by working with Bord na Móna, Regional Authorities (EMRA and NWRA), neighbouring counties and national bodies to develop and complete these routes (see <i>Appendix 5: Tourism - Longford County Trails Map</i> ).
CPO10.62	Support increased opportunities for off-road walking, including looped walks and longer distance trails, taking account of 'positive control points' in trail design, such as areas of natural beauty, lakeshores or rivers, bogs, built heritage and archaeological features and with links to towns and villages. In designing walking trails, the <i>Sport Ireland Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails</i> will be consulted.
CPO10.63	Continue to maintain and further enhance the County's walking and cycling trails, striving to achieve National Trails accreditation and other standards as set by <i>Sport Ireland</i> , in partnership with local communities and landowners.
CPO10.64	Continue to develop the Longford Bogs Greenway utilising the Bord na Móna Rail lines from Longford Town to Clondra, Lanesborough, Corlea and Ballymahon interconnected with the Royal Canal Greenway at selected locations (see <i>Appendix 5: Tourism – Longford County Trails Map</i> ).
CPO10.65	Support the conversion of the Bord na Móna Kilnacarrow Rail Bridge to a greenway crossing of the River Shannon and facilitate a link through the Roscommon bogs to Roscommon, Strokestown and Roosky, Co. Leitrim.
CPO10.66	Support the development of a Shannon Way, subject to the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives, to link the Royal Canal at Clondra to the Grand Canal in Offaly via Athlone in collaboration with local communities, Offaly County Council and Westmeath County Council. This trail shall be located close to the river and linked to scenic areas where possible.
CPO10.67	Support the provision of various county greenways to link Clondra, Newtownforbes, Roosky, Drumlish, Cairn Hill, Ballinamuck, Lough Gowna, Derrycassin Woods, Aughnacliff, Granard, Ballinalee, Edgeworthstown, Ardagh and Abbeyshrule subject to the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives.

CPO10.68	Develop the Mosstown Mill and Mill Race walk at Kenagh to connect to the Royal Canal greenway and to incorporate the addition of the Limetree Avenue from the old Mosstown estate which would create a looped walk of natural and heritage interest.
CPO10.69	Support the provision of visitor interpretation along walking and cycling trails, including storyboards, artworks and other media, to create a greater sense of place, connecting and immersing visitors in our local heritage and stories.
CPO10.70	Support the provision of services for visitors using walking and cycling trails which are appropriate to the location and activity, including bike rental and service points, picnic benches at scenic locations, public toilets, and other ancillary services in remote areas.
CPO10.71	Promote the principles of 'Leave no Trace' in all trail information panels, promotional materials and events and use all statutory procedures to deter negative environmental impact resulting from use of our trails and outdoor recreation amenities.

### 10.11 Arts, Sport, Culture, Environment, Food and Festivals

Longford with its exceptional community spirit is a county rich in environmental, local food, culture, sport and artistic expression. Facilities such as the County libraries and various theatres such as the Backstage in Longford and the Bog Lane in Ballymahon, offer the chance for visitors to enjoy displays from local talented artists, food producers and craft workers. Smaller shared facilities offering gallery and craft shop provision are also located throughout the county. Sport is supported with a passion in County Longford with numerous sporting facilities and venues in every parish. Musical, drama and dance talent are also on display with many venues featuring home-grown talent. The tradition of Irish, country and contemporary music and dance is celebrated county-wide in various venues and halls and pubs. Similarly, with the County's Tidy Town Community groups and environmental activities. Longford communities have an exceptional success record in the Tidy Towns competition with nearly every town, village and community participating and achieving considerable success.

A number of activities and festivals enable local communities to celebrate a valuable cultural heritage and spotlight local talent and unique local attributes. While some festivals remain small in scale year after year, reaching only a local audience, others have the ambition to grow into larger events, capable of attracting larger numbers of visitors, resulting in a greater impact to the local economy and highlighting the festival location as one worth visiting to a wider audience. The Council will seek to support these festivals where possible, to support their growth potential, subject to any necessary event licensing and quality standards. The Council will also nurture new festivals, such as *Still Voices Short Film Festival*, which have the potential to develop into national attractions.

The Council provides support for the county's arts and cultural facilities along with assistance to groups organising festivals through its annual grants scheme and other support through its arts, tourism, planning and heritage sections.

<b>Arts, Culture, Environment and Festivals – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO10.72	Support the continued development of Tidy Towns, local food, culture, sport, visual and performing arts and craft through the various environmental activities, fairs, festivals, arts, music and cultural centres, galleries and craft shops.
CPO10.73	Continue to support activities, events and evolving visitor experiences such as <i>Creative Ireland</i> , the County Library Service, and the Backstage and Bog Lane Theatres etc. as important tourist offerings.
CPO10.74	Continue to support activities such as Tidy Towns, community groups, and festivals in the county, with a particular focus on events which have the potential to attract a wider audience and spotlight the county as a visitor destination.
CPO10.75	Continue to provide supports to community groups, sporting organisations, indigenous enterprises and organisations which create locally produced food, products, activities and events.
CPO10.76	Support the setting up of a ‘Green Festival’ and a ‘National Cycling Festival’ initiative.
CPO10.77	Encourage and support Tidy Towns organisations, festivals and event organisers to incorporate green principles in their event planning and management.
CPO10.78	Identify opportunities to capture and celebrate the rich musical and creative heritage of the county.

### 10.12 Tourism Climate Change Context and Associated Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a climate change context and associated actions.

Tourism has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland. If we do not curb our Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and start to adapt, regional economies and industries that depend on natural resources and favourable climate conditions (e.g. agriculture and tourism) will begin to suffer greatly.

As one of Ireland’s most important economic sectors, the tourism industry generated €5.6 billion 2018, with an addition €2 billion coming from domestic returns alone<sup>1</sup>. However, tourism is responsible for nearly one tenth of the world’s carbon emissions and set to increase by 4% year on year – outpacing most other economic industries<sup>2</sup>. The operational impacts on tourism of climate change will be increasingly felt, with reduced water availability, extreme weather events, decline in insurability, and increased costs against efforts to cut emissions. Travel, particularly by air, contributes more than half of the CO2 emissions associated with tourism, with one long-haul flight

<sup>1</sup> Fáilte Ireland (2019), ‘Key Tourism Facts 2018’, September 2019.

[http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3\\_Research\\_Insights/Key-Tourism-Facts-2018.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/Key-Tourism-Facts-2018.pdf?ext=.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Gabbatiss, J. (2018), ‘Tourism is responsible for nearly one tenth of the world’s carbon emissions’, Independent Newspaper, 07 May 2018, UK.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/tourism-climate-change-carbon-emissions-global-warming-flying-cars-transport-a8338946.html>

generating more carbon than the average person produces in a year; notwithstanding the added air pollution<sup>3</sup>. Short haul flights are the greatest offenders, with 25% of an aeroplane's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions typically generated at take-off alone<sup>4</sup>.

The practice of 'sustainable tourism' as a means of supporting environmental conservation, social development and local economies through tourism is considered the most appropriate response. The promotion and development of 'domestic tourism' aligns neatly with the concept, while adhering to the NPF 'NPO 22' setting out to "*facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level*".

The development of such Greenway, Blueway and Peatways, all found within County Longford, has the added benefit of improving our Green Infrastructure provision, encouraging more sustainable means of transport, and supporting biodiversity.

### **Tourism Climate Change Actions**

Longford County Council shall:

- A10.1** Collaborate with relevant state bodies, neighbouring Local Authorities and local communities in delivering a UNESCO accredited, Biosphere for Lough Ree and the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park.
- A10.2** Continue to fund, improve, develop all Greenways, Blueway, Peatways, and achieve *Sport Ireland Trail* registration for all existing and proposed trails, wherever possible.
- A10.3** Seek funding for the responsible development of Biodiversity Interpretative Centre within The Commons area of Lanesborough Town.
- A10.4** Support opportunities for increased tourism within limits of existing infrastructure and sensitive habitats.
- A10.5** Prioritise tourism marketing to the domestic market, across multiple media platforms.
- A10.5** Invest in the development of the local sustainable tourism market with zero carbon impact.

<sup>3</sup> Kommenda, N. (2019), 'How your flight emits as much CO<sub>2</sub> as many people do in a year', The Guardian Newspaper, 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019, UK. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2019/jul/19/carbon-calculator-how-taking-one-flight-emits-as-much-as-many-people-do-in-a-year>

<sup>4</sup> Jung, Y. (2010), 'Fuel Consumption and Emissions from Airport Taxi Operations', Green Aviation Summit, NASA Amers Research Center, Sept 8-9, 2010, USA. [https://flight.nasa.gov/pdf/18\\_jung\\_green\\_aviation\\_summit.pdf](https://flight.nasa.gov/pdf/18_jung_green_aviation_summit.pdf)

# Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage

## 11.1 Introduction

Built and Cultural Heritage, in the form of architectural and archaeological assets are an intrinsic part of our heritage, as they provide our communities and society with unique opportunities to learn about the past, support our sense of place, and form an intrinsic part of the character and attractiveness of the County.

Longford has an abundance of built and cultural heritage that gives the county its own unique and distinct character, from its castles to its ancient burial sites. Longford also contains Europe's oldest iron age trackway at Corlea, and the architectural award-winning Saint Mel's Cathedral, which was rebuilt and reopened in 2014 after a devastating fire left it in ruins.

In addition to the protection of these resources as Recorded Monuments and Places, there is also provision under the Planning and Development Act to afford protection by way of the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Area designations. It is important that this plan also recognises our cultural heritage that gives the historic background to the rich built environment that underpins Longford's historical sense of identity. Preservation of these resources not only enriches the identity of Longford for generations to come but also provides for a unique selling point in terms of tourism and thus the local economy.

## 11.2 Statutory Context

### 11.2.1 Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out a list of mandatory objectives to be included in a development plan. A number of these relate to cultural heritage, including the protection of archaeological heritage, structures and areas of special interest, and the preservation of the character of the landscape, views and prospects.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) relates to Architectural Heritage and includes reference to Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs).

### 11.2.2 The National Monuments Acts 1930 – 2004

The Act confirms that Archaeological Heritage is legally protected from unauthorised damage or interference. Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendments) Act 1994 made specific provision for the compilation of all recorded sites and features of historical and archaeological importance in the County into the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

### 11.3 Planning Policy Context

#### 11.3.1 National Planning Framework (NPF)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out to protect and value our important and valuable built heritage and Protected Structures. The NPF is built around 10 no. National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's), with NSO7 of particular relevance:

*NSO 7* aims to enhance amenity and heritage. This will ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways.

In the NPF there are 3 no. National Policy Objectives (NPOs) which relate to heritage as follows:

*NPO 17* - Enhance, integrate and protect the special physical, social, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets through appropriate and sensitive use now and for future generations.

*NPO 23* - Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

*NPO 60* - Conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural and cultural heritage of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their significance.

#### 11.3.2 Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031

The RSES makes a strong reference to the heritage value of the region's towns and settlements. The RSES identifies the specific significance of Cultural Heritage, Architectural Heritage, Heritage Led Regeneration and Archaeological Heritage, as set out accordingly:

##### Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is the fabric of our lives and societies. It surrounds us in the buildings of our towns and cities, our landscapes, natural sites, monuments and archaeological sites. Cultural heritage brings communities together and builds shared understandings of the places we live. Intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices and traditions that are central to the lives and identities of our communities, groups and individuals.

##### Architectural Heritage

Local authorities, through their city and county development plans and designation through the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), enable places of architectural value to be protected. Good heritage management should be incorporated into spatial planning to promote the benefits of heritage led urban regeneration in historic towns, for example through the protection

of historic urban fabric, the reuse of historic buildings and the enhancement of places of special cultural or natural interest. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is an invaluable built heritage resource for local authorities and the general public.

#### Heritage Led Regeneration

Planning for the regeneration of a historic town needs an integrated approach that balances the protection of the built heritage and the sustainable development of historic urban areas with the needs of modern living and takes account of the concerns and aspirations of the community and key stakeholders. This requires the coordination and management of sometimes conflicting demands and interests of different stakeholders. However, the development of a common vision for the town, supported by a coordinated and integrated series of objectives and a programme of realistic, achievable actions, will balance the conservation of the heritage with the needs of those who live in and use the historic town.

#### Archaeological Heritage

The Region's historic environment, represented in its built form, landscape heritage and archaeology, provides a depth of character that benefits the Region's economy, culture and quality of life. The built environment, combined with its historic landscapes, provides a unique sense of place, whilst layers of architectural history provide an environment that is of local, national and international value.

The RSES includes a number of relevant Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs):

*RPO 9.24:* Promote and facilitate the role of arts and culture in recognition of its importance to people's identity and the potential for economic development through a unique cultural tourism offering throughout the Region.

*RPO 9.25:* Seek to work with all relevant stakeholders to promote equality of access to and engagement with arts and cultural services and in the promotion of culture and heritage led urban and rural regeneration.

*RPO 9.26:* Seek to build on the success and support the clustering of the film and audio-visual sector in the Dublin and Wicklow areas and to support training of film workers and crew around the Region, as well as exploiting opportunities for the industry outside of these hubs.

*RPO 9.27:* EMRA will support local authorities to work with local communities to promote historic towns in the Region in the practice of heritage led regeneration, to promote the sensitive and adaptive reuse of historic building stock and industrial structures where appropriate, and to strengthen their capability to draw down European and national funding.

*RPO 9.28:* Support the implementation of language plans for the Region's Gaeltachts and the identification of Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks in the Region, and to promote the development of the Gaeltacht in Meath in a manner that protects and enhances the distinctive linguistic and cultural heritage, whilst meeting the needs and aspirations of both residents and visitors alike.

*RPO 9.30:* Support the sensitive reuse of Protected Structures.

## 11.4 Other Relevant Plans and Guidelines

### 11.4.1 National Heritage Plan (2002) and the New National Heritage Plan (Draft 2019)

A key objective of the National Heritage Plan (2002) seeks to “*place heritage at the heart of public life*”. The plan recognises that heritage is communal, and we all share a responsibility to protect it starting at the local level. Fundamental to this is to develop, promote and implement policies and legislation for the protection of architectural heritage and to promote best practice in modern architecture and urban design.

The key objectives are to:

- (i) provide a policy, legislative and administrative framework to protect architectural heritage as a national resource;
- (ii) promote increased public awareness and appreciation of architecture and our national built heritage
- (iii) ensure the sustainable management of our built heritage resources.

### 11.4.2 Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999); Policy and Guidance on Archaeological Excavation (1999)

This Framework and associated principles which stipulate the basic principles for the protection of archaeological heritage are based on a presumption of avoiding development impacts on archaeological heritage. Preservation in-situ will be the first option, followed by preservation by record where the archaeological heritage is affected, or proposed to be affected by the development.

### 11.4.3 Government Policy on Architecture

The Government Policy on Architecture 2009- 2015 and beyond recognises the place of architecture in society as an expression of cultural, aesthetic and social values both past and present. The implementation of this national *Policy on Architecture* and its associated 45 actions is of crucial importance to promote quality in the built environment and to provide / encourage awareness, education and sustainability on the role of architecture.

A new, national Architectural Policy is currently under preparation. ‘*Places for People - National Policy on Architecture*’ (November 2019) is a discussion document prepared by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It focuses on designing for climate resilience and sustainability, designing quality places for public benefit, respecting our past, shaping our future, leadership and knowledge and Innovation.

### 11.4.5 The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011

These Guidelines are issued under Section 28 and Section 52 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Under Section 52(1), the Minister is obliged to issue guidelines to planning authorities concerning development objectives,

- a) for protecting structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, and

- b) for preserving the character of architectural conservation areas.

Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Act require planning authorities to have regard to them in the performance of their functions.

#### 11.4.6 The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

The NIAH is a state initiative under the administration of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and established on a statutory basis under the provisions of the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999. The purpose of the NIAH is to identify, record, and evaluate architectural heritage of Ireland, uniformly and consistently as an aid in the protection and conservation of the built heritage. NIAH surveys provide the basis for the recommendations of the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to the planning authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures (RPS). The published surveys are a source of information on the selected structures for relevant planning authorities. They are also a research and educational resource.

#### 11.4.7 Longford County Heritage Plan 2019-2024

The County Heritage Plan is a strategic plan for the protection and enhancement of heritage within County Longford, prepared by the County Longford Heritage Forum. The Heritage Plan incorporates the County Biodiversity Action Plan and 6 no. specific objectives as follows: -

1. Implement key Strategic Actions over the lifetime of the Heritage Plan to achieve greater awareness and protection of all aspects of the heritage of County Longford.
2. Develop knowledge, appreciation and access to Longford's heritage through research and innovation.
3. Promote the protection and best practice in heritage management within the county.
4. Promote heritage education and awareness.
5. Support organisations and communities in promoting sustainable enjoyment of Longford's countryside, waterways and heritage.
6. Implement the County Longford Biodiversity Action Plan.

### **11.5 County Longford Built and Cultural Heritage**

The County has a wealth of architectural and archaeological heritage, ranging from pre-history to the 20th century. Some of the most significant visible monuments include the portal tomb at Aughnacliffe; ringforts; standing stones, an Iron Age timber roadway (toghers) at the Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre, and the linear earthworks that make up the Black Pigs Dyke in north Longford. The landscape also bears the remains of ecclesiastical heritage in the form of churches and abbey ruins, graveyards, pilgrim paths and holy wells.

County Longford has many significant sites of built heritage, and several historic castle sites remain; the most-impressive of which is the Norman motte-and-bailey castle in the town of Granard. Important country houses within the county include Castle Forbes and Carrigglas Manor which is associated with Thomas Langlois Lefroy, a paramour of Jane Austen, and the Irish architect James Gandon. A variety of industrial heritage sites reflecting the economic development of the County can be also found, including mills, bridges the canal and railways.

Longford is an important location for events in Ireland's mythology, such as An Táin Bó Cuailigne (Cattle Raid of Cooley) and Tochmairc Éitíne, (the Wooing of Étain by Midir). Several key events in Irish history took place in the county, including the Battle of Ballinamuck, the last great battle of the 1798 Rebellion. Longford is associated with General Seán Mac Eoin, a key figure in the Ireland's War of Independence, as well as Kitty Kiernan, the fiancée of General Michael Collins. The County and the associated islands of Lough Ree host a variety of heritage and cultural features including sites of mythological, historic, archaeological, architectural, social and industrial importance. One of the most noteworthy is Inchcleraun, (or Quaker Island) which it is stated was once owned by Clothra, the sister of the great Queen Maeve, and is believed to have been the site where the great queen died.

The Hill of Ardagh is an important site for the early Christian religion in the diocese. It is believed that St. Patrick arrived in Ardagh in approximately the year 435 and secured a site for his church over which he placed his nephew St. Mel as bishop. St. Mel's Cathedral in Longford Town, a magnificent Neo-Classical building that was beautifully renovated following a devastating fire in December 2009, is dedicated to his name.

The protection of this built architectural and archaeological heritage is an essential component of this plan and is detailed accordingly.

### 11.6 Architectural Heritage

Architectural heritage relates to monuments, groups of buildings and sites, and includes all relevant man-made structures and features of the landscape in the county; such as houses, bridges, towns, demesnes and stone walls of considered architectural heritage value. It is important that provision is made to ensure adequate protection for the built environment in its existing form and that consideration is given to the sympathetic re-use of historic buildings.

<b>Architectural Heritage Policies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO11.1	Promote and direct users to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) website ( <a href="http://www.buildingsofireland.ie">www.buildingsofireland.ie</a> ) wherever appropriate.
CPO11.2	Cooperate with the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage in assessing and celebrating historic designed landscapes, demesnes and gardens.

CPO11.3	Implement the County Heritage Plan 2019-2024 and seek to update the Heritage Plan over the lifetime of the County Development Plan.
CPO11.4	Promote the maintenance and appropriate re-use of the existing building stock.
CPO11.5	Ensure that all development should be appropriate to its setting in the landscape or townscape and responds to and reinforces local character and heritage.
CPO11.6	Encourage the enhancement, management, protection and the promotion of access to and understanding of the architectural heritage of the County.
CPO11.7	Recognise and protect the unique historical, mythological and cultural significance of Ardagh Mountain. Developments which materially impinge on the character of the mountain will not be permitted.
CPO11.8	Provide detailed guidance notes and continue to develop the Council's advisory/educational role with regard to heritage matters and to promote awareness, understanding and appreciation of the architectural heritage of the County.
CPO11.9	Ensure that proposals for development to structures included as part of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (DoEHLG) and any updated version, maintain and enhance the character of these structures.
CPO11.10	Ensure that development in the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Potential is sited and designed in a sensitive manner with a view to minimal detracting from the monument or its setting.
CPO11.11	Require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, for development in the vicinity of monuments or in areas of archaeological potential. Where there are upstanding remains, a visual impact assessment may be required.
CPO11.12	Refer 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 Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to the relevant section of the DoAHG for observations/comment prior to a grant of permission/approval being obtained.
CPO11.13	Ensure 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.

## 11.7 Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas

### 11.7.1 Protected Structures

A Protected Structure is a structure that the local authority considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. The protection afforded to structures on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) applies to all parts of a given structure, including:

- the interior;
- the land lying within its curtilage (the area of land attached to or associated with a building and usually forming one enclosure with it);
- any other structures in that curtilage;
- specified features in attendant grounds, and;
- all fixtures and fittings forming part of the interior of a Protected Structure or of any structure within the curtilage.

The Heritage Council interpret **‘Curtilage’** as *the area of ground directly connected with the functioning or inhabitation of the structure, such as a yard, a basement or a passageway to the structure.*<sup>1</sup>

*The Irish Statutory guidance refers to the following 3 no. considerations when determining curtilage:*

1. *a functional relationship between the structures*
2. *an historical relationship between the main structure and the structure*
3. *and the ownership past and present of the structure.*

The RPS is a live register and amendments including additions and deletions from it can be made as a result of the review of the County Development Plan under Section 12, and outside of said process under Section 55 of the Planning and Development Act (as amended). The RPS is included in *Appendix 6: Built and Cultural Heritage*.

The placing of a structure on the RPS seeks to ensure that the character of the structure is maintained and any changes or alterations to it are carried out in such a way as to retain and enhance its character. Protected Structure status relates to protection, in relation to a structure or part of a structure, in terms of conservation, preservation, and improvement compatible with maintaining the character and interest of the structure. All owners and occupiers of Protected Structures must ensure that a Protected Structure, or any element of a Protected Structure, is not endangered through harm, decay or damage, whether over a short or long period, through neglect or through direct or indirect means.

Protected Structure status does not preclude appropriate development, however works to a Protected Structure that would materially affect the character of the structure, require planning permission. Not all works to a Protected Structure however will constitute material alterations. In these circumstances Section 57 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) enables owners/occupiers to request a declaration from the Planning Authority as to the type of works, which it considers, would or would not materially affect the character of the structure.

The Council will endeavour to ensure that proposed new works to existing buildings and structures of architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness. In this regard the Council will seek to ensure that original doors,

<sup>1</sup> the Heritage Council interprets Curtilage as follows:

[https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/what\\_is\\_curtilage\\_colm\\_murray.pdf](https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/what_is_curtilage_colm_murray.pdf)

windows, window/shopfront detailing, and exterior plaster finishes should be retained and repaired wherever possible. Where the replacement of existing features is necessary and justified, (such as windows), these shall reflect the character of the existing structure in terms of the materials used and the architectural detailing. Timber sliding-sash windows should not be substituted with aluminium or uPVC windows.

<b>Record of Protected Structures (RPS) Policies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO11.14	Review and update the Record of Protected Structures on an on-going basis and to make additions and deletions as appropriate.
CPO11.15	For the purposes of the RPS, identify and retain good examples of historic street furniture, e.g. cast-iron post boxes, water pumps, light fixtures and signage, as appropriate.
CPO11.16	Promote best conservation practice and encourage the use of appropriately qualified professional advisors, tradesmen and craftsmen, with recognised conservation expertise, for works to Protected Structures.
CPO11.17	Ensure the protection of structures included in the Record of Protected Structures by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Controlling development which would alter the character of Protected Structures and proposed Protected Structures.</li> <li>▪ Monitoring the condition of Protected Structures and proposed protected structures to identify those endangered by neglect, vandalism or unauthorised development and taking appropriate action.</li> <li>▪ Preventing the endangerment of Protected Structures in the Council's ownership.</li> </ul>
CPO11.18	Consider the acquisition of Protected Structures, where possible and where economic constraints permit, if this is necessary to protect the structure.
CPO11.19	Encourage the rehabilitation, renovation and reuse of existing older buildings/ buildings of architectural merit, where appropriate, in preference to their demolition and redevelopment. In certain cases, land use zoning restrictions may be relaxed in order to secure the conservation of the Protected Structure.
CPO11.20	Facilitate contemporary and innovative design providing that they are of a sufficient high quality and do not detract from the character of the historic fabric of the Protected Structure.
CPO11.21	Require applications for development where a Protected Structure or its setting is likely to be materially affected, to submit a detailed assessment of the building.
CPO11.22	Protect the setting of Protected Structures and refuse permission for development within the curtilage or adjacent to a Protected Structure which would adversely impact on the character and special interest of the structure, where appropriate.
CPO11.23	Issue Declarations as to the type of works that would affect the character of a Protected Structure and therefore require planning permission.

CPO11.24	Administer the DoAHG Historic Structures Fund including the assessment of 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 fund.
CPO11.25	Promote and support the funding sources available for Protected Structures and built heritage within the County.
CPO11.26	Identify and seek further funding for the upkeep of Protected Structures within the County.

### 11.7.2 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, an area, or a group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value; or it contributes to the appreciation of Protected Structures, which may be included in a Development Plan, where it is considered necessary to preserve its character. Such areas are often chosen because they contain a group of historic buildings that have a distinctive street pattern or plot size which gives the area a distinct character and contributes to the town or village wherein it is located.

Most structures in an ACA are critical in how they positively contribute to the streetscape or character of an area. Although some of the individual buildings may not be of special merit, their importance is in their context and interrelationship and the contribution that each makes to the character of the area. Unless a structure is also included on the Record of Protected Structures, the protected status afforded from inclusion in an ACA only applies to the exteriors and the streetscape.

Piecemeal alterations on individual non-protected structures can have a significant cumulative effect on a streetscape. Any development or works which would have a material effect on the special character of an ACA require planning permission.

There are 2 no. Architectural Conservation Areas identified within the County (Ardagh town and Battery Road Longford town), the extent of the ACA's are mapped and the details contained within *Appendix 6: Built and Cultural Heritage* of this plan.

The identification of new ACAs and/or the modification of existing ACAs may be proposed during the lifetime of the County Development Plan.

<b>Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) Policies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO11.27	Prepare and review, where necessary, detailed character statements and planning guidance for the 2 no. ACA's in the County, within the lifetime of the Development Plan.
CPO11.28	Protect the character of Architectural Conservation Areas in County Longford and ensure the preservation of the character of the Architectural Conservation Area.

CPO11.29	Promote best conservation practice and encourage the use of appropriately qualified professional advisors, tradesmen and craftsmen, with recognised conservation expertise, for works to buildings of historic significance within Architectural Conservation Areas.
CPO11.30	Identify and designate new Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's) as appropriate.

### 11.7.3 Historic Gardens, Demesnes and Designed Landscapes

Historic designed landscapes consist of private gardens, public parks and the gardens and landscapes associated with country house demesnes. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) in a survey (2003) of Historic Gardens and Designed landscapes, including demesnes identified 96 such sites throughout the County. In County Longford, examples of such include Carriglass, Castle Forbes, Coolamber and Newcastle House.

The Council will seek to ensure that future development within such areas does not adversely affect the character of these areas or result in the deterioration of the features of special historic interest. However, the Council also recognises the modern-day responsibility being placed on guardians of these estates and the need to make them viable thus offering an effective alternative to the neglect of these estates. In this regard it is acknowledged that it is equally important to ensure that development is not restricted altogether, and that proposals for development are considered, particularly where it can be demonstrated that this could ensure the future sustainability of the estate.

<b>Historic Gardens, Demesnes and Designed Landscapes Policies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO11.31	Support the publication of a County Inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, in order to promote the intrinsic character of those within the county.
CPO11.32	Encourage the protection and enhancement of heritage gardens and demesne landscapes, and to support, in consultation with the owners, the provision of public access to these sites as appropriate.
CPO11.33	Discourage development that would adversely affect the character, the principal components of, or the setting of historic parks, gardens and demesnes of heritage significance.
CPO11.34	Require that proposals for development in designated landscapes and demesnes include an appraisal of the landscape, designed views and vistas, including a tree survey, where relevant, in order to inform site appropriate design proposals and ensure the on-going and future sustainability of the estate.
CPO11.35	Continue the development, expansion and the protection of the (Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall) in Longford town.

#### 11.7.4 Vernacular Architecture

'Vernacular' architecture are buildings and structures built in a style which developed over time unique in style to the local area without much outside influence. Buildings and structures such as post offices and post boxes; shops, timber shopfronts and sign lettering; town houses and coach houses; cottages and traditional farm buildings; and national schools and churches, all contribute much to the built heritage of the county.

Vernacular architecture is the back-bone of all our towns and villages. However, it is becoming increasingly rare, frequently overlooked in development applications and proposals, where demolition and new build over adaptive reuse of traditional buildings is generally the most common approach. This loss of traditional building stock is a gradual process, but the cumulative impact of losing this layer of the cultural fabric of the county's-built heritage, is a loss of the character and erosion of the architectural integrity of the county.

Historic buildings form the backdrop to most of the towns, villages and rural areas in the County. Although some may have used architects in their design, most are in the vernacular tradition – the homes and workplaces built by local people using local materials. Generally, these buildings are not so special as to be designated Protected Structures, however, small differences in materials, layout and forms contribute to local distinctiveness and the character of the area.

Since the mid-1960's the landscape of our towns, villages and the rural countryside has changed significantly. Much of this built heritage has been lost, but some elements of the have survived, particularly in terms of the vernacular and built heritage of housing provided for Bord na Mona to employees. This consisted of Frank Gibney style architecture and is particular to the era and provision of housing to peat workers in a number of towns throughout the midlands. Lanesborough still maintains one of the finest examples of such housing, which is of a particular vernacular and of considerable architectural merit. This along with any other remaining remnants of this built heritage considered of particular value requires protection and much ongoing care and maintenance. New uses need to be found for traditional buildings and this may require their adaptation. The retention of the character of historic towns and villages is recognised as being a major attraction and is important in maintaining local distinctiveness for both the local community and visitor alike.

<b>Vernacular Architecture Policies – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO11.36	Encourage the retention, sympathetic maintenance and sustainable re-use of historic buildings, including vernacular dwellings or farm buildings and the retention of historic streetscape character, fabric, detail and features.
CPO11.37	Seek the retention of surviving historic plot sizes and street patterns in the villages and towns of County Longford and incorporate ancient boundaries or layouts, such as burgage plots and townland boundaries, into re-developments.

CPO11.38	Actively promote the retention and restoration of thatched dwellings as a key component of the built heritage of the County.
CPO11.39	Create and maintain and update the survey of surviving thatched structures in the County and to promote available grant schemes to assist owners with their retention and repair.
CPO11.40	Ensure that conversions or extensions of traditional buildings or the provision of new adjoining buildings, are sensitively designed and do not detract from the character of the historic building.
CPO11.41	Encourage the retention and appropriate re-use of vernacular buildings, where appropriate and encourage the retention of the original fabric such as windows, doors and other significant features of historic buildings.

### 11.7.5 Industrial and Agricultural Heritage

Within and throughout the County there are many examples of industrial and agricultural heritage assets that have helped shape and define our County. In terms of industrial heritage, the rail line, the Royal Canal and the road network are legacy assets that have had a significant influence on the form and character of the County, and in respect of the rail and road network have been adapted to meet modern times and needs.

The Royal Canal is a man-made waterway linking Dublin to the River Shannon near Tarmonbarry, with a spur branching off to connect with Longford town. It is one of two major canal navigation systems in Ireland, the other being the Grand Canal. In terms of industrial heritage, former disused quarries provide a rich tapestry of former industry of times past. In this regard County Longford boasts a significant industrial heritage site in the form of disused quarries in Lanesborough and on the islands of Lough Ree. Other structures and buildings of agricultural heritage are easily identifiable within our settlements and include mills and store houses.

<b>Industrial and Agricultural Heritage Policies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO11.42	Create and maintain an inventory of Industrial and Agricultural Heritage assets within the County.
CPO11.43	Support the retention and appropriate repair/maintenance of historic bridges and other significant industrial heritage features in the County.
CPO11.44	Encourage appropriate change of use and reuse of industrial heritage structures provided such a change does not seriously impact on the intrinsic character of the structure and that all works are carried out in accordance with best conservation practice, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria.
CPO11.45	Encourage the retention and appropriate re-use of vacant traditional farm buildings, where appropriate, and encourage the retention of the original fabric such as windows, doors and other significant features of interest.

### 11.8 Financial Support for Built Heritage and National Monument Assets

In terms of ensuring the protection and enhancement of the built and cultural heritage of County Longford, all efforts will be made to secure suitable funding initiatives where possible. These are subject to review and replacement by other schemes, but some of the current available grant schemes include the following:

- The *Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) 2020* is a grant scheme available for RPS, pRPS, ACA structures and or National Monuments.
- The *Historic Structures Fund (HSF) 2020* is a grant scheme typically available for RPS structures but is also available for built heritage and thatched cottages.
- *Heritage Council Grant Scheme* – The Heritage Council allocates around €1 million of National Lottery funding towards their public grant schemes. These include:
  - Community Grants
  - Heritage Management/Maintenance Grants
  - Thatching Repair Grant
  - Grant Scheme for the Museum Standards Programme of Ireland participants.
- *Conservation of Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme & Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS)* - this grant is not solely for Protected Structures and is a fund source enabling the repairs of traditional farm buildings and structures.

<b>Financial support Incentives for Built Heritage and National Monument assets Policies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is Policy Objective of the Council to	
CPO11.46	Ensure the protection and enhancement of the built and cultural heritage of County Longford by securing and promoting the provision of suitable funding initiatives where possible.

### 11.9 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological heritage of an area includes monuments, sites, and objects on land or under water. There are a large number of sites spread across the County representing a variety of time periods. This rich and valuable archaeological heritage provides a valuable cultural, educational and tourism resource creating an important sense of place. Each site and monument has a unique character and contribution to make to the landscape of the County and adds meaning to our understanding of the environment. The appropriate management of archaeological remains is essential to ensure the survival of these finite and non-renewable features.

### 11.10 County Longford Archaeological Sites and Monuments

Within the County there are over 1,700 archaeological sites and monuments identified and recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The identified sites and monuments are currently protected in the following ways:

1. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) – There are over 1,700 monuments on the RMP for County Longford.<sup>2</sup>
2. The Register of Historic Monuments (RHM) – There are 380 no. monuments in the County (which are also on the RMP).<sup>3</sup>
3. The site is a national monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or a Local Authority.
4. The site is a national monument subject to a preservation order (or temporary preservation order).

### 11.10.1 National Monuments in County Longford

National Monuments in State ownership or guardianship are compiled by the DoELG. There are 6 no. national monuments located within the County detailed below:

**Table 11.1 National Monuments in County Longford**

Site	Description Nat.	RMP Number	Monument Number	Status Land Ownership
Inchcleraun	Early Monastery	LF021-048001	91	State ownership
Larkfield	Ringfort	LF006-021	640	State ownership
Sonnagh	Ringfort	LF006-031	598	State ownership
Aghaward	Ringfort	LF009-006	630	State ownership
Granard - Moatfield	Motte & Bailey	LF010-080001 LF010-080002 LF010-080003 LF010-080004	263	State Guardianship
Corlea – Cloonbrean	Bog Trackway	LF022-058	677	State ownership

### 11.10.2 Monuments Protected Under Preservation Orders

There are 10 no. monuments protected under Preservation Orders within the County detailed accordingly:

<sup>2</sup> (National Monuments Service's Archaeological Survey Database: <https://www.archaeology.ie/>).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

**Table 11.2 County Longford Monuments Protected Under Preservation Orders**

No. of Order	Monument	Townland	O.S. Map	Date Order
10	Dolmen & associated standing stones	Aughnacliffe	6	05/01/33
1/64	Ringfort	Dring	6	13/02/64
6/73	Deserted Town Site	Granard Kill	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	14:9:5	02/04/85

**11.10.3 Monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest**

There are 57 no. monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest within the County detailed below:

**Table 11.3 County Longford Monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest**

Map	Townland	Site	Description	Grade
1	Aughnacliffe	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
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

Map	Townland	Site	Description	Grade
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
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 Augustinia 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		

Map	Townland	Site	Description	Grade
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		

Archaeological structures may, in some situations, also be considered as architectural heritage and therefore may appear on both the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Maps for the County showing the numbers and locations of these sites have been produced and are presented in *Appendix 6: Built and Cultural Heritage*.

Within the County there are 2 no. specific archaeological sites of specific importance as follows:

#### Corlea Bog Trackway:

One of the most significant archaeological heritage sites and assets in the County is Corlea Bog Trackway. The Visitor Centre located on the site conserves an Iron Age bog road, which was built in the year 148 BC across the surrounding bogland. The oak road is one of the largest of its kind to have been uncovered in Europe. Inside the visitor centre building, an 18-metre stretch of preserved road is on permanent display.

#### Granard – Norman Motte

In 2018 supported by the local authority and Failte Ireland, a new visitor and interpretative centre was opened in the town of Granard in the northeast of the County, which celebrates Ireland's highest Norman motte built in 1199. The centre which has a large appeal range, is particularly focussed on school going age and is to be developed further in the future with the development of an interpretative park.

Archaeological remains provide valuable information about our past and the people who lived here before us. The archaeological resource is non-renewable, as excavation of an archaeological site or feature results in its destruction and removal from its landscape setting. Where new development is being considered, the archaeological potential of the site should be considered in the very earliest stages of planning by checking the National Monuments Service's Archaeological Survey Database: <https://www.archaeology.ie/>.

<b>Archaeological Heritage Policy – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO11.47	Protect known and unknown archaeological areas, sites, structures, monuments and objects in the County.
CPO11.48	Protect the integrity of the settings of archaeological areas, sites, structures, monuments and objects in the County.
CPO11.49	Protect the National Monuments and monuments protected under Preservation Orders in the County (see <i>Table 11.1: National Monuments In County Longford</i> , <i>Table 11.2: Monuments Protected under Preservation Orders</i> and <i>Appendix 6: Built and Cultural Heritage</i> ).
CPO11.50	Protect the monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest in the County (see <i>Table 11.3: County Longford Monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest</i> and <i>Appendix 6: Built and Cultural Heritage</i> ).
CPO11.51	Encourage and promote the appropriate management and enhancement of the County's rich archaeological heritage, to include community initiatives.
CPO11.52	Encourage and promote access to and understanding of the archaeological heritage of the County.
CPO11.53	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.
CPO11.54	Investigate and promote the provision of improved access to important archaeological sites.
CPO11.55	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.
CPO11.56	Consult with the National Monuments Service in relation to proposed developments adjoining archaeological sites.
CPO11.57	Contribute, as appropriate, towards the protection and preservation of underwater archaeological sites in riverine or lacustrine locations.

### 11.11 Built and Cultural Heritage Climate Change Context and Associated Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a climate change context and associated actions.

Built heritage is one of our most important cultural assets and can be defined as any group of buildings, structures, monuments, or installation or remains, that are of architectural, social political, economic, or military significance. The increasing occurrence of extreme weather events mean that all structures, particularly those in a ruinous or dilapidated state are most susceptible to the effects of climate change.

Rainfall presents the greatest threat, particularly wind-driven rain, while the subsequent rising water levels increase the moisture content of soils and potentially lead to weakened building foundations, subsidence, erosion and even landslide. Conversely, long, dry summers with lowered water tables have the potential to damage building foundations and increased likelihood of wildfires and landslides. Flood waters may erode foundations and damage structural fabric while prolonged periods of wetness, especially if associated with winter warmth, have implications for several decay mechanisms, including salts and biological action. Cumulative deterioration due to the mobilisation of salts is likely to increase in western Europe because of an increase in critical humidity fluctuations.

In response, the CAP 2019 includes twelve Sectoral Adaptation Plans based upon the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) 2018 of which the 'Built and Archaeological Heritage' is included and has been developed using the six step adaptation planning process as described in sectoral Planning Guidelines for Climate Change Adaptation, as published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and implemented by the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht. Locally, adaptive measures include the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structures Fund (HIS) tasked with providing financial aid for the conservation and restoration of heritage properties, and a pilot scheme within BHIS 2020 for routine maintenance and minor repairs.

Aside from the climatic threat to our built heritage, we must respond to the current energy efficiencies of all existing building stock if we are to meet our 2050 target of carbon neutrality. Today 35% of the building stock in Europe is over fifty years old and 75% inefficient in its energy use<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, contribution from our cultural built heritage sector, if refurbished, has the potential to significantly reducing GHG emissions. Furthermore, our existing building stock offers its greatest asset in its ability to be recycling for alternative use and thereby reducing the need for demolition and construction, and subsequently generation of carbon dioxide.

Buildings and the construction industry are responsible for 39% of all carbon emissions in the world, with operational emissions (from energy used to heat, cool and light buildings) accounting for 28%. The remaining 11% comes from 'embodied carbon' emissions, or upfront carbon that is associated with materials, construction and

<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2019), 'Energy performance of buildings directive', 16 May 2019  
[https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficient-buildings/energy-performance-buildings-directive\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficient-buildings/energy-performance-buildings-directive_en)

demolition<sup>5</sup>. Failing to consider embodied carbon in a proposal has been shown to underestimate the entire carbon emission of a new build by up to 31%. Similar research has discovered that the construction of a traditional terrace house produced thirteen more times more embodied carbon than the refurbishment of a traditional terrace house. This equates to around 16.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is the equivalent of the emissions released from driving 60,000km<sup>6</sup>.

### ***Built and Cultural Heritage Climate Actions***

Longford County Council shall:

- A11.1** Adopt the principles of conservation-led regeneration by applying the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Architectural Heritage Protection (2011).
- A11.2** Seek enrolment on all future Historic Towns Initiatives (HTI).
- A11.3** Notify owners of Protected Structures of the increased threat climate change presents, while reminding them of their continued and legal requirement to ensure the structure(s) do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm (*Practical advice on basic methods of conservation should accompany the notice*).
- A11.4** Require the proposed demolition of any structure or part thereof, as considered of merit by the Planning Authority, to be accompanied by a report from a registered / chartered professional within a related discipline justifying same, to the satisfaction of the planning authority.
- A11.5** Require the submission of a life-cycle cost report with all applications in excess of 500 sq. m, new build construction, unless deemed otherwise by the Planning Authority.
- A11.6** Require the submission of a cost benefit analysis by a chartered quantity surveyor justifying any demolition or refurbishment of 100 m<sup>3</sup> of construction and demolition waste, or above, unless deemed otherwise by the Planning Authority.

<sup>5</sup> World Green Building Council (2019), 'Bringing embodied carbon upfront – Coordinated action for the building and construction sector to tackle embodied carbon', September 2019

[https://www.igbc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.-WorldGBC\\_Bringing\\_Embodied\\_Carbon\\_Upfront\\_CONFIDENTIAL\\_180919\\_media-release-v4-with-IGBC-logo.pdf](https://www.igbc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.-WorldGBC_Bringing_Embodied_Carbon_Upfront_CONFIDENTIAL_180919_media-release-v4-with-IGBC-logo.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Historic England (2020), 'Buildings Must Be Recycled and Reused to Help Tackle Climate Change', 26 February 2020.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/recycle-buildings-tackle-climate-change/>

## Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment

### 12.1 Introduction

The County's rich natural heritage and biodiversity is of importance at the local, national and international level. It includes geology and forms a central component of the landscape of the County. Protecting and enhancing our biodiversity and landscapes is vital to the health, well-being and quality of life of our communities and assists societal adaptation to the challenges of climate change. This Plan sets out to contribute towards the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage and the biodiversity of designated ecological sites within the County and to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.

The natural environment determines the physical character of the County and create a sense of place. 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. The Council is committed to the conservation, preservation and enhancement of the environment and will seek to continue to protect the natural resources of the county in accordance with higher level national and regional policy outlined.

### 12.2 Statutory Context

#### 12.2.1 Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Development Plans must include mandatory objectives for the conservation of the natural heritage and for the conservation of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed.

#### 12.2.2 EU Birds and Habitats Directives (The Habitats Directive)

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as 'The Habitats Directive', provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. It protects habitats and species of community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites, known as *Natura 2000*; Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The Habitats Directive sets out decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect European Sites and establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA).

#### 12.2.3 Wildlife Act 1976, (as amended)

The Wildlife Act 1976, as amended is the principal national legislation providing for the protection of wildlife and the control of some activities which may adversely affect wildlife.

#### 12.2.4 Flora (Protection) Order, 2015

This sets out the current list of plant species protected by Section 21 of the Wildlife Act, 1976, as amended

### 12.3 Policy Context

#### 12.3.1 National Heritage Plan (2002) and the Draft National Heritage Plan (2019)

Both of these Plans identify and recognise that heritage is a communal and mutually shared asset to be protected by the actions of all.

#### 12.3.2 Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2009 (revised 2010)

This guidance is intended to assist and guide planning authorities in the application of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as it relates to their roles, functions and responsibilities in undertaking Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects. It applies to plans and projects for which public authorities receive an application for consent, and to plans or projects which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt. It sets out the different steps and stages that are needed in establishing whether a plan or project can be implemented without adversely affecting the integrity of a European Site. The guidance addresses issues of mitigation and avoidance of impacts, and also the Article 6(4) derogation provisions for circumstances in which there are no alternatives and for which there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) requiring a plan or project to proceed.

#### 12.3.3 All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015

The Pollinator Plan identifies 81 actions under five main objectives:

- Making farmland, public land and private land in Ireland pollinator friendly;
- Raising awareness of pollinators and how to protect them;
- Managed pollinators - supporting beekeepers and growers;
- Expanding our knowledge on pollinators and pollination service;
- Collecting evidence to track change and measure success.

#### 12.3.4 National Peatlands Strategy 2016

The National Peatlands Strategy contains a comprehensive list of actions, necessary to ensure that Ireland's peatlands are preserved, nurtured and become living assets within the communities that live beside them.

#### 12.3.5 National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017

The *National Biodiversity Action Plan – Actions for Biodiversity 2017-2021* was developed in line with EU and International Biodiversity strategies and policies. It recognised that locally-led action is crucial in protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services and sets out the measures Ireland should take to ensure its conservation.

### 12.3.6 National Planning Framework (NPF)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out to protect and value our important and vulnerable habitats, landscapes, natural heritage and green spaces. It identifies the importance of the interrelationships between biodiversity, natural heritage, landscape and our green spaces. The NPF states that integrated planning for green infrastructure and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans. It refers to the importance of biodiversity and how the planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation.

The following Relevant National Policy Objectives are noted:

- *NPO 58*: Integrated planning for Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans.
- *NPO 59*: Enhance the conservation status and improve the management of protected areas and protected species by:
  - o Implementing relevant EU Directives to protect Ireland's environment and wildlife;
  - o Integrating policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity in statutory development plans;
  - o Developing and utilising licensing and consent systems to facilitate sustainable activities within European Sites;
  - o Continued research, survey programmes and monitoring of habitats and species.
- *NPO 60*: Conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural and cultural heritage of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- *NPO 61* - Facilitate landscape protection, management and change through the preparation of a National Landscape Character Map and development of guidance on local landscape character assessments, (including historic landscape characterisation) to ensure a consistent approach to landscape character assessment, particularly across planning and administrative boundaries.

### 12.3.7 Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

This Strategy recognises the need to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of our protected habitats and species including landscape and heritage protection, to identify, protect and enhance our green infrastructure, to ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources, to build climate resilience, to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050 and the protection of the healthy natural environment to ensure clean air and water for all.

The RSES promotes co-ordinated spatial planning to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of protected habitats and species including landscape and heritage protection. Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 7.16 specifically refers to enhanced

green infrastructure with an objective to identify, protect and enhance green infrastructure and ecosystem services in the region and to promote the sustainable management of strategic natural assets such as our farmlands, peatlands, uplands woodlands and wetlands.

**12.3.8 County Longford Heritage Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-2024**

This Plan provides a framework for the conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage at a local level. The 6 no. key objectives for the protection and enhancement of the heritage assets of the county are as follows:

1. Implement key Strategic Actions over the lifetime of the Heritage Plan to achieve greater awareness and protection of all aspects of the heritage of County Longford;
2. Develop knowledge, appreciation and access to Longford’s heritage through research and innovation;
3. Promote the protection and best practice in heritage management within the county;
4. Promote heritage education and awareness;
5. Support the sustainable enjoyment of Longford’s countryside, waterways and heritage;
6. Implementation of the County Longford Biodiversity Action Plan.

**12.4 Natural Heritage in County Longford**

The natural heritage and biodiversity of County Longford is a unique resource, from its upland areas and low-lying peatlands, 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 higher national and 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, of which a high-quality environment is an essential indicator. The maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity is fundamental in the achievement of sustainable development.

<b>General Natural Heritage Policies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO12.1	Protect, conserve and enhance to the County’s natural heritage and biodiversity. 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.
CPO12.2	Encourage and promote access to and understanding of the natural heritage of the County.

CPO12.3	Protect important geological or geomorphological sites in the County, including any sites designated or proposed to be designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).
CPO12.4	Pursue in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the preparation, establishment and implementation of Habitat mapping and a Wetland Survey for the County.

## 12.5 Designated Sites

There is huge diversity of species and habitats within County Longford, which because of their importance at European and National level require the designation of areas for their protection and conservation. As such European and national legislation protects the important and valuable heritage areas within the County. The three main types of designation are:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC);
- Special Protection Areas (SPA);
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHA).

The responsibility for designating sites lies with the DoAHG; 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 7: Natural Heritage and Environment* where County Longford's Designated Sites are mapped (including NHA, pNHA, SAC and SPA).

### 12.5.1 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

These sites are selected for the conservation and protection of plant and animal species (other than birds) and habitats listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) respectively. The Designated sites relevant to County Longford are listed as follows.

Table 12.1 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	Features of Interest
<b>SAC 000440 – Lough Ree</b>	3150 Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) 7110 Active raised bogs 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 7230 Alkaline fens] 8240 Limestone pavements 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles 91D0 Bog woodland 1355 Lutra lutra (Otter)
<b>SAC 000448 – Fortwilliam Turlough</b>	3180 Turloughs
<b>SAC 001818 – Lough Forbes Complex</b>	3150 Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation 7110 Active raised bogs 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion 91E0 Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)
<b>SAC 002341 – Ardagullion Bog</b>	7110 Active raised bogs 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
<b>SAC 002346 – Brown Bog</b>	7110 Active raised bogs 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
<b>SAC 002348 – Clooneen Bog</b>	7110 Active raised bogs 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion 91D0 Bog woodland
<b>SAC 002201 – Derragh Bog</b>	7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 91D0 Bog woodland
<b>SAC 002202 – Mount Jessop Bog</b>	7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 91D0 Bog woodland

**12.5.2 Special Protection Areas (SPAs)**

These sites are selected for the conservation and protection of birds and their habitats designated under the EU Birds Directive 2009 (2009/147/EC) (first adopted in 1979) and transposed into Irish law by the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations (SI 291 of 1985). The National Parks and Wildlife Service within the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht identify, evaluate and propose sites for designation. The boundaries of protected areas may change and/or new sites may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan.

**Table 12.2 Special Protection Areas (SPA)**

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	Features of Interest
<b>SPA 004061 – Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough</b>	A059 Pochard ( <i>Aythya ferina</i> ) A061 Tufted Duck ( <i>Aythya fuligula</i> ) A999 Wetland and Waterbirds
<b>SPA 004064 – Lough Ree</b>	Little Grebe ( <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> ) [A004] Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ) [A038] Wigeon ( <i>Anas penelope</i> ) [A050] Teal ( <i>Anas crecca</i> ) [A052] Mallard ( <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> ) [A053] Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) [A056] Tufted Duck ( <i>Aythya fuligula</i> ) [A061] Common Scoter ( <i>Melanitta nigra</i> ) [A065] Goldeneye ( <i>Bucephala clangula</i> ) [A067] Coot ( <i>Fulica atra</i> ) [A125] Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> ) [A140] Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> ) [A142] Common Tern ( <i>Sterna hirundo</i> ) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
<b>SPA 004101 – Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog</b>	Greenland White-fronted Goose ( <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> ) [A395]
<b>SPA 004045 – Glen Lough</b>	Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ) [A038]

**12.5.3 European Sites and Appropriate Assessment**

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) provide for the conservation and protection of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and rare habitat types in a European context considered to be most in need of conservation. Such sites form part of an EU network of ecologically important and protected sites known as European Sites.

The Natura 2000 network consists of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and candidate cSAC and Special Protection Areas (SPA) and candidate cSPA, both within the county and within a 15km radius of same. The Habitats Directive requires that the impacts of any plans or projects likely to affect European Sites are assessed by the Planning Authority, in a process known as Appropriate Assessment (AA). Appropriate Assessment means an assessment, based on the best scientific knowledge, of the

potential impacts of a plan or project, wherever located, on the conservation objectives of any European Site and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects. All projects and plans arising will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. A plan or project will only be authorised after the Council has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and subsequent Appropriate Assessment where necessary that:

1. The plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European Site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) or
2. The plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000 or
3. The plan or project will have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European Site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

Following a finding that a proposed development will adversely affect the integrity of a European Site, planning permission may only be granted in exceptional cases, in the absence of any alternatives, for Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) subject to the strict requirements of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

#### **12.5.4 Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)**

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) are designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 and encompass nationally-important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms and geomorphological features. NHAs are legally protected from damage from the date they are formally proposed for designation. The NHAs in County Longford are listed in Table 12.3.

**Table 12.3 Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)**

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)	Features of Interest
NHA 000422 - Aghnamona Bog	Peatlands [4]
NHA 000691 - Rinn River	Peatlands [4]
NHA 000985 - Lough Kinale & Derragh Lough	Peatlands [4] and Birds [12]
NHA 001423 - Cloonageeher Bog	Peatlands [4]
NHA 001448 - Forthill Bog	Peatlands [4]
NHA 001450 - Mount Jessop Bog	Peatlands [4]

There are also a number of sites of ecological and biodiversity significance within the County that are proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), and have not yet been elevated to full NHA status (Table 12.4).

**Table 12.4 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA)**

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)	Features of Interest
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

Despite not enjoying the same statutory protection as NHAs, the Council shall specifically ensure the protection of areas of trees, forestry and bogs identified as part of these proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) sites. In any case a number of these

sites already enjoy protection as SACs and/or SPAs under the EU Wildlife and Birds Directives.

<b>Designated Sites - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.5	Protect and conserve the conservation value of Special Areas of Conservation, candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan.
CPO12.6	<p>Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects).</p> <p>Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.</p>
CPO12.7	<p>Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted.</p> <p>Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.</p>
CPO12.8	Ensure that all development proposals relating to European Sites will comply with the DoECLG publication <i>‘Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland- Guidance for Planning Authorities’</i> .
CPO12.9	Ensure an Appropriate Assessment is carried out in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European Site(s), either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, in view of the site’s conservation objectives to comply with the Habitats Directive.
CPO12.10	Permit development on or adjacent to designated Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature Reserves or those proposed to be designated over the period of the Plan, only where an appropriate level of assessment can clearly demonstrate that it will have no significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site.

CPO12.11	Consult and have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on a designated European or National site, or a site proposed for such designation.
CPO12.12	Identify and provide appropriate buffer zones between Designated Sites and local biodiversity features and areas zoned for development.
CPO12.13	Undertake appropriate surveys and collect data to provide an evidence-base to assist the Council in meeting its obligations under Article 6 of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) subject to available resources.
CPO12.14	Prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for European Sites in the County in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders.
CPO12.15	Require an ecological appraisal, in addition to an Appropriate Assessment, for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European Sites, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively.
CPO12.16	Ensure that no plan, programme, or project giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan, either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects <sup>1</sup> .
CPO12.17	Require an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for any proposed development which may have a significant impact on rare, threatened and or protected species and non-designated habitats of biodiversity value.
CPO12.18	Where surveys carried out for the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA/EclA)/Natura Impact Statement or other assessments generate biodiversity data previously unknown or unrecorded in the County this data be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NDBC).

### 12.6 The Importance of Non-Designated Sites

Beyond the boundaries of the previously listed designated sites within the County, there are further areas that provide important habitats for our flora and fauna, and in particular vulnerable species. These make up a wide network of linked spaces that contribute to the County's Natural Heritage. Some of these sites and areas, such as rivers and boglands, are present across a large area of the county and as such, provide an important amenity, resource and exchange of species within the County as well as a carbon sink which is vital in climate change management and adaptability.

<sup>1</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

These features include, among others: rivers, canals and their corridors, lakes, ponds, turloughs, hedgerows, peatlands, grasslands, eskers, important strands of trees and woodlands.

<b>Non-Designated Sites – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.19	Ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of natural heritage, biodiversity and environmental value outside designated sites and to require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.
CPO12.20	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.
CPO12.21	Protect Ramsar sites under The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (especially as Waterfowl Habitat).
CPO12.22	Enhance and sustain landscapes and features within the County in order to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• safeguard, sustain and improve the quality and character of landscapes which are important and valued or,</li> <li>• promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of local landscapes or,</li> <li>• promote important settings for outdoor recreation and tourism development.</li> </ul>
CPO12.23	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 they; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 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</li> <li>b) 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).</li> </ol>

### 12.6 Geological Sites

The County has an extensive and diverse range of geological heritage sites, many of which fall within existing pNHAs and SACs, where the ecological interest is founded upon the underlying geodiversity. Some of the County’s oldest rocks are from the Ordovician period and comprise sandstones and shales located in the north of the County. However, most of the bedrock geology of Longford comprises of Carboniferous Limestone.



While the 8 sites were included in the previous County Development Plan 2015-2021, they had not been audited and were based on a preliminary 'master list' of County Geological Sites (CGS). During the Longford County Geological Heritage Audit 2015 the sites listed below were assessed as being unsuitable for the CGS status and were listed as rejected in Appendix 4 of the Geological Heritage of County Longford report.

These recommendations have been incorporated into this Development Plan, which contains 15 no. County Geological Sites (see Table 12.5: Longford County Geological Sites). The County Geological Sites are mapped in *Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment*.

**Table 12.5 Longford County Geological Sites**

Site Name	Principal Characteristics Critical Features	Location & Townland
<b>Ardagullion Quarry</b>	Carboniferous Limestone stratigraphy - The site provides a good representative section of the local Carboniferous Limestone in an area where it is generally poorly exposed.	Ardagullion
<b>Ballymahon Esker</b>	Beaded Esker - an elongated ridge of sands and gravels deposited under the ice sheet at the end of the last Ice Age. Ballymahon Esker extends from Ballymahon town to Dungolman, Co. Westmeath.	Ballymahon
<b>Carrickboy Quarry</b>	Bedrock comprises massive and bedded Waulsortian limestone and shale. The fossiliferous deepwater limestones and shales formed topographic highs (reefs) on the Carboniferous seafloor around 340 million years ago.	Carrickboy
<b>Cleenrah</b>	Cleenrah Mine was apparently operated from the early 16th century up to the 1870s, when haematitic-manganese shale associated with mafic volcanics mined.	Cleenrah
<b>Cloghchurnel Esker and Fan</b>	The Cloghchurnel Esker and fan includes a large accumulation of sands and gravels deposited both under the ice sheet and at its margin as the ice withdrew north-westwards across north Longford at the end of the last Ice Age	Granard
<b>Corlea Trackway</b>	The Corlea Trackway is an Iron Age trackway, or togher, which was constructed from oak planks in 148–147 BC.	Cloonbreaney Keenagh
<b>Creeve Quarry</b>	The quarry and the adjacent natural knoll show a section of Lower Carboniferous (Viséan) limestone rocks.	Creeve Longford
<b>Drumlisk Quarry</b>	The rock here is greywacke of the Coronea Formation, of Ordovician age.	Drumlisk

Site Name	Principal Characteristics Critical Features	Location & Townland
<b>Glen Lodge Stream</b>	Streambank exposures in a deep glen or gorge. This site is unique in Ireland as it is the sole exposure of late Silurian age sedimentary rocks in the Longford-Down zone of rocks.	TD Kiltyclogh, Aghaward Granard
<b>Keel Mine</b>	An abandoned 1960's exploratory mine site. The mineralogy is of honey coloured sphalerite (zinc sulphide) primarily within a pebble conglomerate, but other minerals such as lead, silver (as the mineral jalpaite) and cadmium occur also.	Longford
<b>Killoe Quarry</b>	The quarry is in the Lucan Formation, of Viséan (Lower Carboniferous) age. This is a good representative site for the Lower Carboniferous limestone rocks	Longford
<b>Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough</b>	Lough Kinale had previously been shown to have Mesolithic remains, and the lake has three fine crannogs within.	Abbeylara (Longford), Finnea (Westmeath)
<b>Mullawornia Quarry</b>	Massive and bedded limestone of Waulsortian carbonate, fossiliferous mudmounds that formed on the seafloor around 340 million years ago (Ma). These Waulsortian facies rocks are part of the Cruicetown Group of Lower Carboniferous age. This is an important site for the research conducted on the depth of Waulsortian carbonate mudmounds.	Ballymahon
<b>Newtowncashel</b>	This site is an important County Geological Site as it was the source of stone for buildings in the county including St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford Town.	TD Ballyrevagh Newtowncashel
<b>St. Mel's Cathedral</b>	Economic Geology - This landmark building is proposed as a County Geological Site for its excellent display of rock used as a building material, both in the original edifice and in its recent restoration after a catastrophic fire in 2009.	Longford

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) in tandem with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoAHG, 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 as an NHA.

<b>Geological Sites – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.24	Contribute towards the appropriate protection and maintenance of the character, integrity and conservation value of features or areas of geological interest listed in Table 12.5.
CPO12.25	Support the implementation of recommendations made in the County Geological Audit (2015) and facilitate a review of the Geological Audit.
CPO12.26	Consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland when undertaking, approving or authorising developments which are likely to impact on County Geological Sites or involve significant ground excavations.
CPO12.27	Contribute towards the appropriate protection of Geological Natural Heritage Areas that become designated during the lifetime of the Plan from inappropriate development.
CPO12.28	Encourage and promote, where appropriate, public access to geological and geomorphological sites and avoid inappropriate development through consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, subject to environmental and habitats assessment.

### **12.7 Wetlands, Turloughs, Wetlands, Watercourses and Fens**

Wetlands can be defined as areas of land that are wet enough for long enough to support a variety of plants and animals specially adapted to wet conditions. These wetland areas in Longford include a range of wildlife habitats, such as raised and cutover bogs, marshes, swamps, turloughs, wet woodlands, lakes and ponds. In addition, wetlands provide important ecosystem services such as flood prevention, provision of clean water, and carbon storage. Despite the known importance of wetlands, they continue to be threatened and damaged from activities such as drainage and infilling.

A survey of wetland sites undertaken in 2017 identified the area of wetland sites mapped in Longford covered an area of 203 km<sup>2</sup> (18.6% of land area). A further County Longford Wetland Field Survey 2019 found that 18 no. wetland sites to be deemed of county or high local importance. The 18 no. sites included in the 2019 survey is included in *Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment*. These include raised bog and lake / wet grassland wetland sites. Raised bogs are also listed under the EU Habitats Directive as a habitat of conservation concern. Of the known wetlands in the County, of particular significance is the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park and Biosphere.

It is important to identify turloughs of local conservation importance and to be aware of the hydrological impacts of development on turloughs. Some Turloughs are located within priority habitats and accordingly are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Within the County there are 2 no. Turloughs of particular significance; Cordara Turlough pNHA (001821) and Fortwilliam Turlough SAC (000448). Turloughs which are within a Natural Heritage Area, are designated sites (see section 12.4.1). Also Turloughs located within either Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), or Special Protection Areas (SPA), are European Sites (see section 12.4.4).

<b>Wetlands, Turloughs, Watercourses and Fens - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.29	Support the implementation of recommendations made in the <i>Longford County Wetlands Fields Survey 2017 and 2019</i> and subsequent versions thereof.
CPO12.30	Protect and conserve the ecological and biodiversity heritage of the wetland sites surveyed in 2019 (see <i>Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment</i> ).
CPO12.31	Protect and conserve wetlands from infilling, fragmentation, degradation and resist development that would destroy, fragment or degrade any wetland in the County.
CPO12.32	Ensure that development proposals or activities that may impact on sensitive water habitats, in particular turloughs and wetlands, shall not be permitted without the introduction of mitigation measures agreed with the planning authority to eliminate negative environmental impacts.  <i>Proposals to drain or otherwise interfere with the sources of turloughs will not be permitted.</i>
CPO12.33	Implement the relevant parts of the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011 and the European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011, which require planning permission to be applied for where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment. Such applications for permission would need to be supported by an Appropriate Assessment where necessary.

## 12.8 Inland Lakes, Waterways and Broad Zone Areas

The Counties inland waterways includes lakes, rivers, canals and streams, are living systems that are home to a wide variety of habitats and species. They function as ecological corridors that connect habitats and designated sites which enable species to travel from place to place. Waterways also contribute significantly to the landscape character, the amenity and quality of life of the County; they help to support our tourism offer and provide recreational facilities.

The 'Broad Zone' areas, mapped in *Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment* of this Plan are designated areas of high amenity value and recreational potential associated with the major rivers and lakes in the County as well as the Royal Canal and areas of outstanding landscape quality in the northern fringes of the County. The Council aims to protect against residential developments which are urban-generated or speculative in these designated 'Broad Zone' areas. The broad zones are m

<b>Inland Lakes, Waterways and Broadzones – County Policy Objectives</b>
It is the County Policy Objective to:

CPO12.34	Preserve, protect and enhance the Counties inland lakes and waterways for their amenity and recreational resource amenity, including the Royal Canal, the Rivers Shannon, Inny and Camlin and Lough Ree, Lough Gowna as well as the County's other rivers and lakes.
CPO12.35	In order to build on amenity potential, the Council will support the development and upgrading of the Inland Waterways and their associated facilities in accordance with relevant management strategies, key stakeholders and bodies including Waterways Ireland. An inter-regional approach shall also be taken in association with Leitrim, Roscommon, Westmeath and Offaly to develop the North Shannon Tourism area.
CPO12.36	Protect Lough Ree from unsustainable, large-scale and high volume abstraction of water resources for use in areas external to County Longford.
CPO12.37	Ensure all abstractions of water from Lough Ree will be subject to assessment for compliance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
CPO12.38	Provide additional accesses to lake shores, river and canal banks, through the acquisition of land for public rights of way, parking and lay-by facilities, where appropriate.  <i>In areas adjacent to inland waterways, lakes, canals and rivers where planning permission is sought, conditions may be attached requiring the retention or creation of public access to the waterway in order to facilitate the creation or expansion of walking/ cycling routes.</i>
CPO12.39	Require that land adjacent to lakeshores and river and canal banks in the County be protected and reserved for public access provision.
CPO12.40	Protect the broadzones of the lakes, rivers, canals and deciduous woodlands from inappropriate development (see <i>Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment</i> ), i.e. development which adversely affects high amenity and landscape quality in relation to their setting, such as the environs of Newcastle House and Woods, particularly adjoining the River Inny Bridge.
CPO12.41	Protect, enhance and preserve the built and natural heritage of the Royal Canal and its associated structures including the maintenance of the broadzone protection area at 100m either side of the Canal. This shall include a visual assessment zone of 500m from each bank in which all development proposals are assessed for their impact on the natural setting of the canal and its views and prospects. If a proposed development is deemed to have a detrimental negative impact on the integrity of the Royal Canal, then it shall not be permitted.
CPO12.42	Restrict development in the broadzones of the major rivers and lakes of the County, as illustrated in <i>Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment</i> , to extensions of existing dwellings, which shall be sensitively designed in terms of the individual site and materials.
CPO12.43	Agriculture, native tree forestry, appropriate public amenity and recreational projects (Including the provision of slipways and angling infrastructure) and strategic Green Routes / Blueways / Trails will be

	open for consideration within the biodiversity protection zone, subject to appropriate safeguards and assessments.
CPO12.44	Promote and encourage ongoing works to improve the navigability of the Royal Canal, and to investigate the provision of mooring points in appropriate locations along the Canal and on the islands within the major lakes of the County
CPO12.45	Protect the historical, cultural and scenic importance of the Islands on the lakes and rivers within the County from inappropriate development, whether on the Islands themselves, or at locations that interferes with their integrity and setting.
CPO12.46	Support and promote, with the co-operation of private landowners, public access to islands in the County.
CPO12.47	Adopt bye-laws prohibiting or restricting jet-skiing, water skiing and any other noise generating activities during the lifetime of this Plan.
CPO12.48	Reserve land adjacent to the canal, riverbanks and other waterbodies to promote and facilitate the creation of waterside linear routes to link with existing routes and amenity spaces and to facilitate the provision of walking/cycling routes along canals and watercourses. Protect, enhance and improve existing public rights of way and, where possible, provide additional access to inland waterways through agreement, permissive access and/or the acquisition of land for public rights of way and parking and lay-by facilities.
CPO12.49	Development on or within the vicinity of the Royal Canal Spur and/or Harbour that potentially hinders the continued preservation or future reinstatement of either is to be discouraged.

**12.9 Peatlands**

Peatlands or bogs are a distinctive feature of the Longford landscape. Bogs are a unique wetland habitat, rich in wildlife possessing a combination of plants and animals that have evolved particularly to thrive in a bog. Bogs can also be considered a living history book, containing semi-fossilized plant remains and human artefacts. Peatlands or Bogs are important controllers of water levels in river catchments, providing a source of water in dry conditions and soaking up excess water during wetter periods; they actively capture and hold carbon and are an important natural resource in combatting climate change. Active blanket bogs and active raised bogs are considered to be priority habitats, listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. However when bogs are drained and harvested, they cannot perform these functions effectively. Indeed, drained and degraded bogs go from being carbon sinks to very large carbon sources. The restoration of peatlands to their natural state will have benefits in terms of nature conservation, climate change and flood prevention and alleviation.

The RSES identifies the strategic importance and value of Peatlands and includes specific guiding principles to be considered for development on peatlands. It is stated that *“Peatlands form unique landscapes which can act as amenity areas for locals and visitors and support a variety of outdoor activities such as hill-walking, wildlife watching and fishing which bring economic benefits in remote areas. Peatlands are also*

considered amongst the most important ecosystems in the world, because of their key value for biodiversity, regulation of climate, water filtration and supply. There has been significant damage to peatlands in our Region due to peat extraction and agricultural improvement together with the associated drainage and burning related to these land uses.” Also, Regional Policy Objective 7.29, supports collaboration between local authorities, the Bord na Móna Transition Team and relevant stakeholders and the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management that incorporate any relevant policies and strategies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats.

The County has significant areas of important boglands of regional and national importance (*Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment - Longford Peatlands*). Corlea Bog and Trackway which includes an Iron Age bog road was built in the year 148 B.C. across the boglands of Longford, close to the River Shannon and is the largest of its kind to have been uncovered in Europe. The Mid Shannon-Wilderness Park (see section 12.10) includes a number of worked out cutaway bogs and is one of the options under consideration by Bord na Mona in terms of return to a natural type environment, which in association with Lough Ree, the Shannon, Royal Canal and River Inny would form part of a proposed Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park.

The use of the bogs for other purposes such as renewable energy can also be achieved in a compatible manner. The large national resource that the Bord na Mona Bogs are can continue to be developed to provide employment and wealth creation opportunities in the national and local interest, including for tourism and amenity purposes.

<b>Peatlands - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.50	Protect the designated peatland areas and landscapes, including any ancient walkways through bogs and to conserve their ecological, archaeological, cultural, and educational heritage.
CPO12.51	Ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, archaeological, cultural and educational significance.
CPO12.52	Work in partnership with relevant stakeholders on all suitable peatland sites to demonstrate best practice in sustainable peatland conservation, management and restoration techniques and to promote their heritage and educational value subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment Screening, as appropriate.
CPO12.53	Work with relevant agencies such as the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Bord na Mona, NPWS, Coillte and adjacent local authorities to prepare an after-use framework plan for the peatlands and related infrastructure, to provide for the future sustainable and environmentally sensitive use of large industrial peatlands sites when peat harvesting finishes.

CPO12.54	Support the National Peatlands Strategy and the implementation of the National Raised Bog Special Area of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022 and restoration works which will be both a positive conservation measure and help to reduce carbon loss in the County.
CPO12.55	Designated and non-designated peatlands may be subject to the requirements of the planning code, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (EIA screening and EIA where applicable) and the requirements of the Habitats Directive.  Planning permission will be required where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment. Such planning applications will need to be supported by an Appropriate Assessment and/or Environmental Impact Assessment where necessary.

**12.10 Mid Shannon Wilderness Park**

The development of the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park in County Longford is a project proposed to combine existing natural amenity areas. These important natural heritage amenity areas include Lough Ree, the Rivers Shannon, Inny and Camlin, the Royal Canal, Newcastle Wood and other forests and the future rehabilitated Bord na Móna bogs. All of these amenity areas are in close proximity to each other and they have the potential to create an interlinked and unique natural heritage amenity area for the County. It provides an opportunity for a sustainable connected link for the region and the State with the potential to create a connected cycle and walking route from east to west, by connecting Dublin to the Midlands and Longford, and in turn with Westport and Sligo through this unique natural area. The Park will be developed in partnership between the various owners particularly Bord na Móna, local communities and Longford County Council. Further information is provided in *Chapter 10: Tourism* and *Annex 10: Mid Shannon Wilderness Plan*.

<b>Mid Shannon Wilderness Park – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.56	Work with partners and stakeholders to progress the development of the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park and Biosphere.

**12.11 Biodiversity and Nature Conservation**

Biodiversity is a term which describes every living organism within a single ecosystem or habitat, including numbers and diversity of species and all environmental aspects. Biodiversity is the measure of the number, variety and variability of living organisms.

Under Section 9 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000, a statutory responsibility is outlined to ‘*promote the conservation of biological diversity*’. 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. The Council will work collaboratively to meet the actions and objectives identified in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

There are many changes and improvements that we can all make to improve and develop biodiversity and associated ecosystems:

- Planting native species or include a water feature to transform your garden into a haven for wildlife;
- Planting perennials such as nectar producing flowers and berry bushes as food sources for birds, insects and small mammals;
- Avoid using toxic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides in your garden;
- Make compost and reduce food waste;
- Growing heritage, or traditional varieties of plants, fruits and vegetables and save seeds of native plants.

<b>Biodiversity and Nature Conservation – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.57	Support the implementation of any relevant recommendations contained in the National Biodiversity Plan, the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and the National Peatlands Strategy the National Biodiversity Plan and the Longford Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024.
CPO12.58	Ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites.
CPO12.59	Improve the biodiversity and ecological value of the County through the promotion of the planting of native and heritage / traditional varieties and grass-cutting schemes amended to encourage local wildflower growth.
CPO12.60	Require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.
CPO12.61	Assess proposed large-scale developments, particularly on greenfield sites and in environmentally sensitive areas, in terms of their impact on the biodiversity of the area.
CPO12.62	Screen all projects and plans arising from this plan for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. All such projects and plans will also be required to comply with statutory Environmental Impact Assessment requirements where relevant.
CPO12.63	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.

CPO12.64	Facilitate increased awareness of the County's biodiversity and natural heritage through the provision of information to landowners and the community generally, in cooperation with statutory and other partners.
CPO12.65	Investigate and encourage the establishment of wildlife areas and corridors, particularly in the context of educational, recreational and amenity facilities.
CPO12.66	Enhance the County's biodiversity and natural heritage, including its landscape, by promoting appropriate recreational and amenity schemes.
CPO12.67	Ensure that the County's watercourses are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values.
CPO12.68	Conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers and riparian zones, lakes, canals and streams which occur outside of designated areas to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the county.
CPO12.69	Maintain a biodiversity zone of not less than 10 metres from the top of the bank of all watercourses in the county, with the full extent of the protection zone to be determined on a case by case basis by the Council, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities.  <i>(Agriculture, native tree forestry, appropriate public amenity and recreational projects (Including the provision of slipways and angling infrastructure) and strategic Green Routes / Blueways / Trails will be open for consideration within the biodiversity protection zone, subject to appropriate safeguards and assessments).</i>
CPO12.70	Identify and map the identified wildlife corridors within the County during the lifetime of the Plan, as resources and capacity exists. To review the Ecosystems Service Scoring mechanism as a potential tool to support the evaluation of these identified habitats and their biodiversity value across the County.
CPO12.71	Any development that is visible from any of our protected areas or waterways shall be substantially screened with multiple lines of native tree and hedge planting on all sides.

### 12.12 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows are an important natural and landscape asset within the County and provide a biodiversity function in the provision of food, habitat and shelter in exposed areas, and also act as pollution filters and carbon sinks. Trees are valuable natural resources that improve the quality of life in our communities and make our neighbourhoods greener and more liveable, while providing many other social and ecological benefits. With an increasing need for greener and more sustainable urban communities, there is also a growing awareness of the value of trees in these urban settlements. The Council will consider the inclusion of additional Tree Preservation Orders over the lifetime of this Plan following a detailed survey and analysis of the trees and woodlands as resources become available.

Hedgerows are perhaps the most characteristic feature of the County’s landscape and provide an important habitat for many species and act as a wildlife corridor. Hedgerows are important habitat and wildlife corridors for small mammals, birds and bat species. Under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000 the cutting of hedges (and uncultivated vegetation) during the bird-nesting season (March 1st to September 1st) is prohibited, except in certain legally defined circumstances. A Hedgerow Study was undertaken in 2006 for the County and remains an important resource and tool for the County. The Council will consider the inclusion of a review of the Hedgerow Study over the lifetime of this Plan, as resources become available.

*NeighbourWood* is an international idea concerned with developing a community-based approach to the planning and implementation of the stewardship of the urban forest in a local neighbourhood, including all trees and woodlands. While the focus is on trees on private property, NeighbourWood considers the urban forest of a neighbourhood as an ecosystem, including both private and public lands.

<b>Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.72	Encourage and promote in co-operation with Coillte and the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources, the preparation and adoption of an Indicative Forestry Strategy for the County, as an important means of contributing to its objective of sustaining, protecting and enhancing the County’s biodiversity, natural resources and landscape and developing tourism product.
CPO12.73	Preserve and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the County, by promoting the protection of trees, groups of trees and ancient woodlands, of significant amenity value, especially native and broadleaf species.
CPO12.74	Undertake a survey of trees and woodlands within the County in order to identify individual trees and or, groups and stands of trees of value worthy of protection, including those in Demense landscapes.
CPO12.75	Protect trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and seek to designate additional Tree Preservation Orders, where appropriate.
CPO12.76	Protect the following important stands of trees identified in <i>Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment</i> from inappropriate development and unmanaged tree felling not part of an overall plan to ensure their sustainability; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avenue at Smithfield, Legan</li> <li>2. Woods at Carriglass, Castleforbes and Cashel. The perimeter deciduous woodland of Newcastle Woods but not the interior areas of commercial forestry.</li> <li>3. Portanure Pine Woods</li> <li>4. Derrycassan Woods</li> <li>5. Culnagore Wood</li> <li>6. Rathcline Wood</li> <li>7. Trees along Regional Road R393 at Knockahaw</li> <li>8. Woodlands at Erne Head, Woodville and Golaroe</li> <li>9. Lime trees at Mosstown, Keenagh</li> </ol>

	<p>10. Trees at Rathsallagh 11. Wood at Farragh, Killoe</p> <p><i>The Council reserve the right, through the appropriate process, to add to this list of protected trees over the period of the Development Plan.</i></p>
CPO12.77	Discourage the felling of mature trees and hedgerow, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows to facilitate development and seek Tree Management Plans to ensure that trees are adequately protected during development and incorporated into the design of new developments.
CPO12.78	Protect all substantial areas of deciduous forest within the County, other than areas of commercial forestry. Proposals for development in these areas should seek to interact with the landscape character of the forested areas and its limits, recognising the importance of working with the forest to achieve sustainable development proposals, and enhancing and building on aspects of the forested areas that increase biodiversity and the natural habitat.
CPO12.79	Encourage the development of proposals for new woodlands and community woodlands in urban/urban fringe areas utilising funding available through schemes such as the <i>NeighbourWood</i> and Native Woodland Schemes.
CPO12.80	Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works, or other works, seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area.
CPO12.81	Investigate the potential of completing a review of the Hedgerow Survey 2006.

### 12.13 Invasive Species

Invasive non-native plant and animal species are a major threat to biodiversity and prohibitions are in place in relation to the introduction or dispersal of certain invasive species, as per the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011) and EU Regulations 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Alien Species.

Invasive alien species can negatively impact on native species, transform habitats and threaten whole ecosystems causing serious problems to the environment and the economy. There is potential for the spread of invasive species from private gardens, boat users, horticulture etc. e.g. Japanese Knotweed, Giant Rhubarb, and the Zebra mussel in our lakes. Excavation and construction works can lead to the further spread of such invasive species.

<b>Invasive Species - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.82	Promote best practice in the control of invasive species in the carrying out of its functions in association with relevant authorities.

CPO12.83	Develop and implement a programme of public awareness on the spread of invasive species and noxious weeds.
CPO12.84	Require landowners and developers to adhere to best practice guidance in relation to the control of invasive species.
CPO12.85	Ensure that proposals for development do not lead to the spread or introduction of invasive species.  <i>If developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are or were previously present, the applicant will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species as part of the planning process and to comply with the provisions of the European Communities Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).</i>

#### 12.14 Prevention of Environmental Pollution and Emissions to the Natural Environment

The Council acknowledges that the protection of our natural environment including that of water resources is crucial to our health and well-being. NSO-9 of the NPF identifies that where sustainable management of our water resources is central and largely depends on the quality of our natural resources to protect public health, the environment, amenities and sustain employment especially tourism and agriculture related industries. In sustaining the environment of the County, it is essential to promote measures that prevent the pollution of water, air and soils.

It has been demonstrated that a clean and healthy natural environment can bring multiple associated health benefits to all, as many sources of environmental pollution can be traced back to human activities. As such 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.

<b>Prevention of Pollution - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.86	Pursue the preparation, establishment and implementation of/compliance with the following (and any future updates): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region.</li> <li>• National Hazardous Waste Plan.</li> <li>• EU and National legislation on the prevention of Air and Noise Pollution.</li> </ul>
CPO12.87	Encourage and promote environmental awareness and environmentally friendly practices in all aspects of life, particularly in industry, agriculture and all other commercial and leisure activities.

CPO12.88	<p>Reduce the impacts of existing pollutant activities through the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Relocation to a more appropriate location where adjacent land uses are more compatible.</li> <li>• Imposition of conditions restricting emissions/activity</li> <li>• Use of enforcement action against unauthorised developments/uses.</li> </ul>
CPO12.89	<p>Ensure the implementation of the specific guidance on radon prevention measures for new homes as contained within the existing Building Regulations (including any updated/superseding regulations that may be published within the lifetime of this Plan).</p>
CPO12.90	<p>Encourage energy efficient design solutions, such as optimising solar gain and geothermal or air source heating, in order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and increase environmental quality.</p>
CPO12.91	<p>Assess any application for planning permission for new development, extension to existing development, or intensification or change of use, in terms of its potential impact on existing adjacent developments, existing land uses and/or the surrounding landscape.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>

### 12.15 Water Quality

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) sets out the protection and enhancement of the country’s water resources and aims to improve our water quality. It applies to rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters. It aims to prevent and reduce pollution, promote sustainable water use, protect and improve the aquatic environment and mitigate the effects of flood and droughts.

Among its key measures are the following:

- Establishment of the Local Authority Waters Programme to carry out localised assessments and promote the implementation of mitigation measures to improve water quality at a local level.
- Setting up the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP), which is run by Teagasc and the dairy cooperatives and provides water quality advice to the farming community whilst working closely with the Local Authority Waters Programme.

- Establishment of the Blue Dot Catchments Programme and working group to ensure the protection of our remaining high-status waters.
- All water systems (lakes, rivers, ground and coastal waters) should achieve and/or maintain at least good status.

The implementation of the WFD will have significant impacts on the management of the Counties water resources, which are managed on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBD) and further identified by a number of 'Catchments' and 'sub-catchments', based on the drainage regime of the major rivers of the Country. County Longford is primarily located within the Shannon (International) RBD, with a small portion of the County to the north drains to the North Western RBD. In turn County Longford straddles a number of river sub-catchments; including Erne Catchment Code 36, Upper Shannon Code 26C, Upper Shannon 26F, Upper Shannon 26E.

The WFD Surface Water Status for the County (see Table 12.9) indicates that rivers in the south and west of the County (subcatchment 26E) are generally 'unassigned' while in the centre and east of the County (subcatchment 26F) are generally of 'moderate' status. WFD status for rivers is 'moderate to poor' in the centre and North (subcatchment 26C), 'moderate' in the north (subcatchment 36). The status of some rivers in counties abutting Longford has also been provided with many rivers identified as 'unassigned'. Longford County Council supports the implementation WFD in achieving and maintaining at least 'good' environmental status for all water bodies in the county.

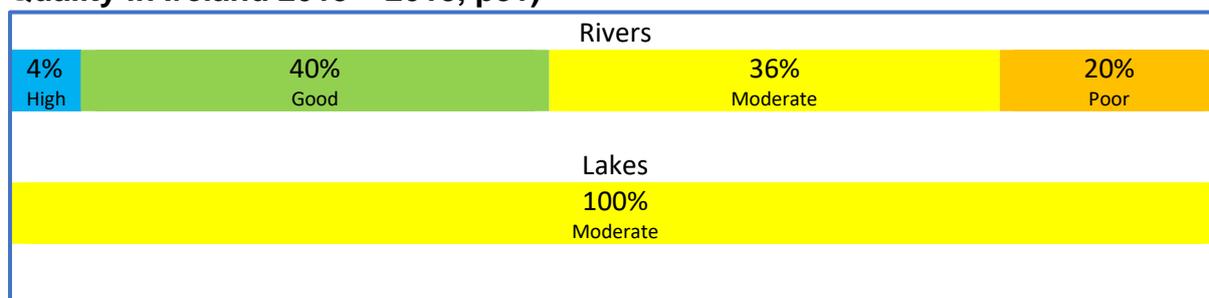
Table 12.9 Risk and Review of Surface Water bodies in County Longford

Sub catchment Code	Name	Type	Risk	Eco Status 10-15	Date to meet Env Objective	Recommend Area for Action Name
<b>Subcatchment 26C Centre &amp; North</b>						
26C_1	Ree	Lake	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26C_1	Ballynakill	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26C_1	Lough Barrow	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26C_1	Shannon Upper_100	River	At Risk	Poor	2027	
26C_2	Fardrumman_010	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26C_6	Camlin_060	River	At Risk	Poor	2027	Camlin
26C_6	Rhine_010	River	At Risk	Poor	2027	
26C_7	Camlin_060	River	At Risk	Unassigned	2027	Camlin
26C_7	Camlin_070	River	At Risk	Poor	2027	Camlin
26C_7	Fallan_010	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26C_7	Shannon Upper_090	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26C_9	Rinn	Lake	At Risk	Moderate	2027	L. Rinn /Forbes
26C_9	Forbes	Lake	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26C_9	Annaghcooleen	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26C_9	Drumbad	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26C_9	Rin_010	River	At Risk	Poor	2027	
26C_9	Rin_020	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26C_9	Rin_030	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26C_9	Shannon Upper	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
<b>Subcatchment 26F Centre &amp; East</b>						
26F_1	Inny_100	River	Review	Moderate	2027	
26F_1	Rath26_020	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26F_1	Rath26_010	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26F_7	Bane Clonsura	Lake	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26F_7	Kinale	Lake	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26F_7	Coolnagun	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26F_7	Ferskill	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26F_7	Glore (WM)	River	At Risk	Poor	2027	
26F_7	Glore (WM)	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26F_7	Inny	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26F_7	Rathcronan	Lake	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26F_8	Glen LD	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26F_8	Black (WM)	River	At Risk	Poor	2027	
26F_8	Black (WM)	River	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26F_8	Clontymullan	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26F_8	Riffey	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	

26F_10	Inny_110	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	
<b>Subcatchment 26E South &amp; West</b>						
26E_1	Derrymaccar	Lake	Review	Unassigned	2027	
26E_1	Ree	Lake	At Risk	Moderate	2027	
26E_1	Drumnee_010	River	Review	Unassigned	2027	

The EPA published a ‘*Water Quality in Ireland 2013-2018*’ assessment which provides an evaluation of the ecological health of Ireland’s rivers, lakes, canals, groundwaters, estuaries and coastal waters against the standards and objectives set out in the EU Water Framework Directive and National River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021. This assessment finds that there has been an overall decline in surface water quality (see Table 12.8), especially in our rivers and meeting the targets set in Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan will be challenging unless urgent steps are taken to address the causes of deterioration.

**Table 12.8 Ecological Status of Rivers and Lakes in Ireland (Source: EPA Water Quality in Ireland 2013 – 2018, p31)<sup>3</sup>**



The EPA values for testing locations indicate that of the 25 rivers monitored between 2013-2018; 1 no. river achieved ‘High’ status; 19 no. rivers achieved ‘good’ or ‘moderate’ status; and 5 no. rivers achieved ‘poor’ status. There were no rivers in county Longford with a ‘poor’ status<sup>4</sup>. The EPA also monitors the quality of lakes, of which there are 3 no. main lakes in the County, all identified as being of ‘moderate’ status.

The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2018-2021, outlines the measures required to improve water quality and achieve ‘good’ ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, groundwaters) by 2027. The Council is committed to implementing the River Basin Management Plan, in fulfilment of its WFD obligations, and the associated programme of measures.

- Protection and improvement of water quality in water bodies with specialist local authority investigative assessment personnel;
- Investment in urban wastewater treatment infrastructure;

<sup>3</sup> [www.catchments.ie/data/#!/dashboard/waterquality](http://www.catchments.ie/data/#!/dashboard/waterquality)

<sup>4</sup> [www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie)

- A greater focus on protecting drinking water sources in public and private drinking water supplies;
- Extension of the local authority-led domestic wastewater treatment systems grant scheme;
- New agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme to promote best agricultural practice regarding water quality.

Within County Longford, the River Basin Management Plan has identified 2 no. Areas Prioritised for Action; the River Camlin and Lough Forbes for improvement in water quality. The Council supports the development of Drinking Water Protection Plans in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan. In this regard, the Council supports mitigation and protection measures for all protected areas, including Drinking Water Protected Areas and associated Source Protection Plans.

### **12.16 Groundwater Protection**

Groundwater quality and quantity is protected under the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). Groundwater is an essential and important natural resource with only a proportion of the available source being used<sup>5</sup>. Groundwater bodies are important water supply sources for private wells, group schemes and local authority supplies and for use in a range of commercial activities. Groundwater directly and indirectly contributes to and sustains a variety of important ecosystems. This is particularly the case in rural areas that are not served by public or group water schemes, with private bored wells being the only source of supply. In this regard, the 2016 Census recorded approximately 1,640 dwellings as having a private well supply source. 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 in County Longford. Aquifer protection zones for the known water sources in the County are shown in *Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment*.

Development management can play a significant role in the prevention of further deterioration of water status and in the protection of existing 'high' and 'good' quality waters. Water protection measures are best incorporated into site selection and site design plans. Therefore, developers should adequately assess environmental risks, take account of site limitations and prepare a Water Protection Plan as part of a planning application. Site selection should take account of sensitive areas and sensitive water bodies. Water Protection Plans should aim to prevent contamination of storm water, minimise soiled and waste waters, install proper containment for material storage, install appropriate treatment and disposal arrangement for soiled and waste waters and take account of legal requirements for discharges to ground and surface waters.

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<sup>5</sup> Towards Setting Guideline Values for the Protection of Groundwater in Ireland, EPA.

Developments generating trade effluents (waste waters) or discharging domestic type wastewater in unsewered areas may be subject to the discharge licensing system under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 and 1990. Such developments need to address requirements of the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2009 (S.I. No 272 of 2009) and the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No 9 of 2010) for the entire site. All wastewater discharges, including storm water discharges which come within the scope of the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations are required to be licensed. Incorporation of water conservation measures into developments would contribute to minimisation of wastewater generation.

<b>Water Quality and Groundwater Protection Policies - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO 12.92	Protect and develop, in a sustainable manner, the existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the County and manage development in a manner consistent with the protection of these resources in conformity with the EU Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010, and any subsequent plan and the Groundwater Protection Scheme.
CPO12.93	Implement the relevant recommendations contained within the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 or any such plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of the plan  <i>Development proposals shall not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface waters, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated woodlands.</i>
CPO 12.94	Collaborate with Irish Water and other relevant stakeholders with the aim of protecting existing and potential water resources and achieving 'good status' in all water bodies in accordance with the requirements and guidance of relevant EU Directives and Regulations, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same).
CPO 12.95	Ensure licensing of discharges of effluent to groundwater, having particular regard to the requirements of the EC Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010).
CPO 12.96	Discourage the over-concentration of individual septic tanks and treatment plants to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.
CPO 12.97	Ensure implementation of the EC (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 610 of 2010, which give effect to several EU Directives including in relation to protection of waters against pollution from agricultural sources ('the Nitrates Directive'), dangerous substances in water, and protection of groundwater.
CPO 12.98	Encourage the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets and comply with the National River Basin Management Plan.

CPO12.99	<p>Protect ground and surface water resources from pollution by ensuring the appropriate control of development in areas of high groundwater vulnerability, the recognition of ground water resources and abstraction points and any identified major catchment areas of surface water bodies capable of use as a potable water resource and ensuring that such sources, their zones of contribution, and areas of aquifer vulnerability are protected.</p> <p><i>Development of a potentially pollutant nature in these areas and any future areas identified shall be prohibited.</i></p>
CPO12.100	<p>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.</p>
CPO12.101	<p>Consider development proposals that involve the physical modification of water bodies, including abstraction of water, having regard to the potential effect on habitats and plant and animal species, with particular consideration given to European Sites and specific actions proposed where negative impacts are anticipated.</p>
CPO12.102	<p>Incorporate water protection measures into initial site selection and design and produce a Water Protection Plan for all planning applications.</p> <p><i>Water Protection Plans should aim to prevent contamination of storm water, minimise soiled and waste waters, install proper containment for material storage, install appropriate treatment and disposal arrangement for soiled and waste waters and take account of legal requirements for discharges to ground and surface waters.</i></p>
CPO12.103	<p>Support, where possible, the development and implementation of a Groundwater Protection Scheme in tandem with the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI).</p>

**12.17 Surface Water Management**

The management of surface and storm water is important in order to avoid increased flood or pollution risk in the storm water network, rivers and streams in the County’s towns, villages and rural areas. Traditionally, rain falling on impervious surfaces was directed into a receiving watercourse through surface water drainage systems. While such drainage systems are effective at transferring surface water quickly, they provide only limited attenuation causing the volume of water in the receiving watercourse to increase more rapidly, thereby increasing flood risk. The Council will require compliance with best practice guidance for the collection, reuse, treatment and disposal of surface waters for all future development proposals (see *Chapter 5 Infrastructure, section 5.4* for County Policy Objectives).

**12.18 Air Quality**

Poor air quality in urban and rural environments can give rise to significant adverse environmental impacts on human health and local flora and fauna ecosystems. The most pronounced areas in relation to air pollution are built-up urban areas and major transport routes with air pollution arising as a result of:

- Emissions from traffic;
- Power generation and emissions from industry and agricultural practices;
- Burning of fossil fuels.

County Longford currently enjoys a high standard of air quality, with the Air Quality Index for Health (AQIH) rating the air quality as ‘Good’. However, increased vehicle usage and other industrial and commercial activities are a threat to damaging the quality of the environment.

Accordingly the Council will 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.

<b>Air Quality - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.104	Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 201) (or any updated/superseding documents).
CPO12.105	Support the collation of air quality and greenhouse gas monitoring data in support of a regional air quality and greenhouse gas emission inventory.
CPO12.106	Seek to ensure in tandem with the EPA, that all developments are operated in a manner that does not contribute to deterioration in air quality.
CPO12.107	Promote alternative and sustainable transport methods in order to maintain good air quality and support the introduction of charging points for electric vehicles (EVs) throughout the county and will seek to replace its fleet with EVs where feasible.
CPO12.108	Promote the retention of trees, in-particular broad leaf-species, hedgerows and other vegetation where possible, and encourage afforestation and tree planting as a means of air purification and filtering.

**12.19 Noise and Light Pollution**

The Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 give effect to EU Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise. The impact of noise pollution is an important consideration in assessing all new development proposals as it can impact on people’s quality of life and health.

The Council will seek through the Development Management process to reduce noise and/or vibration at site boundaries or within adjacent sensitive areas, especially residential areas, by measures such as layout, design and/or attenuation mechanisms. The Council will require the submission of Noise Impact Assessments where it is proposed to introduce noise creating uses in proximity to noise sensitive uses, such as residential areas, and if permission is being granted may impose conditions mitigating impact. Similarly, where noise sensitive uses are proposed within proximity to a noise source, such as national roads, rail lines, etc., proposals shall include noise and/or vibration attenuation measures in any planning application.

In respect of light pollution, it is acknowledged that artificial light is necessary for the operation of industry, recreational amenities and for illumination within our homes. However inappropriate or excessive light can be harmful to wildlife and human health, due to sleep patterns being disrupted. With increased development comes increased light pollution and therefore measures to minimise the harmful impacts of light pollution must be introduced to ensure that new developments are appropriately illuminated, while environmentally sensitive areas are protected.

<b>Noise and Light Pollution County Policy Objectives</b>	
<b>It is the County Policy Objective to:</b>	
CPO12.109	Support the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 and any subsequent revision of these regulations.
CPO12.110	Support the Implementation of the Longford Noise Action Plan 2018-2023 (and any revision made thereto)
CPO12.111	Require all developments to be designed and operated in a manner that will minimise and contain noise levels, including the use of noise / vibration attenuation measures as appropriate.
CPO12.112	Require the submission of a Noise Impact Assessment for all developments likely to introduce noise generating uses in proximity to noise sensitive uses.
CPO12.113	Control lighting in urban and rural areas and in particular in sensitive locations, in order to minimise impacts on residential amenity, habitats and species of importance.
CPO12.114	(a) Require the use of energy efficient public lighting in all new development proposals. (b) New/Replacement LED luminaries with warmer colours (i.e. CCT values at or below 2700K) be specified for future installations to avoid environmental impacts associated with blue-rich LED light.

**12.20 Soil Protection**

Soils represent an important and non-renewable natural resource. 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. Accordingly, all aspects of life are influenced either directly or indirectly by soil types; including agricultural practices,

settlement patterns, transport routes, communications infrastructure, location of archaeological deposits and economic activity. The soil types within the County are mapped and contained within *Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment*.

<b>Soil Protection – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO12.115	Recognise and protect fertile agricultural soils in the County as an important non-renewable natural resource and protect soils identified as agriculturally important in the Landscape Assessment through the prevention of inappropriate use in the development management process.
CPO12.116	Identify areas of poorer soil in the County and respect their limitations, particularly in terms of their assimilative properties to prevent pollution
CPO12.117	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.
CPO12.118	Investigate the potential uses of cutaway bogs in the County for re-naturing and amenity and particularly consider the development of sustainable and renewable energy projects.
CPO12.119	Ensure that adequate soil protection measures are undertaken where appropriate. Adequate and appropriate investigations shall be carried out into the nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work, where brownfield development is proposed.
CPO12.120	Require that the EPA's publication <i>Code of Practice: Environmental Risk Assessment for Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites</i> (2007) shall be taken into account as relevant by proposals for development within or adjacent to old landfill sites.
CPO12.121	Ensure all undeveloped, contaminated sites shall be remediated to internationally accepted standards prior to redevelopment. All applications shall be accompanied by a report from a qualified, expert consultant remediation incorporating international best practice and expertise on innovative ecological restoration techniques including specialist planting and green initiatives that create aesthetically improved sites, healthy environments and contribute to the provision of new green open spaces as integral parts of newly created areas.
CPO12.123	Require that the treatment/management of any contaminated material shall comply as appropriate with the Waste Management Act 1996 (waste licence, waste facility permit), as amended, and under the EPA Act 1992 (Industrial Emissions licensing, in particular the First Schedule, Class 11 Waste), as amended. These measures will ensure that contaminated material will be managed in a manner that removes any risk to human health and ensures that the end use will be compatible with any risk.

CPO12.124	<p>Require that prior to the grant of approval on contaminated sites, developers will carry out a full contaminated land risk assessment to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the proposed land uses will be compatible with the protection of health and safety (including the durability of structures and services) - during both construction and occupation; and</li> <li>• How any contaminated soil or water encountered will be appropriately dealt with.</li> </ul>
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### 12.21 Natural Heritage and the Environment Associated Climate Actions

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a climate context and associated actions.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the greatest environmental risk to health is ambient air pollution, causing more than three million premature deaths worldwide every year. In Ireland, this figure is an estimated at 1,180 persons, aided by above average levels of air pollutants, despite the country meeting EU air quality standards. A response from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has been to extend the Smokey Coal Ban to include Longford Town amongst others from September 2020. Ireland's 2020 target is to achieve a 20% reduction of non-Emission Trading Scheme (non-ETS) sector emissions (i.e. agriculture, transport, built environment, waste and non-energy intensive industry) against 2005 levels.

Worldwide, peatlands account for 3% of all land cover, and 21% in Ireland alone<sup>6</sup>, and stores twice as much carbon as all standing forests, aided by the ability of a 15cm, thick layer storing more carbon per hectare than tropical rainforests<sup>7</sup>. Yet these habitats are extremely vulnerable to climate change and Ireland is set to lose 31% by 2055 of this asset if immediate rewetting action is not taken<sup>8</sup>.

Healthy, intact ecosystems trap and sequester carbon, retain water, prevent soil erosion and provide protection from extreme weather. Habitats such as wetlands, woodlands and peatlands are particularly high in biodiversity value and are key for both climate mitigation and adaptation measures, providing important carbon sinks, water attenuation and flooding protection, and pollinators for crops.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has calculated that approximately 20% of all species, and one in every three bee species are threatened with extinction as a direct result of our eroding biodiversity. From the food we eat, water we drink, raw materials

<sup>6</sup> Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (2015), '*National Peatlands Strategy 2015 – Managing Ireland's Peatlands*', National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

<https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NationalPeatlandsStrategy2015EnglishVers.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ramsar (2015), '*Guidelines for inventories of tropical peatlands to facilitate their designation as Ramsar Sites*', Ramsar Briefing Note 9, Ramsar – Convention on Wetlands.

[https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/bn9\\_peatland\\_inventory\\_e.pdf](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/bn9_peatland_inventory_e.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Sweeney, J. (et. Al) (2008), '*Climate Change – Refining the Impact for Ireland: Strive Report*', Strive Programme 2007-2013, Environmental Protection Agency, University of Ireland, Maynooth.

<https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/climate/sweeney-report-strive-12-for-web-low-res.pdf>

we use for fuel, construction and medicine, to the creation of space for our leisure, these biodiverse ecosystems help to regulate our climate.

In early May 2019, Ireland became only the second country in the world to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency. Biodiversity is, essentially, the foundation of all plant and animal life, so this declaration is an important, formal recognition by the State of the seriousness of the threat that exists.

***Natural Heritage and the Environment - Climate Change Actions***

Longford County Council shall:

- A12.1** Within the lifetime of the plan, undertake a survey and vector mapping exercise to identify exemplar individual trees and/or stands of trees and/or woodlands throughout the county worthy of their protection and preservation.
- A12.2** Encourage the potential community woodlands areas in urban/urban fringe areas and the development of community woodlands throughout rural Longford.
- A12.3** Discourage and ban the use of glyphosate weed killers in public spaces in favour of hot water, foam stream, flame weeding and concentrated vinegar.
- A12.4** Prepare a Peatland Strategy that shall encourage the rewilding, restoration and protection of peat bogs after turf cutting and/or peat extraction has ceased.
- A12.5** Support the National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme 2017 – 2022.
- A12.6** Promote the roll-out of renewables and stringent protection and enhancement of carbon pools such as forests, peatlands and permanent grasslands.
- A12.7** Fracking and the industrial extraction of fossil fuels will not be encouraged within Longford’s functional area.
- A12.8** Engage the services of a full-time Ecologist on a shared amongst neighbouring Local Authorities.
- A12.9** Install and promote the installation of bird, bat, and owl boxes, and bee bricks and insect hotels or equivalent, at all relevant locations and developments, where possible.

## Chapter 13: Green Infrastructure

### 13.1 Introduction

Green Infrastructure can be broadly defined as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which is designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings. Green infrastructure is a multi-functional and strategically planned network of natural and designed systems that facilitates environmental, economic and social benefits through natural solutions that supports ecological processes. The provision of green (land) networks and blue (water) spaces in our urban environments not only provide for more visually pleasing design solutions; but can also improve environmental conditions thus improving residents' health and quality of life.

Developing an interlinked network of Green Infrastructure, open spaces and heritage assets can greatly benefit urban and rural communities. Green Infrastructure should be developed, designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of economic, environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green Infrastructure is not only key to human health and wellbeing, but also provides multiple benefits which are recognised in national and regional policy documents.

### 13.2 Statutory Context

#### 13.2.1 Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Development Plans must include mandatory objectives for the conservation of the natural heritage and for the conservation of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed.

Furthermore, the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that the County Development Plan indicates locations on a map and to preserve public rights of way, which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility.

### 13.3 Policy Context

#### 13.3.1 EU Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013

This EU-wide strategy set out to promote investments in green infrastructure, to restore the health of ecosystems, ensure that natural areas remain connected together, and allow species to thrive across their entire natural habitat, so that nature keeps on delivering its many benefits to us. The strategy promotes the deployment of green infrastructure across Europe as well as the development of a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure in Europe, a so-called TEN-G, equivalent to the existing networks for transport, energy and ICT. This can also help enhance the health and wellbeing of EU citizens, provide jobs, and boost our economy.

### 13.3.2 EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy

Developing green infrastructure is a key step towards the success of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy's target 2 requires that 'by 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems'. Green infrastructure contributes to all 6 targets of the Strategy - in particular the full implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directive (target 1) and to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in the wider countryside and the marine environment (targets 3 and 4).

### 13.3.3 Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways

The strategy sets out to develop and maintain a Strategic Greenway network of national and regional routes which can link with local Greenways and other cycling, walking and green infrastructure. The Strategy identifies the importance of greenways providing important biodiversity/ecological corridors in addition to providing opportunities for people to experience green infrastructure. The Section also emphasises the potential of greenways and associated green infrastructure to provide pollination enhancement measures in accordance with the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020.

### 13.3.4 National Biodiversity Plan 2017-2020

The Plan identifies the important role of Green Infrastructure in helping to achieve biodiversity targets and developing ecological corridors that allow the movement of species through their entire natural habitat.

### 13.3.5 CEDRA 2012 'Energising Ireland's Rural Economy'

Recommendation 27: The Commission recommends that national State-owned infrastructure that can support national, regional and local tourism initiatives should be prioritised for development. The Commission believes that this is essential to build on the success of initiatives such as the Great Western Greenway in Mayo, and the O'Sullivan Beara Way from West Cork to Leitrim.

### 13.3.6 Inland Fisheries Ireland (2020) on "Planning for watercourses in the Urban Environment"

It outlines an integrated watercourse protection strategy that has been developed by Inland Fisheries Ireland through consultation with a wide range of experts in the area. Watercourses including rivers, lakes and streams are an integral part of our environment and if managed appropriately can significantly improve the quality of life for people living in urban areas.

### 13.3.7 Action Plan for Rural Development – Realising our Rural Potential - 2017

Key Objectives:

- Increase tourist numbers to rural Ireland.

- Support sustainable jobs through targeted rural tourism initiatives, including through the support of key marketing initiatives such as Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way, as well as developing the potential of Ireland's Lakelands.
- Develop and promote Activity Tourism in rural areas through the development of blueways, greenways and other recreational opportunities.
- Develop and promote our natural and built heritage through investment and development of our Gaeltacht areas, enhanced promotion of our National Parks and Nature Reserves and other natural and built resources.

*Action 200* aims to enhance animation and interpretation at key heritage sites and augment existing networks and trails with additional sites and materials to create new visitor experiences.

### 13.3.8 National Planning Framework (NPF)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) identifies our environment as an asset worthy of protection, which if planned for in the same way as for other forms of infrastructure, can provide long term benefits. An attractive environment is important for tourism and a vibrant, well planned urban area with good amenities will contribute to attracting skilled employees and investment to underpin long-term development. Our natural assets are also valuable for carbon capture, which will assist in meeting climate mitigation and adaptation goals and national biodiversity targets.

National Policy Objective NPO58 stipulates that integrated planning for Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans. The NPF identifies 4 no. key priorities to achieve this:

- Assisting in accommodating growth and expansion, while retaining the intrinsic value of natural places and natural assets;
- Providing increased certainty in planning by proactively addressing relevant environmental issues;
- Encouraging more collaborative approaches to plan-making by enabling examination of the interactions between future development requirements and the capacity of receiving areas; and
- Ensuring that sufficient and well-planned green spaces, commensurate in scale to long-term development requirements, are designated in statutory plans.

### 13.3.9 Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The EMRA RSES places significant weight to the importance of Green Infrastructure and Regional Policy Objectives. It requires the Council to identify, protect, enhance and manage Green Infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner (RPO 7.22); and to support the further development of Green Infrastructure policies and to coordinate the mapping of strategic Green Infrastructure in the Region (RPO 7.23)

The RSES also provides a list of 7 no. key guiding principles essential in the preparation of Green Infrastructure Strategies:

1. Identify and protect existing Green Infrastructure Assets – (before development, including spatial mapping where appropriate), and enhance the potential of the existing network through the development of new Green Infrastructure assets during development processes.
2. Connectivity is key – interconnect Green Infrastructure assets with each other and with people, providing linkages from built up areas to the countryside. This includes wildlife corridors between areas of high biodiversity value and the development of greenways, blueways and peatways.
3. Consider the Green Infrastructure impacts of greenways – while the development of greenways and blueways has positive health and wellbeing benefits, there is also potential for habitat loss and disturbance due to increased movement of people. Therefore, there is a need to strategically plan, deliver and manage our Green Infrastructure networks and ensure appropriately designed infrastructure to reduce the impact on the natural environment.
4. Integrate an ecosystem services approach – addressing biodiversity protection, water management and climate action in the planning and management of green spaces, for example provision of street trees, roadside hedges, planting wildflower meadows, introducing wildlife under- and over-passes, permeable surfaces and SuDS along connecting routes and green walls and roofs on buildings.
5. Design Green Infrastructure strategies that function at different scales and across boundaries – to this end local authorities should work with their neighbouring authorities to co-ordinate Green Infrastructure strategies and with infrastructure providers to seek out opportunities to develop Green Infrastructure along strategic infrastructure corridors.
6. Carbon Sequestration – local authorities should consider the potential for carbon sequestration in Green Infrastructure Strategies, whereby certain areas can be considered as strategic and integral mechanisms for the long-term storage of carbon to mitigate the contribution of fossil fuels emissions and combat climate change.
7. Integrate built and natural heritage – provide links between walking and cycling routes particularly in areas of high amenity, uplands, lake shores, river banks, forests with built heritage sites, areas of historic or archaeological importance and National Monuments. The development of waymarked ways and looped walks can maximise recreation and tourism benefits to local populations but may require the creation of new rights of way either by agreement or by the use of compulsory powers.

### 13.4 County Longford Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure within the County can be described as the county's environmental and heritage resources. County Longford has a widespread and prosperous existing Green Infrastructure network which boasts many key features, including but not limited to those listed below:

- a) European Sites – SACs and SPAs –, NHAs and proposed pNHAs, river and stream buffer zones and non-designated sites.
- b) The archaeological and architectural assets including sites and Monuments on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), buildings and other structures on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and the Historic Graveyards.
- c) Geological Sites identified in *Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment* and included in the list within *Table 12.5: Longford County Geological Sites*.
- d) Other Natural Resources such as lakes and waterways (including rivers, streams and the Royal Canal); bog and peatlands; forestry, woodlands, tree stands, and hedgerows; and hills/upland/commonage.
- e) Areas of Landscape sensitivity (generally rural) including the Broadzones near the Shores of Lough Ree, Lough Gowna, Lough Kinale and River Inny and those in the north county, northern uplands, and northern drumlin/lakelands.
- f) Existing parks and open spaces.

### 13.5 The Benefits of Green Infrastructure

The Green Infrastructure network supports both native plant and animal species, providing corridors for their movement, maintaining natural ecological processes. The Green Infrastructure network also helps to provide a natural form of flood defence/relief, a carbon sink, assists to sustain air and water quality and also provides natural recreational spaces for communities.

Individually each Green Infrastructure site/asset has an important role and benefit when developed and maintained in a healthy state. These individual roles and benefits can be enhanced when the sites/assets are linked together into a Green Infrastructure network. Green Infrastructure can also be combined with 'Grey' Infrastructure (human-engineered infrastructure for water resources such as water and wastewater treatment plants, pipelines, and reservoirs), through the design of new developments, or the extension, refurbishment or retrofitting of exiting developments. The benefits of Green Infrastructure sites/networks are set out in Table 13.1.

**Table 13.1: Green Infrastructure Elements and Social and Economic Benefits**

<b>Green Infrastructure Elements and Social and Economic Benefits</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
Recreation and Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improves physical and mental well-being;</li> <li>- Improves air quality;</li> <li>- Provides recreational, exercise and sporting opportunities;</li> <li>- Provides permeability through the landscape, creating corridors for activities, especially walking and cycling.</li> </ul>
Biodiversity & Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhances biodiversity;</li> <li>- Increases opportunities for sustainable land management;</li> <li>- Safeguards priority habitats and species;</li> <li>- Restores ecological networks;</li> <li>- Conserves and improves soil quality;</li> <li>- Reduces the impacts of poor air quality;</li> <li>- Supports habitats for wildlife, biodiversity and ecosystems;</li> </ul>
Water Resource and Flood Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improves water quality;</li> <li>- Provides waterside recreation;</li> <li>- Protects water resources and abstraction sites bringing them into multifunctional use.</li> </ul>
Sense of place appreciation of landscapes and cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safeguards beneficial use of local landscape resources;</li> <li>- Conserves historic landscapes, archaeological assets, built heritage and cultural heritage;</li> <li>- Assists place-making by positively maintaining the character of locations, particularly where new development is planned;</li> <li>- Provides green buffers/green wedges in built up areas.</li> </ul>
Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assists climate change adaptation including flood alleviation;</li> <li>- Allows flood plains to retain their wildness thereby assisting their capability to take and disperse flood waters;</li> <li>- Buffers/breaks flooding (fluvial); providing space for SUDS;</li> </ul>
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interlinks with recreational, tourism and cultural activities;</li> <li>- Provides a setting for land based active tourism and social enterprises thereby encouraging inward investment.</li> </ul>
Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides access to nature for the populace</li> <li>- Provides a setting for community engagement, activities and informal education, training and skills;</li> <li>- Increases awareness of environment and climate change;</li> </ul>
Productive Environments – Food, Fibre and Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides and supports forestry, crop production, agriculture and energy development;</li> <li>- Provides places/settings in urban and rural areas for food production (allotments/gardens);</li> <li>- Provides a habitat for bees and insects to pollinate;</li> </ul>

The Council acknowledges that Green Infrastructure planning involves a holistic approach and should be provided as an integral part of sustainable development, alongside other infrastructure such as utilities and transport networks, if we are to get the maximum benefit from our natural assets. It is through the conservation of ecological infrastructure such as hedgerows and riparian corridors that we can develop a ‘network of sites’ to strengthen and enhance our green infrastructure. These allow for the migration and the exchange of species between conservation areas.

Longford County Council is committed to proactively promoting and developing Green Infrastructure and ecological connectivity in the county by requiring the retention and enhancement of substantial networks of biodiversity, in addition to requiring the provision of a high standard of Green Infrastructure as part of new developments in both urban and rural areas. Methods of integrating both existing and new Green Infrastructure into proposed new developments should be identified at the initial stages.

<b>General Green Infrastructure – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Council Policy Objective to:	
CPO13.1	Develop the green infrastructure network to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the protection of European Sites;</li> <li>- the provision of accessible parks, open spaces and recreational facilities (including allotments and community gardens);</li> <li>- the sustainable management of water;</li> <li>- the maintenance of landscape character including historic landscape character;</li> <li>- the protection and enhancement of the architectural and archaeological heritage.</li> <li>- Any new greenway, blueway and peatway projects shall comply with CPO 5.15 in relation to Infrastructure corridor and route selection processes.</li> </ul>
CPO13.2	Seek a net gain in green infrastructure through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the protection and enhancement of existing assets;</li> <li>- the provision of new green infrastructure as an integral part of the planning process;</li> <li>- taking forward priority projects including preparing green infrastructure maps during the lifetime of the Development Plan.</li> </ul>
CPO13.3	Resist development that would fragment or prejudice the County’s strategic green infrastructure network.
CPO13.4	Ensure green infrastructure protection and provision promotes pedestrian access, cycling, and public transport in preference to the car, as appropriate, while protecting biodiversity and other landscape resources.
CPO13.5	Facilitate the conservation and enhancement of significant non-designated areas containing ecological importance and located in green corridors.

CPO13.6	Protect green infrastructure including both natural and man-made from the threat of pollution.
CPO13.7	Ensure the protection, enhancement and maintenance of Green Infrastructure in the Development Management Process. Require an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for all development proposals on lands zoned Recreation / Amenity / Green Space, to ensure that the potential impacts on protected species and habitats can be assessed.
CPO13.8	Survey lands zoned Recreation/Amenity/Green Space and to apply the Ecosystem Scoring Service to assess the habitat and species value of the subject lands zoned in the key settlements of the County as resources and opportunities allow during the lifetime of the Plan.

### 13.6 Creation of New and Additional Green Infrastructure

The creation of new green infrastructure as part of any new developments is important for a number of reasons, which range from the provision of green infrastructure for flood relief to habitat creation and pollination. The development of linkages of green corridors of various sizes and scales between environmental assets enhancing both the individual and cumulative values of these assets is also significant.

New and additional Green Infrastructure can also be incorporated into developments involving the modification, adaptation and extension of existing buildings and other permitted developments. This may involve the retrofitting of Green Infrastructure to buildings/developments which could potentially include the provision of SUDs measures, green roofs, allotments, riparian buffers and pollination areas.

<b>New Green Infrastructure – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Council Policy Objective to:	
CPO13.9	Require that all Local Area and Land Use Plans to protect, manage and provide, where possible, Green Infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner.
CPO13.10	Facilitate the ongoing development and improvement of green infrastructure, including green networks, green amenities and linked green corridors which ensure the provision of natural areas for the growth of wildlife and biodiversity.
CPO13.11	Develop a green infrastructure network for urban areas, connecting both natural and semi-natural corridors including green spaces, open spaces, rivers and canals. Enhancements along natural features may include the provision of riparian buffers and wild areas for pollination.
CPO13.12	Ensure that residual land in developments can be used for the provision of green infrastructure including community food programmes(allotments) and areas for pollination.
CPO13.13	Ensure all planning applications for development have regard to the County's Green Infrastructure resources and that they provide for the protection of existing green infrastructure, and, where appropriate, the provision of new green infrastructure.

CPO13.14	<p>Require significant and large new development or extensions (multiple residential developments, retail, industrial, mineral extraction, renewable etc) (at the discretion of the council) to submit a Green Infrastructure Plan as part of a planning application.</p> <p><i>(This plan should identify environmental assets and include proposals which protect, manage and develop green infrastructure resources in a sustainable manner).</i></p>
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### 13.7 County Longford's Network of Blueways, Greenways and Peatways

The existing network of Blueways, Greenways and Peatways is presented in *Appendix 5: Tourism - Longford County Trails*.

#### Blueways:

Blueways consist of a network of navigable inland waterways such as lakes, canals and rivers and include the River Shannon and the Royal Canal. They provide scenic routes by canoe, bike or on foot and connect Longford with neighbouring Counties such as Roscommon, Westmeath and Leitrim.

In County Longford examples of such would include the Royal Canal, a man-made waterway linking Dublin to the River Shannon near Tarmonbarry, with a spur branching off and connecting with Longford town. It is one of two major canal navigation systems in Ireland. Given the number of lakes and canals in the county, the Council will endeavour to develop a network of integrated blueways both within the county and to other counties.

#### Greenways:

Greenways are essentially shared off-road routes designed for cyclists and pedestrians for leisure, recreation, tourism and daily journeys and are reserved exclusively for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. They provide recreational opportunities for walking, jogging and cycling and can often coincide with river/stream corridors and can promote free passage for wildlife.

The Royal Canal Greenway is the primary National access route into Longford. From this primary National route, the local access routes spread out across the County. Longford County Council recognises the potential for a strategy-based approach to greenways. This presents a number of connected natural and manmade features and locations. This network connects most areas of importance and natural beauty in the County. This includes Longford Town and the Counties tourism products of the *Rebel Trail, the Literary Trail and the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park*, which are a fundamental part of the *County's Tourism Strategy, 2017 – 2022*. This County Cycling strategy has been developed further into North, South and Mid-Longford Cycling Routes. These are mapped and sign posted throughout the County in all the major towns and villages. This provides the County with a comprehensive Cycling network

built around the national and regional access Greenway Routes via the Royal Canal Greenway.

Peatways:

Peatways within the County consists of a number of significant raised peat sites some of which are identified as worthy of protection (see Appendix 8: Green Infrastructure - Peatland Areas Map). The RSES and neighbouring counties are keen to establish pathways connecting these important peatland sites creating Peatways through the landscape. This programme seeks to create an interconnected link to a range of biodiversity and cultural hotspots, including the Corlea Bog and the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park in Longford with other peatlands in Westmeath, Roscommon and Leitrim.

The Council recognises the Blueways, Greenways and Peatways and the contribution that they make to the County's overall Green Infrastructure network, in addition to the many valuable economic, social and environmental benefits they provide. The Council identifies the need to both conserve and protect these assets and look to develop them further, as they provide natural defences against flood risk in both urban and rural areas; contribute and offer valuable economic potential in terms of tourism development and associated spin off's; and provide significant quality of life benefits. The Council is fully committed to developing a network of Greenways, Blueways and Peatways in accordance with the requirements of national policy, including the Department of Transport, Sport and Tourism '*Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways*' (2018). This section should be read in conjunction with *Chapter 10: Tourism – 10.8 Lakes, Bogs and Waterways and 10.9 Greenways, Cycling and Walking*.

<b>Network of Blueways, Greenways and Peatways – Council Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Council Policy Objective to:	
CPO13.15	Support the delivery of sustainable strategic Greenways, Blueways and Peatways projects in the County in accordance with the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways.
CPO13.16	Develop an integrated network of Blueways both within County Longford and to adjoining counties.
CPO13.17	Support the development of Blueways and associated infrastructure such as mooring points within the key settlements as part of the tourist offering of the County.
CPO13.18	Investigate the provision of mooring points on the islands within the major lakes of the County.
CPO13.19	Support the development of an integrated Strategic Greenway Network of national and regional routes and maximise connectivity to existing greenways through linkages of cycling and walking infrastructure.
CPO13.20	Protect, enhance and preserve the built and natural heritage of the Royal Canal and its associated structures including the maintenance of the broadzone at 100m either side of the Canal. This shall include the natural setting of the canal and its views and prospects.

CPO13.21	Proposals for greenway/blueway development should contribute towards the protection or enhancement of existing green infrastructure and have regard to the “Connecting with nature for health and wellbeing” EPA Research Report 2020.
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### 13.8 Green Infrastructure Strategy for Longford

It is the intention of the Council to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County in consultation with all key stakeholders during the lifetime of this Development Plan following the seven guiding principles identified in the *EMRA RSES* highlighted earlier in the policy section of this Chapter. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will include provisions for improved accessibility across the County through improved and connected walking and cycling routes whilst also ensuring adequate protection to the existing environment and ecology of the landscape. The Strategy will seek to ensure that areas and networks of green infrastructure are identified, protected, enhanced, managed and created to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.

<b>Green Infrastructure Strategy – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Council Policy Objective to:	
CPO13.22	Develop and implement a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County in partnership with key stakeholders and the public.
CPO13.23	Identify and map Green Infrastructure assets and sites of local biodiversity value over the lifetime of the Plan.
CPO13.24	Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy reflects a long-term perspective, including the need to adapt to climate change.
CPO13.25	Sets targets in the Green Infrastructure Strategy for the provision of different green infrastructure elements in urban areas, such as trees in urban areas, so that a net gain in green infrastructure is achieved over the lifetime of this development plan.
CPO13.26	Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County safeguards important agricultural and horticultural lands.
CPO13.27	Ensure the Green Infrastructure Strategy connects and integrates existing and new communities through appropriate planning, ongoing management and governance.
CPO13.28	Ensure Green Infrastructure responds to and reflects landscape character including historic landscape character, conserving and enhancing the existing landscapes and townscapes of the County and which contribute to a distinctive sense of place.
CPO13.29	Support and increase investment in the provision and on-going maintenance of existing Green Infrastructure and support the provision of new public parks, Greenway, Blueway and Peatway corridors and other public open spaces to create green, healthy settlements throughout the County by accessing relevant National and European funding mechanisms and opportunities including tourism related funding.

### 13.9 Public Rights of Way, Walking and cycling routes, Trails

Public Rights of Way constitute an important recreational amenity. They enable the enjoyment of high-quality landscape, natural and archaeological heritage and provide valuable links to natural assets and amenities such as rivers lakes, bogs, forests and places of natural beauty. A public right of way is a physically defined route over which the public have a right of passage even if the route is not in public ownership. It is described as “a user as of right” and confers an unrestricted right of the general public to pass and repass at all times of the day or night and at all seasons without notice to, or permission from the landowner.

The Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) includes a mandatory objective for a County Development Plan to indicate locations on a map and to preserve public rights of way, which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility. A list of the known public rights of way in Longford is attached below and these are also mapped in Appendix 8. When additional rights of way are identified they shall be incorporated them into the Plan by way of a Variation or at the next review of the Plan.

Existing public rights of way constitute an important amenity and they enable the enjoyment of high-quality landscapes, providing a valuable link to natural assets and places of natural beauty, such as the lakes, bogs and forests to those that live and visit the County. There are a number of public accesses to the lakes within the county. There are several walking routes throughout the County through publicly owned lands including along the Royal Canal Way. There are other pedestrian rights of way within the County such as mass paths, which have existed for centuries but not all of which are readily identifiable. The Council recognises the importance of maintaining established rights of way and supports initiatives for establishing new walking routes and enhanced accessibility. Table 13.2 indicates the known public Rights of Way in County Longford.

**Table 13.2: County Longford Public Rights of Way**

1.	The Mall Walk
2.	Royal Canal Walk
3.	Commons North Walk
4.	Granard Motte Access
5.	St. Patrick Terrace to N55
6.	Derrycassin Wood
7.	Ballymahon Riverbank
8.	Lough Ree access, Cashel
9.	Lyanmore Path
10.	Lough Gowna lakeshore & carpark
11.	Leebeen Park
12.	Lough Forbes SAC

However, it is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list and that the omission of any Right of Way shall not be taken as an indication that such a Right of Way is not a public Right of Way, or has been extinguished.

*Appendix 8: Green Infrastructure* includes a public Right of Way map for those known routes to date. In addition, the appendix includes a map of the existing trails and walking routes identified to date.

<b>Public Rights of Way – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the Council Policy Objective to:	
CPO13.30	Review and protect existing public rights of way and trails for the common good and bring forward proposals for the creation of additional public rights of way.
CPO13.31	Cooperate with Coillte, Bord na Mona, private land owners and other Public Bodies in the establishment of access ways, nature trails etc. with a view to the opening up of state forests and cut away bogs for recreational use, compatible with forestry requirements.
CPO13.32	Identify links to established public rights of way with adjoining counties, where appropriate.
CPO13.33	Ensure that existing Public Rights of Way and trails are appropriately waymarked, signposted and accessible.
CPO13.34	Encourage and facilitate the creation of additional rights of way and extend existing ones for pedestrian, cycling, amenity or recreational purposes, either by agreement or by the use of compulsory powers, for the creation of public rights of way, particularly in areas of high amenity and recreational importance.
CPO13.35	Promote the preservation, protection, enhancement, maintenance and improvement, for the common good of all public rights of way particularly those giving access to lakes, riverbanks, geomorphological features of heritage value and other places of natural beauty or recreational utility/activity.

### **13.10 Green Infrastructure Climate Context and Associated Actions**

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a climate context and associated actions.

Green Infrastructure serves a wide variety of important functions including but not limited to; provision of habitat, increase biodiversity, ecological corridors, climate change adaptation and mitigation, water treatment, water retention, local amenity provision, air quality improvement, cultural and heritage preservation, a mental restorative environmental and flood mitigation (RSES – EMRA 2019, p164). Biodiversity’s protection relies heavily on quality Green Infrastructure, defined as a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas, designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services in both rural and urban settings (EU Green Infrastructure Strategy).

(RSES – EMRA 2019, p166). The EU Biodiversity Strategy has set the backdrop, requiring that by 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by established ‘Green Infrastructure’ and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems. The responsibility lies with the local authority to consider the potential for carbon sequestration in Green Infrastructure Strategies, whereby certain areas can be considered as a strategic and integral mechanism for the long-term storage of carbon to mitigate the contribution of fossil fuels emissions and combat climate change.

Careful land management is also needed to ensure that land use changes do not impact on the ability of the natural environment to absorb climate impacts. Sustainable land use management and natural flood risk mitigation measures can slow down the water flow in catchments and rivers, for example by protection and/or rewetting of peatlands and bogs and by planting hedgerows across hillsides. Such measure may not be able to solve severe flood problems on their own but can form part of the solution and can also help to achieve environmental goals, including improving water quality, nature conservation / biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation (RSES – EMRA 2019, p158).

Green adaptation seeks to use ecological properties to enhance the resilience of human and natural systems in the face of climate change, such as creation of green spaces and parks to enable better management of urban micro-climates.

***Green Infrastructure Climate Change Actions:***

Longford County Council shall:

- A13.1** Maintain existing green infrastructure and encourage and facilitate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the development of green infrastructure that recognises the synergies that can be achieved through the following:
- Provision of open space amenities;
  - Sustainable management of water;
  - Protection and management of biodiversity;
  - Protection of cultural heritage;
  - Protection of protected landscape sensitivities;
  - Planting drought resistant plants.
- A13.2** Expand the footprint and improve existing connections to the existing Albert Reynolds Peace Park (The Mall) Longford Town, while supporting the development of all other parks within its functional area.
- A13.3** Undertake a feasibility study identifying ‘pocket park’ opportunities for all towns within its functional area.
- A13.4** Seek to implement the principals of the ‘Green Street’ concept for all future, urban regeneration of streets, prioritising the integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- A13.5** Work with the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government, the Department of

**A13.6**

Transport, Tourism & Sport, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling.

Require the incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS) for all future developments with an identified need.

## Chapter 14: Landscape Character

### 14.1 Introduction

Landscape is all around us – it's where we live, work and play – enriching and sustaining our lives in countless ways. All aspects of our natural and cultural heritage come together in these landscapes and give us a strong sense of place. The County has a rich and diverse landscape character which helps to define its character and nature. Each landscape type also has a varying capacity to absorb development relative to its overall sensitivity. The challenge is to manage our landscapes so that change is positive in its effects, and that the landscapes which we value are protected and those which have been degraded are enhanced.

It is recognised that our landscape is a key asset in sustaining a high quality of life for the residents of the County and is an important sustainable tourism resource. The protection and management of the County's natural heritage is a shared responsibility. Longford County Council is committed to working with relevant agencies, communities and individuals to ensure the conservation, protection and enhancement of our landscape and natural heritage assets can be sustained and realised.

### 14.2 Statutory Context

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that planning authorities, make provision in their development plans for the protection of landscape character including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty and interest.

### 14.3 Policy Context

#### 14.3.1 National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040

The NPF (National Policy Objective NPO-14) acknowledges the value of landscape which offers a wealth of natural and cultural assets which in turn support our quality of life and our visitor economy. It aims to facilitate landscape protection, management and change through the preparation of a National Landscape Character Map and development of guidance on local landscape character assessments, (including historic landscape characterisation) to ensure a consistent approach to landscape character assessment, particularly across planning and administrative boundaries.

#### 14.3.2 Eastern Midlands Regional Assembly – RSES

The RSES recognises the importance of landscape considerations, particularly in the context of placemaking, culture and attractiveness. It acknowledges the diverse range of scenic landscapes across the Region and aims to promote a wider concept of the landscape as defined by the interaction of both human and natural, covering urban, peri-urban and rural areas as well as land, inland waters, coastal and marine areas. A strong emphasis is placed in the strategy on the value of blueways which are

particularly important for water quality, fisheries and ecological habitats, and for activities such as kayaking and snorkelling.

The RSES supports the preparation of a national landscape character assessment, which will provide a framework for regional and local landscape character assessments. Specifically, RPO 7.27 commits, following the adoption of a national landscape character assessment, to the preparation of a Regional Landscape Character Assessment to promote better landscape management and planning in the Region.

#### 14.3.3 European Landscape Convention and National Landscape Strategy 2004

The European Landscape Convention (ELC), ratified by Ireland in 2002 and which came into effect on 1st March 2004, states that landscape means '*...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*'. This definition has been incorporated into the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

#### 14.3.4 National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025

The objective of the National Landscape Strategy (NLS) is to provide a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape by way of supporting actions. The NLS recognises the importance of landscape protection and its interconnectivity with biodiversity and climate change. A key objective of the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025 is to develop a National Landscape Character Assessment and to publish statutory guidelines on local Landscape Character Assessments, following best international practices and incorporating Historic Landscape Characterisation for Planning Authorities.

### **14.4 Landscape Character Assessment**

Landscape Character Assessment is a process which describes, maps and classifies landscapes. Landscape character is defined as '*a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse*'. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future. The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be subtracted from its physical and visual characteristics, so all of these elements are considered.

The Landscape Character Assessment is used by the Council to improve the understanding of the County's landscape in terms of its inherent and unique character and to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced. It is also used to predict the broad pattern of future changes and devise policies and objectives as guidance to planners and other parties which will ensure that change is complimentary to landscape character.

### 14.5 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity

The sensitivity of the Landscape Character Areas is defined as its overall resilience to sustain its character in the face of change and its ability to recover from loss or damage to its components. Sensitivity is evaluated using criteria ranging from 'High' to 'Low' and is based on the interaction of individual components such as landform, amount of evident historical features (time depth) and distribution of viewers.

Landscape sensitivity and the capacity of the landscape will be given due consideration in all aspects of decision-making in order to protect the landscape areas of highest value and to assist in the achievement of sustainable development. A highly sensitive landscape is likely to be vulnerable, fragile and susceptible to change whereas a landscape with low sensitivity is likely to be more robust and/ or tolerant of change. The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the County is included in full within *Annex 11: Landscape Character* and maps the indicative Landscape Character Areas of the County. It provides guidance for a detailed understanding of the landscapes of the County and sets out guidance and recommendations to assist in the development of related planning policies, development of strategies and development management within the County.

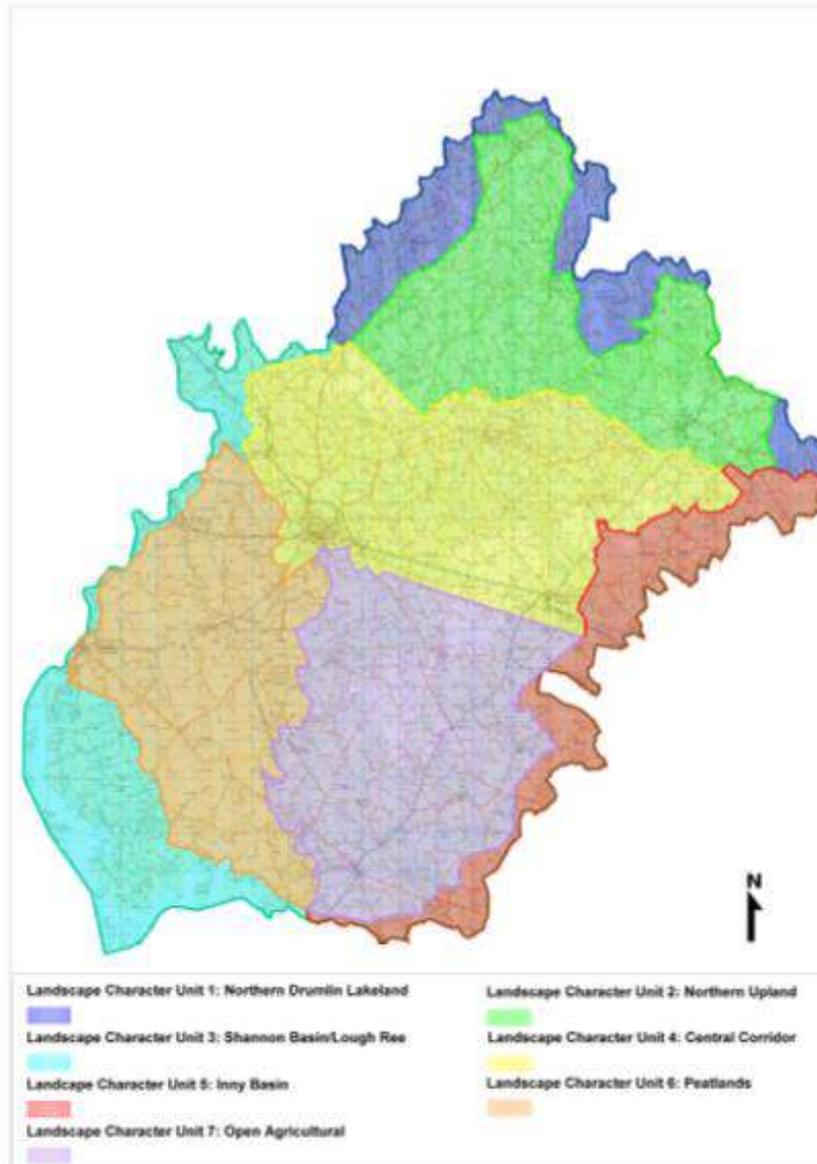
The LCA identifies 7 no. broad landscape character types within the County these are defined in Table 14.1 below and detailed fully in *Annex 11: Landscape Character*.

**Table 14.1 County Longford's Landscape Character Type and Sensitivity**

Landscape Character Type	Landscape Sensitivity
<b>Unit 1 – Northern Drumlin Lakeland</b>	Sensitivity of much of this landscape can be classified as LOW to MEDIUM with some HIGH sensitivity in the vicinity of the lakes and designated scenic routes
<b>Unit 2 – Northern Upland</b>	Sensitivity of much of this landscape can be classified as MEDIUM to HIGH
<b>Unit 3 – Shannon Basin/Lough Ree</b>	Sensitivity of the landscapes in this unit range from MEDIUM - along the south-eastern border of the unit - to HIGH sensitivity - along the shores of the lake, islands, the riverbanks, and in the vicinity of the Aquifer.
<b>Unit 4 – Central Corridor</b>	Sensitivity of the landscapes in this unit are generally LOW. Potential areas of MEDIUM to HIGH sensitivity exist in the vicinity of protected woodlands, riverbanks and in the vicinity of the Aquifer.
<b>Unit 5 – Inny Basin</b>	Sensitivity of the landscapes in this unit are generally LOW. Potential areas of MEDIUM to HIGH sensitivity exist in the vicinity of protected woodlands, riverbanks.
<b>Unit 6 – Peatlands</b>	Visual Sensitivity of the landscapes are generally LOW, as their flat nature allows development to be accommodated with minimum screening needed to achieve integration into its surrounds. An exception to this designation is the vicinity of the Royal Canal, where sensitivity is HIGH.

	In Environmental terms, sensitivity can be generally termed MEDIUM to HIGH due to the limited capacity of the receiving environment to cater for additional effluent loading.
<b>Unit 7 – Open Agricultural</b>	Visual sensitivity of the landscapes in this unit are generally LOW to MEDIUM. An exception to this designation is the vicinity of the Royal Canal, the River Inny, in Upland Areas with designated scenic views, and in proximity to the heritage village of Ardagh where sensitivity is HIGH.

The potential capacity of each Landscape Character Area is based on indicative types of development that are likely to occur within the study area. The capacity of a character area or type is the ability of that landscape to absorb specific types of development. The capacity of the landscape character area is evaluated on a case-by-case basis because it will vary according to the type and form of development, its location in relation to the landscape character area in question, and its visibility from it.

**Figure 14.1: County Longford's Landscape Character areas**

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:-

<b>Landscape Character - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO14.1	Support and implement objectives contained in any Regional Landscape Character Assessment.
CPO14.2	Review in the context of a regional approach to landscape assessment, the County Landscape Character Assessment following publication of statutory guidelines for Planning Authorities on local Landscape Character Assessments, as outlined in the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025.
CPO14.3	Protect the landscapes and natural environments of the County by ensuring that any new developments do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of their area. Any development which could unduly impact upon such landscapes will not be permitted.
CPO14.4	Ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to the character, value and sensitivity of a landscape in new development proposals. Any new development should respect and reinforce the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types, including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements which contribute to their distinctiveness.
CPO14.5	Conserve and enhance the high nature conservation value of the Landscape Character Areas in order to create/protect ecologically resilient and varied landscapes.
CPO14.6	Discourage proposals necessitating the removal of an extensive number of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments and consider the making of Tree Preservation Orders in respect of trees or groups of trees of particular landscape value.
CPO14.7	Require landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals to be submitted with planning applications for development which may have significant impact on landscape character areas of medium or high sensitivity.
CPO14.8	Preserve views and prospects as illustrated on the accompanying map as part of <i>Appendix 9: Landscape Character</i> and as listed in Tables 14.2 and 14.3.

## 14.6 County Longford Landscape Character Areas

### 14.6.1 Landscape Unit 1 – Northern Drumlin Lakeland

This area consists of the North West fringe of the County and extends from Drumlish in the west to the County boundary in the north. This landscape unit also includes the areas surrounding Lough Gowna and Lough Kinale in the east of the County. The southern boundary is mainly formed by the R198 Regional route from Longford to Arva, the Aughnacliffe to Enaghan Road and other relevant features such as the 100m contour line.

Views are available to the north into Counties Leitrim and Cavan, which closely mirror the landscape inside the county boundary. Landcover consists of predominantly small agricultural holdings, interspersed with bogland, which becomes more dominant toward the eastern boundary of the unit and lakeland areas that dominate on the western County Boundary. The area primarily consists of rolling drumlin landscape, with agricultural land tending to be tightly enclosed and bounded by small but well-established hedgerow species, at times permitting limited views of the string of lakes that border the County.

The soils in this area are predominantly poorly drained gley soils with some peats. Drainage patterns are extremely complex, giving way to peatlands in the valley of the Black River and the vicinity of Annagh Lough. This area type includes the Lough Gowna Complex to the northeast of the County (included in An Foras Forbartha Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes in Ireland, 1977) and Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough in the northeast. Drainage is divided between the two major River catchments of the Shannon to the southwest and the Erne to the northeast.

The settlement pattern in the area is highly dispersed due to the nature of the topography and its influence on the agricultural practices in the area. Drumlish and Ballinamuck are the only settlements in the area, with the main concentration of development centred on these villages. Drumlish has seen a substantial level of development over the period of the previous two Development Plan periods relative to its size with a number of recently added housing developments situated within the development boundary. Ballinamuck has also experienced a level of housing development in recent times but at a much lesser rate to that of Drumlish.

The road pattern throughout the area is relatively sparse with an emphasis on north-south communication. The undulating drumlin nature of the topography of the area is unattractive to mobile telephony infrastructure and other masts/antennae support structures, these preferring the higher ground of the adjacent areas, while retaining strong intervisibility from this area.

Agriculture tends to be extensive and part-time in nature, given the limited capacity of the soils in the area. Farms tend to remain fragmented, which reinforces and perpetuates the patterns of small, tightly packed fields and highly dispersed settlement. Industrial development in the area is limited given the lack of concentrated settlement and the poor road network. In common with the majority of rural areas throughout the Country, utility poles and overhead wiring line the roadsides and traverse fields. Two sets of 110 kV electricity lines and their associated pylons enter the County at Farmullagh and Corglass and create a striking landscape impact.

Coarse fishing and angling on the numerous lakes are an important element of the tourist industry in the area. Known archaeology in the area is comparatively sparse, with the exception of the islands and shores of Loughs Gowna and Kinale and in the vicinity of Cloonagh and Mullinlaghta to the east of the area. The Black Pig's Dyke, an important linear earthwork, commences at Dring on the southern shores of Lough

Gowna and runs down toward Lough Kinale. The 1798 battlefield and associated sites and monuments are significant culturally important items and are located at and in the vicinity of Ballinamuck. The potential for recreational and amenity development in the area is high, given the lakeshore frontage that exists for walking, angling and swimming. The local community has established a swimming pool at Annagh Lough. The sensitivity of much of this landscape can be classified as LOW to MEDIUM with some HIGH sensitivity in the vicinity of the lakes and designated scenic routes

#### Threats

- Loss of inherent character due to altered landscape management practices arising as a result of EU agricultural policy reforms/further decline in agriculture;
- Removal of existing network of hedgerows and boundaries distinctive to the area through farm fragmentation/road frontage and ribbon development;
- Loss of integrity of important historical sites and cultural heritage, such as 1798 battlefield, due to insensitive or poorly located development;
- Agricultural activity and residential development in the vicinity of the lakes threatens water quality and fish stocks;
- Unsympathetic residential or amenity development at lakeshores or within their visual areas.

#### Opportunities

- Dense field patterns and substantial boundaries provide an enclosed landscape that can accommodate appropriately sited development without major landscape change;
- Opening up of access to lakeshores for amenity purposes

<b>Landscape Unit 1 – Northern Drumlin Lakeland - County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO14.9	Support appropriate development in areas of population decline.
CPO14.10	Encourage setting back of dwellings into fields retaining existing plot size and boundary treatment.
CPO14.11	Permit hedgerow removal only where necessary for road safety and, where removal is required, encourage replacement with native hedgerow species
CPO14.12	Encourage access to lakes and watercourses and development of tourist accommodation within or in the vicinity of settlements, while monitoring amenity development /restricting access in environmentally sensitive locations.
CPO14.13	Restrict housing on lakeshores and within their visual areas.

#### **14.6.2 Landscape Unit 2 – Northern Upland**

This unit consists of the central northern section of the County, stretching from Drumlish in the west to Moyne in the north, Esker in the south and including the towns of Granard and Abbeylara in the east, up to and including the county boundary with Cavan. Many of the important views listed in the County Development Plan are located in this landscape unit. The majority of this unit lies above the 100m contour line to the north of the County and contains Corn Hill, Edenmore and Crott. Visible

from a significant distance, given the flat nature of the surrounding Midland and Border Counties, the highest point is 278m at Corn Hill. There is high intervisibility between this area and other isolated upland areas such as Ardagh Mountain in the south of the County, the Hill of Uisneach in Westmeath and Sliabh Bán in County Roscommon.

The Geology and Soils are predominantly Gley Soils, much of which is in typical drumlin formation. Drainage in the northern section of the unit is dominated by the Lough Gowna Lake complex, which falls under the catchment of the River Erne. The southern portion is drained towards the Shannon via the Camlin and Inny Rivers and their tributaries. Agriculture in this area tends to be extensive, given the poor soil, drainage and access characteristics, and results in a similar but somewhat less enclosed field pattern than Landscape Unit 1. This more open feeling in the landscape may also be attributed to the elevated nature of the topography. Forestry is well established in the area with large coniferous and mixed forestry tracts at Corn Hill, Edenmore and Crott, with smaller pockets scattered throughout the area. Boggy areas predominate to the western boundary in the lower reaches of the river valleys where drainage becomes sluggish and a transition zone is formed between Landscape units 1 and 2.

The area is served by an extensive county road network, which is heavily influenced by the elevated topography and associated drainage patterns. Many of these roads are little more than laneways through the hills and valleys and are substandard in width and alignment. The height of Corn Hill in relation to the surrounding Midland topography has made it an attractive site for the establishment of communications masts, which remain a substantial landscape feature. A portion of the now disused Cavan railway lies to the east of Abbeylara.

The main settlements within this unit are Granard, supported by the villages of Abbeylara, Moyne, Legga, Bunlahy and Aughnacliffe. Development has yet to become established to any significant degree in these settlements. Rural housing in the area follows the dense pattern of extensive agriculture and the complex road network, tending to be highly dispersed with some local concentrations.

Industrial development in the area is limited, with the exception of the Granard area, where the Kiernan Feed factory dominates the landscape for a substantial distance on the approach from Ballinalee. Other industrial developments, including Pat the Baker, are predominantly located within the town where their scale is contained, and their landscape influence is minimal. The Roadstone Quarry at Moyne exerts a considerable landscape influence over Lough Naback, however, this serves to lessen the influence of the pylons and associated 110kv overhead wiring traversing the unit from east to west at this point.

This landscape area has a particularly high concentration of archaeological heritage, most notably to the eastern side of the unit where the megalithic tombs at Aughnacliffe, the Black Pig's Dyke running from Dring to Lough Kinale, the Abbey at Abbeylara and the old town at Granardkille are substantial landscape features with important national

heritage and mythological associations. Holy wells are important cultural landscape features and are scattered throughout the eastern section of the unit. Recreation and Amenity is mainly confined to sports grounds and GAA pitches.

The sensitivity of much of this landscape can be classified as MEDIUM to HIGH

#### Threats

- Potential future development of large-scale utility infrastructure in the upland areas - Encroachment of forestry onto important upland slopes and interference with designated scenic views;
- Potential loss of material and/or integrity of setting of archaeological features and artefacts;
- Potential loss of character of existing towns and villages;
- Further loss of population in Granard creating settlement pressure in surrounding rural area and historic landscape;
- Encroachment on protected views by dwelling units.

#### Opportunities

- Towns and villages throughout the unit are capable of accommodating substantial additional development to remove pressure from sensitive areas
- Potential for further tourism related development, particularly in Granard

<b>Landscape Unit 2 – Northern Upland – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO14.14	Provide for the development of coherent countywide framework for large-scale utility infrastructure including identification and designation of permitted and restricted areas.
CPO14.15	Investigate the concentration of heritage artefacts and features in the eastern section of this unit in terms of whether they may warrant the designation of a specific historic landscape to ensure heightened public awareness and their continued protection.
CPO14.16	Facilitate co-ordination between Coillte/Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and natural Resources forestry strategies and development Plan Policy
CPO14.17	Develop identity and character in new developments in towns and villages through the application of area specific design criteria laid out in design guide.
CPO14.18	Protect views and prospects.
CPO14.19	Preserve, maintain and enhance these important landscapes and protect the amenity value and visual integrity of the northern upland areas. Discourage inappropriate development in open countryside and prohibit developments which are likely to have material adverse visual impacts, either individually or cumulatively, on the character of these uplands. Ensure that new development will not materially interfere or detract from the scenic uplands and require that proposed developments demonstrate that every effort has been made to reduce visual impacts (including excessive bulk and inappropriate siting) and that visually prominent sites have been avoided to minimise visibility from scenic routes, lakes, walking trails, public amenities, settlements

	and roads. In regard to the potential impacts of development on sensitive upland areas potential developments shall consider the difficulty of establishing and maintaining screening vegetation.
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### 14.6.3 Landscape Unit 3 – Shannon Basin/Lough Ree

This unit is located along the western boundary of the County forming the border with Counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Westmeath and taking in the Rivers Shannon, Inny and Rinn and Lough Forbes and Lough Ree. This unit has large amounts of water cover with inland marshes, bogland and tracts of deciduous forestry in the northern section around Lough Forbes. Land cover becomes less diverse travelling south of Lanesborough on the western shores of Lough Ree, with poorly drained agricultural land forming the majority of the landcover in the area. Relatively small and isolated pockets of bog and marshland create important habitats at Fortwilliam Turlough, Commons North and Portanure, while the Portanure Pine Woods are an important stand of trees on the shores of the lake. Lough Ree is interspersed with several small, uninhabited islands and the predominantly flat landscape provides for panoramic vistas across the lake at numerous locations. Small hills such as those at Newtowncashel, Cullentra and Rathcline (none of which break the 90m contour line) appear much larger in this context and act as punctuation marks in otherwise homogenous topography. The area around Lough Forbes is relatively inaccessible and visibility limited due to extensive afforestation.

Much of the geology in the area to the south of Lanesborough is classified as a regionally important aquifer. The Geological survey of Ireland has classified this area as highly to extremely vulnerable by the Geological survey of Ireland. The River Shannon enters the northwestern fringe of the County south of Rooskey, where it is joined by the Rinn River in Lough Forbes. Views of the watercourse are limited in this northern section due to a combination of local topographical and landcover characteristics. The Shannon continues towards Clondra where it is joined by the Camlin River and on towards Lanesboro where it broadens out into Lough Ree. This area is particularly susceptible to flooding. To the south of the County, the Inny enters Lough Ree via the Owenacharra River.

Agriculture in the area is, in a similar vein to the majority of the County, extensive in nature. Industry and services are limited in the area given the highly dispersed nature of the settlement, however, those that exist have considerable visual impact. These include:

- County Council Water Treatment Plant – Lough Forbes
- Former Denim Factory (Burlington) at Fisherstown
- Power Station at Lanesborough

The former denim factory at Fisherstown is an immense structure (in the region of 29,000m<sup>2</sup>) the impact of which is reduced given its isolated position, single storey nature and the predominantly flat landscape in which it is situated.

The area is traversed to the north by three of the four national routes that run through the County, the N4 north of Newtownforbes, the N5 at Clondra and the N63 at Lanesborough. The remainder of the road network is relatively sparse except for the southern section and consists of third and fourth-class county roads and supporting networks of lanes and boreens. The only significant settlement in the unit is Newtowncashel, a small village located in an elevated position commanding extensive views over the lake. This lack of a defined urban or village structure means that the area is under particular pressure for one-off rural settlement, which is generally dispersed throughout the area, although to a lesser extent than the north of the County. Some areas of concentrated ribbon development have occurred in the vicinity of adjacent settlements, such as Fisherstown at Clondra and along the Rathcline Road south of Lanesborough.

Castleforbes Demesne is a private estate located to the north of the unit within extensive woodlands. Extensive early Christian remains are located in the south of the unit and on Saints Island and Inchcleraun. Waterways corridor study has identified the potential for the discovery of underwater archaeology which is not addressed at present in the County development Plan. Access to and awareness of water courses and water bodies tends to be restricted in this area, given the limited road network in the vicinity and landcover barriers such as forestry and wetlands. Parking and amenity areas have been established at Loughfarm, Bleanavoher and Barley Harbour. An extensive amenity area has been developed south of Lanesborough, which is extensively used as a walking route by locals.

The sensitivity of the landscapes in this unit range from MEDIUM - along the southeastern border of the unit - to HIGH sensitivity - along the shores of the lake, islands, the riverbanks, and in the vicinity of the Aquifer.

#### Threats

- Pollution of ground and surface water sources from residential or intensive agricultural development - Inappropriate development and privatisation of lakeshores and riverbanks;
- Road network insufficient to cater for large numbers of visitors associated with tourism development;
  - Loss of important archaeological and architectural features and/or their setting, underwater and lakeside archaeology in particular - Proliferation of invasive species – Japanese knotweed, rhododendron, zebra mussel – threatens biodiversity and ecosystem functioning.

#### Opportunities

- Development of Amenity areas along lakeshore;
- Development of accommodation base within existing village;
- Strong community involvement in village development (Tidy Towns).

<b>Landscape Unit 3 – Shannon Basin/Lough Ree – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO14.20	Restrict development in the vicinity of the lakes and maintain aquifer protection zone for 1km around boreholes at Carrowroe
CPO14.21	Effluent treatment systems in the vicinity of the lake to have nitrogen and phosphorous cleansing capabilities
CPO14.22	Prepare Village policy statement for Newtowncashel to include provision for the protection of scenic route
CPO14.23	Promote appropriate schemes for the control/eradication of invasive species

#### **14.6.4 Landscape Unit 4 – Central Corridor**

This area consists of the centre of the County and includes the settlements of Newtownforbes, Longford Town and Edgeworthstown extending in a northerly direction towards Drumlish in the west and Granard in the east. The southern boundary is mainly formed by the N4 National route from Longford to Mullingar. As with the rest of the County, the main landcover constituent in this unit consists of agricultural pastures. The urban fabric of Longford Town, Edgeworthstown and Newtownforbes also cover extensive areas. Deciduous and mixed forestry are present in pockets throughout the centre of the unit, notably at Carrickglass and Farraghroe. The land in this unit is relatively flat and low-lying, rarely breaking the 100-metre contour line, meaning that trees, field boundaries, buildings and other features generally restrict views over any significant distance. This is contrasted with areas of distinct demesne type landscapes such as at Moatfarrell/Corbeagh. Drainage is toward the Shannon via a complex network of Rivers and Streams accessing the Camlin River, which is subject to seasonal flooding.

The urban network is strongest in this area of the County, with a defined hierarchical system dominated by the settlements of Longford, Edgeworthstown and Newtownforbes, which lie along the main transport routes. Edgeworthstown and Longford exhibit a certain amount of commuter traffic to the Dublin area, but not yet to an economically significant degree. Significant pressure exists for “one-off” housing development along the R198 regional route from Longford to Arva and there is an established ribbon development pattern in place in the Clonbalt/Cloonrollagh/Creenagh area. This pattern is repeated at Kilnashee and Cloonagh further north along this route on the approach to Drumlish.

The road network is at its most dense at this point given the relatively favourable flat topography of the area. All four national routes (N4 – Dublin/Sligo N5-Longford/Castlebar, N55 Athlone/Cavan, N63-Longford/Roscommon) traverse this Landscape Unit. The Dublin/Sligo Rail line traverses the County through the Central Corridor. Almost one-third of the planning applications for large-scale communications infrastructure in the County have been made in this area.

Agriculture in this area is well developed in comparison to much of the County, with a wide range of agricultural activity, from large-scale dairying activity to smaller scale

extensive uses, particularly to the west of the area. The main industrial centre of the County is centred at Longford Town, with major installations at Lisnamuck/Templemichael, Townsparks, Ballymacormack and the Athlone Road. Edgeworthstown has two large factories, C&D Pet Foods and Paul & Vincent.

A wide range of architectural and cultural heritage is present in this area, with the important occupied demesnes of Castleforbes and Carrickglass. Former settlements have left their mark on the landscape at Farraghroe, Corbeagh and Moatfarrell. A wide range of recreational facilities are available at Longford Town, including leisure centres and swimming pools. The Mall sports complex and walkway through Longford is an important and widely used amenity, augmented by Sli na Sláinte (around Longford bypass). The Camlin River is part of the Midland Fisheries Group of Shannon Regional Fisheries Board managed waters and requires a fishing permit. There are also a number of GAA and soccer pitches within the Unit and a golf course in Longford Town.

The sensitivity of the landscapes in this unit is generally LOW. Potential areas of MEDIUM to HIGH sensitivity exist in the vicinity of protected woodlands, riverbanks and in the vicinity of the Aquifer.

#### Threats

- Pollution of Groundwater sources in the vicinity of the aquifer to the north of Longford Town;
- Loss/fragmentation of important agricultural land/tree stands and woodlands;
- Continued ribbon development in pressure areas.

#### Opportunities

- High capacity for absorption of additional development;
- Existing strong urban network upon which settlement strategy can be based.

<b>Landscape Unit 4 – Central Corridor – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO14.24	Restrict development in pressure areas
CPO14.25	Relax restrictions in areas of high capacity
CPO14.26	Install Groundwater protection scheme around potential groundwater supplies
CPO14.27	Identify and protect important areas of agricultural land from further fragmentation
CPO14.28	Encourage use of existing large-scale communications infrastructure for future proposed developments

### 14.6.5 Landscape Unit 5 – Inny Basin

This area is located to the east of the County and forms the border with County Westmeath. The landcover in this area is dominated by peatlands and mixed woodlands interspersed with pastures of varying quality. The area maintains a relatively flat and level topography.

The Inny River makes its way from Lough Kinale in Unit 1 and follows the County Boundary for a time before veering south into County Westmeath and Lough Derravarragh. The River re-enters County Longford east of Legan and continues west toward Ballymahon and onto Lough Ree. The Inny dominates the drainage pattern of the area. Flows tend to be sluggish given the nature of the landcover and topography. There is one seasonal lake to the north of the region, however visibility of the lake and the River from the public road is poor and awareness of these features low, with the possible exceptions of locals and seasoned anglers.

The difficult nature of the terrain has meant that human influence on the landscape of the area has been limited in comparison to other units. There are two designated settlements in this unit, one in the south at Forgney and the other in the North at Lisryan. Settlement is greatest in the areas outlying Legan and Edgeworthstown, while Lisryan in particular has experienced some growth in recent times.

The area is roughly bisected between north and south by the N4 and the Dublin-Sligo rail line running parallel. The remainder of the road network in the area is sparse, composed mainly of portions of County roads and small laneways. There are few industries in the area given the limited road network and unstructured settlement pattern. Services are generally confined to a local level, such as primary schools, shop, GAA pitch etc. and these facilities are generally located within the two settlements of Forgney and Lisryan. Agriculture in the area appears well developed in reclaimed areas.

The sensitivity of the landscapes in this unit are generally LOW. Potential areas of MEDIUM to HIGH sensitivity exist in the vicinity of protected woodlands, riverbanks.

#### Threats

- Continued depopulation and associated loss of landscape management,

#### Opportunities

- Existing designated settlements in the area provide potential for population growth.

<b>Landscape Unit 5 – Inny Basin – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO14.29	Target growth to existing settlements
CPO14.30	Encourage provision of facilities to strengthen settlements
CPO14.31	Consider rural housing where appropriate and in accordance with normal planning criteria with the exception of high sensitivity areas in the vicinity of protected woodlands and riverbanks. Rural housing shall not be permitted in close proximity to the River Inny.

### 14.6.6 Landscape Unit 6 – Peatlands

This area is located in the west of the County and includes the settlements of Lanesborough and Clondra and extends towards Ballymahon in the south. Located in the western half of the County, this area is dominated by extensive tracts of raised bog interspersed with mixed forestry and areas of scrubby vegetation. The topography is notably flat, with the majority of the land lying below the 50m contour line. This, when combined with the limited vegetation cover and extensive peat land cover mean that views are available across wide areas throughout the unit.

Drainage patterns in the area are heavily influenced by artificial means employed to retain water levels and prevent inundation of commercial peatlands. The Shannon system is the main natural influence, draining the area via the Camlin, Fallan and Bilberry rivers. Seasonal flooding persists in the northern sector, particularly in the vicinity of the Camlin River.

The settlement pattern in this unit tends to be less dispersed and more focussed into the designated towns and villages than other areas, given the difficult nature of the terrain. One off development in the area tends to be confined to specific pressure areas, for example, Kilmore/Cloonmore and Tullyvrane/Lehery outside Lanesborough.

The road network, particularly in the southern section, has been curtailed by the hostile landscape conditions, however communication lines become more complex in the vicinity of Longford and the Royal Canal to the north. The road pattern around Lanesborough, particularly the R392 that travels east to Ballymahon, is notable due to its straightness and lack of consideration for the topographical features that it traverses. This is a former toll road, constructed in the 18th century and connecting Dublin to the main areas of industrial activity in the Country, at which time, Lanesborough marked the western boundary. The straight road and predominantly flat topography create a distinct and unique landscape experience while travelling across the unit. The remains of an ancient toher road, constructed of timber, can be seen at Corlea Bog.

The Royal Canal is an important landscape feature, not only due to its heritage associations but also its wider influence on the landscape including features that were built to support it, such as the bridges, towpaths, lock keeper cottages and lock gates. Works are ongoing on the opening up of the canal, which will have a considerable impact on how the landscape is perceived throughout the area.

Agricultural potential in the area is limited given the nature of the dominant landcover, however, some reclaimed sections of land support large pastoral farming enterprises, particularly in the northern sector. The area has a strong industrial history in terms of the historical harvesting of peat and the transport of the finished product along the Royal Canal. The landscape impacts of this history are manifested in the industrial architecture and archaeology that abounds throughout the area. The ESB power station at Lanesborough dominates the landscape of the area for a considerable distance, particularly at night time. Much of the industrial development in this unit is

planned adjacent to the power station where it is anticipated that the landscape impact will be limited. The Corlea Visitor Centre interprets an Iron-age bog road built across the boglands to the south of the unit. Bord na Mona preserves the boglands in the vicinity in conjunction with the Department of the Environment. The area is well served by mobile and broadband wireless communications.

The visual sensitivity of the landscapes in this unit are generally LOW, as their flat nature allows development to be accommodated with minimum screening needed to achieve integration into its surrounds. An exception to this designation is the vicinity of the Royal Canal, where sensitivity is HIGH. In environmental terms, sensitivity can be generally termed MEDIUM to HIGH due to the limited capacity of the receiving environment to cater for additional effluent loading.

#### Threats

- Inappropriate development in the vicinity of the Royal Canal;
- Pollution of ground and surface water due to inadequate or malfunctioning effluent treatment systems.

#### Opportunities

- Existing and potential recreational and amenity development;
- Ability to accommodate development in appropriate areas.

<b>Landscape Unit 6 – Peatlands – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective to:	
CPO14.32	Identify appropriate areas for development.
CPO14.33	Develop guidelines for screening and siting measures to facilitate development.
CPO14.34	Seek to identify opportunity to collaborate and/or partner with Bord na Mona.

### 14.6.7 Landscape Unit 7 – Open Agricultural

This area is located in the east of the County and contains twelve settlements including, Ballymahon, Ardagh and Keenagh. The unit extends from below the N4 Longford to Mullingar road towards the southern edge of the County. Located in the southeast of the County, this area contains the most versatile agricultural land in the County and is generally characterised by larger, open fields, interspersed with mature trees. Plantations of deciduous and mixed woodland punctuate the landscape.

The northern section of the unit contains the most elevated area, including Farnagh Hill and Ardagh (Bawn) and Castlerea Mountain, all of which contain full and/or intermittent scenic views listed for preservation under the County Development Plan. The southern and eastern sections of the unit consist mainly of gently undulating pastoral land. Drainage in the southern and eastern section of the unit is dominated by the River Inny, which is fed by numerous tributary streams and rivers. The northern section drains toward the Camlin River.

This unit has the most developed urban structure of the County, being served by twelve designated settlements. Settlements tend to be established longer than in other units throughout the County and as, such, generally exhibit a strong character, identity and sense of community. One-off and ribbon development tends to be more pronounced in the northern section of the unit, tapering off to the south where the more agriculturally productive lands are located.

The road network in the unit is relatively dense, with the exception of the elevated areas around Ardagh and Castlerea Mountain. The N55 traverses the unit from northeast to southwest and is served by a network of five regional routes. The Royal Canal is important as an amenity, a landscape feature and a significant influence on the history, culture, architecture and archaeology of the area. The waterway traverses the southern portion of the unit. The area contains almost one quarter of the mobile communications infrastructure in the County.

Agriculture exists mainly in the northern section of this unit. The majority of industry and services are provided within Ballymahon and these include Scientific Games Worldwide Services Ltd, Kepak and Readymix. It is considered that their respective locations within the town have minimal landscape impact.

This area holds historical and cultural significance with the Irish writer Oliver Goldsmith as he spent time within this area of Longford. The location of the Royal Canal within this unit also meant that a number of the settlements evolved around the Canal and indeed some of the traditional architecture within this unit is reflective of this. The Royal Canal and River Inny provide important amenity and recreation facilities within the unit. The Inny Kayaking Club which is based within Ballymahon has developed over the years and optimises use of this recreational resource. Abbeyshrule Airport has developed significant aviation facility within the village of Abbeyshrule and is extremely popular with aviators from both Ireland and the UK.

Landscape Sensitivity can be categorised as Low to Medium. An exception to this designation is the vicinity of the Royal Canal, the River Inny, in Upland Areas with designated scenic views, and in proximity to the heritage village of Ardagh where sensitivity is HIGH.

#### Threats

- Inappropriate development within the vicinity of the Royal Canal and River Inny;
- Encroachment of development onto the upland areas with potential interference with designated scenic views;
- Potential loss of character of existing towns and villages including unsympathetic residential developments in areas of high architectural quality, particularly within the heritage village of Ardagh.

#### Opportunities

- Existing and potential recreational and amenity development, particularly with relation to the River Inny and Royal Canal;
- Existing strong settlement base which has capability to absorb further development.

<b>Landscape Unit 7 – Open Agricultural – County Policy Objectives</b>	
It is the County Policy Objective of the Council to:	
CPO 14.35	Fast track the formulation of Local Area Plans/ village policy statements throughout the county to create, preserve and enhance village character.
CPO14.36	Promote the development of adequate community and social facilities in smaller villages to maintain character, identity and pedestrian scale.

### 14.7 Protected Views and Prospects

The landscape of the County has many vantage points which offer attractive views from hilltops and upland areas, along river valleys and the boglands. These scenic views are of an amenity and tourism value and contribute to our quality of life. There are two distinct types of views identified Full (uninterrupted) (see Table 14.2) and Intermittent (broken or sporadic) (see Table 14.3).

**Table 14.2: Views and Prospects (to be read in conjunction with Appendix 9: Landscape Character - 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)	Full
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)	Full
F.S-22	Drumnee, Saints Island	Full

Route No.	Townlands	Classification
F.S-23	Ardagh Demesne, Moor, Lyanmore <sup>1</sup>	Full

**Table 14.3: Views and Prospects (to be read in conjunction with Appendix 9: Landscape Character - Intermittent Scenic routes)**

Route No.	Townlands	Classification
I.S-1	Gaigue, Tawnagh, Camagh (Longford 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, Cartronageeragh.	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

It is not envisaged that the designation of a Protected View would prohibit all development within the view, but rather that any development proposed within the view should be designed and located so as not to obstruct the view both to and from a location and/or be unduly intrusive in the landscape as seen from both to and from these vantage points.

<sup>1</sup> To include the view from the village towards Ardagh House between both Lodge Houses shall be protected from any inappropriate developments.

**Protected Views and Prospects – County Policy Objectives**

It is the County Policy Objective to:

CPO14.37	Preserve the views and prospects listed in Table 14.2 and 14.3 and detailed in Appendix 9: Landscape Character with accompanying maps and to protect these views from development which would interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape.
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**14.8 Landscape Character Climate Context and Associated Actions**

In accordance with the format set out in *Chapter 3: Climate Change* of this Plan the following is an assessment of the content of this chapter in a Climate Context and associated Actions.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the greatest environmental risk to health is ambient air pollution, causing more than three million premature deaths worldwide every year. In Ireland, this figure is an estimated at 1,180 persons, aided by above average levels of air pollutants, despite the country meeting EU air quality standards. A response from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has been to extend the Smokey Coal Ban to include Longford Town amongst others from September 2020. Ireland's 2020 target is to achieve a 20% reduction of non-Emission Trading Scheme (non-ETS) sector emissions (i.e. agriculture, transport, built environment, waste and non-energy intensive industry) against 2005 levels.

In early May 2019, Ireland became only the second country in the world to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency. Biodiversity is, essentially, the foundation of all plant and animal life, so this declaration is an important, formal recognition by the State of the seriousness of the threat that exists to that life. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has calculated that approximately 20% of all species, and one in every three bee species are threatened with extinction as a direct result of our eroding biodiversity. From the food we eat, water we drink, raw materials we use for fuel, construction and medicine, to the creation of space for our leisure, these biodiverse ecosystems help to regulate our climate.

Healthy, intact ecosystems trap and sequester carbon, retain water, prevent soil erosion and provide protection from extreme weather. Habitats such as wetlands, woodlands and peatlands are particularly high in biodiversity value and are key for both climate mitigation and adaptation measures, providing important carbon sinks, water attenuation and flooding protection, and pollinators for crops. Worldwide, peatlands account for 3% of all land cover, and 21% in Ireland alone<sup>2</sup>, and stores twice as much carbon as all standing forests, aided by the ability of a 15cm, thick layer storing more carbon per hectare than tropical rainforests<sup>3</sup>. Yet these habitats are

<sup>2</sup> Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (2015), '*National Peatlands Strategy 2015 – Managing Ireland's Peatlands*', National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

<https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NationalPeatlandsStrategy2015EnglishVers.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ramsar (2015), '*Guidelines for inventories of tropical peatlands to facilitate their designation as Ramsar Sites*', Ramsar Briefing Note 9, Ramsar – Convention on Wetlands.

[https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/bn9\\_peatland\\_inventory\\_e.pdf](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/bn9_peatland_inventory_e.pdf)

extremely vulnerable to climate change and Ireland is set to lose 31% by 2055 of this asset if immediate rewetting action is not taken<sup>4</sup>.

### ***Landscape Character Climate Change Actions***

Longford County Council shall:

- A12.1** Within the lifetime of the plan, undertake a survey and vector mapping exercise to identify exemplar wetlands, bogs, individual trees and/or stands of trees and/or woodlands throughout the county worthy of protection and preservation.
- A12.2** Encourage the potential community woodlands areas in urban/urban fringe areas and the development of community woodlands throughout rural Longford.
- A12.3** Discourage and ban the use of glyphosate weedkillers in public spaces in favour of hot water, foam stream, flame weeding and/or concentrated vinegar.
- A12.4** Prepare a Peatland Strategy that shall encourage the rewilding, restoration and protection of peat bogs after turf cutting and/or peat extraction has ceased.
- A12.5** Support the National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme 2017 – 2022.
- A12.6** Promote the roll-out of renewables and stringent protection and enhancement of carbon pools such as forests, peatlands and permanent grasslands.
- A12.7** Discourage fracking and the industrial extraction of fossil fuels within Longford's functional area.
- A12.8** Engage the services of a full-time Ecologist on a shared basis amongst neighbouring Local Authorities.
- A12.9** Install and promote the installation of bird, bat, and owl boxes, and bee bricks and insect hotels or equivalent, at all relevant locations and developments, where possible.
- A12.10** Actively participate and seek to adopt recommendations originating out of the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) and Midlands Climate Action Region.

<sup>4</sup> Sweeney, J. (et. Al) (2008), 'Climate Change – Refining the Impact for Ireland: Strive Report', Strive Programme 2007-2013, Environmental Protection Agency, University of Ireland, Maynooth.  
<https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/climate/sweeney-report-strive-12-for-web-low-res.pdf>

## Chapter 15: Monitoring, Evaluation and Implementation

### 15.1 Introduction

The monitoring, evaluation and implementation of the Development Plan is vital in order to ensure the delivery of policy objectives and in turn that the Development Plan is a proactive tool in shaping our County Development in a positive way taking account of the most relevant guidance available. Such evaluation covers both quantitative and qualitative processes and incorporates the following methods: -

### 15.2 Statutory 2-year Review of Development Plan

The Development Plan requires statutory monitoring and evaluation in accordance with section 15(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which states that:

*‘the Chief Executive of a planning authority shall, not more than 2 years after the making of a development plan, give a report to the members of the authority on the progress achieved in securing the objectives (of the plan)’.*

In addition to the above, the Act requires the planning authority to commence the review of the plan not more than four years after its adoption. As such the requirements of the Act will require that an in-depth appraisal of the plan be carried out twice during its lifetime. In this regard the effectiveness of all policies and objectives in the plan will be subject to monitoring.

As such the policies and objectives of the plan must be capable of implementation and it must be possible to monitor progress. The Development Plan must also be able to respond to changing circumstances over its timescale, and as such regular monitoring of the relationship between the plan and changes in the wider policy context, development pressures and local priorities are important if the policies and objectives are to remain effective and relevant. This will offer the opportunity for all policy to be reviewed.

EU, national, regional and other policies, funding and investment priorities will be revisited as part of the Development Plan Review, as Longford County Council seek to ensure continued policy alignment with relevant policy and the delivery of associated projects through associated funding streams. By ensuring good policy alignment, the Development Plan can drive investment that is targeted towards identified priorities at European, national, regional and local scale, assisting in identifying partnership opportunities and leveraging appropriate funding.

This may also offer a particular opportunity, taking account of the current uncertain times in which the plan is being prepared, as a result of Covid 19 and the associated as yet unknown repercussions for the Development Plan. If following the publication of the Census material to be undertaken next year (2021) or following a large deviation in economic fiscal or other policy as a result of the evolving situation in relation to the global Covid 19 pandemic, this will offer the opportunity for a review of policy and an

analysis of the evolving evidence base, which may offer a change in direction in terms of policy alignment and population and economic growth scenarios.

### **15.3 Approach and Priorities for Monitoring**

Within the first two years of the Plan, priorities for monitoring will be determined and key information requirements identified, within the resources available. The initial focus will be on those policy objectives central to the aims and strategy of the plan e.g. in understanding housing supply issues, an examination of urban areas subject to extensive pressures for new residential development, up-to-date information on housing land availability, numbers of house completions, outstanding planning permissions and rates of take-up will be undertaken.

In deciding priorities, the key issues facing the area will be determined and the information requirements identified. It is also noted that section 95(3)(a) of the 2000 Act expressly requires that the biennial report required under Section 15(2) includes a review of progress on the housing strategy. In this regard given the impact of housing supply and provision on the demand for education provision and accompanying demand for school accommodation, the Department of Education and Science will be duly informed of the findings of the 2-year review report. The review will look at issues such as the interpretation of development plan policy objectives in the development management process.

The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of policy objectives in terms of achieving stated aims. As such attempts have been made as much as reasonably possible to ensure that policy objectives are clear, in an attempt to facilitate performance appraisal and evaluation. Monitoring involves the collation and analysis of performance data and is linked to an evaluation process so that effectiveness can be measured against stated criteria. As such efforts have been made to formulate policy objectives in terms that allow performance to be readily measured in terms of the formulation of quantifiable criteria. The preparation of the SEA environmental report provides such a process. However inevitably, the Development Plan also contains policy objectives which do not readily lend themselves to quantification, and as such qualitative performance targets will be devised as part of the review process.

Much of the data required for successful monitoring and evaluation will be readily available in the local authority and often from within the planning department. The development management process will be central to the implementation of the plan and decisions on planning applications and appeals will be a key source of data for monitoring purposes. Linking of planning application databases with GIS will provide for easy data capture and provide a spatial expression of results.

Subsequently a monitoring and evaluation report will be prepared to identify any issues concerning implementation of the Development Plan.

### **15.4 Recommendations from Oversight Bodies: OPR, EMRA and NOAC**

The implementation and delivery of the Development Plan will also be monitored by both the Office of the Planning Regulator and the Eastern and Midland Regional

Authority and the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC). As part of this process, Longford County Council will amend policy as required by these bodies to ensure policy alignment with relevant higher-level comments and associated funding streams. In terms of monitoring and reporting, regional progress will be measured in terms of the key indicators for policy making and evaluation to be developed by the Regional Authority.

The following monitoring and reporting arrangements are required by legislation to measure progress and will be complied with by Longford County Council:

- Under Section 22A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the local authority is required every 2 years, to prepare and submit a report to the EMRA setting out progress made in supporting objectives, relevant to the Strategy.
- Take account of the monitoring report to be prepared by EMRA every 2 years in relation to their analysis of the Development Plan progress made in implementing the overall objectives of the RSES, including any specific actions and outcomes specific to public bodies identified in legislation. This monitoring report will also be submitted to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) for consideration and the NOAC may make recommendations to the Minister in relation to relevant measures to further support the implementation of the Strategy, which Longford Council will also take on board.
- Longford County Council will assist and co-operate as far as practicable in implementing the RSES.
- In accordance with Article 10 of the SEA Directive, '*monitoring will be carried out in order to identify, at an early stage, any unforeseen adverse effects due to implementation of a plan, and to be able to take remedial action*'. Measures to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Development Plan are included in the SEA Statement.

### **15.5 Securing Funding Initiatives**

The Development Plan will be realised by the delivery of European, National and Regional funding that will achieve the Regional Strategic Outcomes expressed in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), as distilled to a County level through the County Development Plan. These funds will focus on the priorities and key aspects of the County Development Plan to sustainably grow the Region in accordance with the RSES and National Planning Framework (NPF). The carrying out of projects and opportunities in accordance with European, National, Regional and Development Plan policy will where possible seek to leverage appropriate funding streams at various levels in order to support the delivery of a number of objectives throughout this Plan. Some of the current funding options available are detailed accordingly: -

#### **15.5.1 Project Ireland 2040 (NPF) Funds**

In 2018 the Government launched Project Ireland 2040 and, as part of this initiative, committed €4 billion in funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and the Climate Action Fund.

**15.5.1.1 Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)**

The €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) is intended to drive regeneration and rejuvenation of strategic and under-utilised areas within key regional drivers and other large towns. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has responsibility for implementing the fund, which will operate on a competitive, bid-based Exchequer grant basis, with proposals being required to demonstrate that they will be:

- Innovative and transformational urban regeneration projects;
- Public-sector led and with the option of community and/or private sector partners;
- Matched by at least 25 percent direct funding from other public and/or private sources;
- A minimum bid of €2m;
- A catalyst for development that would not otherwise occur; and
- Likely to leverage significant further public and private sector investment.

**15.5.1.2 Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)**

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed to providing an additional €1 billion for a Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) over the period 2019 to 2027. The Fund will provide investment to support rural renewal for suitable projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. The fund which is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development provides an unprecedented opportunity to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland, to make a significant and sustainable impact on rural communities, and to address de-population in small rural towns, villages and rural areas. It will be a key instrument to support the objectives of the National Planning Framework, and in particular to achieve Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – one of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

**15.5.1.3 Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund**

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation launched funding under the Government's new Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, with €500 million available for co-funded projects involving enterprises and research partners over the period to 2027. Disruptive technology is that which has the potential to significantly alter markets and their functioning and significantly alter the way that businesses operate. While it involves a new product or process, it can also involve the emergence of a new business model. Disruption is about the combination of technology and business model innovation. Proposals are expected to address the development, deployment and commercialisation of one or more disruptive technologies to deliver new solutions through investment in the development and implementation of new products and services. Ultimately, the projects funded will create the jobs of the future.

**15.5.1.4 Climate Action Fund**

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 sets out the creation of a Climate Action Fund to support climate action projects which will leverage investment by public and private bodies. The Fund will have an allocation of at least €500m over the period to 2027. The Climate Action Fund includes the objective of funding initiatives that

contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets in a cost-effective manner. It also offers the potential for innovative interventions which, in the absence of support from the Fund, would not otherwise be developed.

### 15.5.2 Other Funding Streams

Outside of the funding mechanisms provided for under *Project Ireland 2040*, the following organisations provide potential funding opportunities for delivery of the Development Plan Objectives: -

- European Funding Programmes - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs);
- Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF);
- Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF);
- Just Transition Fund;
- Enterprise funding and business supports from other development agencies such as the local enterprise offices;
- Town and Village Renewal;
- Outdoor Rural Recreation Scheme;
- CLAR;
- GLAS Heritage Building Scheme;
- Sustainable Energy Ireland Funding Streams etc.
- Any other funds as deemed relevant by EMRA, the local authority or other relevant agency.

## Chapter 16: Development Management Standards

### 16.1 Introduction

It is intended that these development standards will provide guidance and assistance to those who seek permission for development and support and inform the implementation of County Policy Objectives. It is an obligation of the Council to ensure that planning permissions granted under the Planning Acts are consistent with the policies and objectives set out in the County Development Plan, and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

### 16.2 Statutory Context

#### 16.2.1 Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, (as amended).

Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, sets out the process to be followed when seeking planning permission for the development of land. Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides that guidelines can be issued at any time by the Minister to Planning Authorities regarding any of their functions under the Act and Planning Authorities are required to comply with any guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions. Planning Authorities are required to have regard to Ministerial guidelines when assessing planning applications.

#### 16.2.2 Environmental Assessments

Specific assessments may be required to enable the Planning Authority to make a comprehensive assessment and determination in respect of a planning proposal having regard to legislative requirements and/or to ensure compliance with the Development Plan.

#### 16.2.3 Appropriate Assessments (AA)

In relation to all plans, or projects including the Council's own development proposals under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (1992), there is a requirement placed on the competent authority (the Planning Authority) to consider and determine the possible nature conservation implications of any plan or project (and also the in-combination impacts with other plans and projects) on the Natura 2000 network of European sites before any decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed.

A proposed development will only be approved where it can be determined by the competent authority (the Planning Authority) that, based on best scientific evidence, the project or plan proposed will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site(s) (Natura 2000 site), either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

If the Screening for Appropriate Assessment process considers that Appropriate Assessment is required, the applicant will be required to prepare a Natural Impact Statement (Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment) for the development proposed.

#### **16.2.4 Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)**

Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is the process of examining the potential effects of a proposed development on the receiving environment. Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) lists the mandatory development thresholds where an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is required in respect of applications for specified classes. In the case of sub-threshold projects, the Council may request by notice in writing a discretionary EIAR, where it considers that the project proposed would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

#### **16.2.5 Other Assessments**

For certain developments due to the site location and or the type of development additional other assessments may be required as part of planning proposals, in certain instances, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Flood Risk Assessment
- Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) & Road Safety Audits (RSA)
- Architectural Assessment
- Archaeological Assessment
- Landscape Appraisal and Visual Assessment
- Ecological/Biodiversity Assessment.
- Infrastructure Assessments, particularly for larger type residential developments over 50 units.

### **16.3 Pre-planning Consultations**

Pre-planning consultations are facilitated and encouraged by the Planning Authority prior to the making of a formal planning application in accordance with Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

## **16.4 General Development Management Standards**

### **16.4.1 Climate Change and Sustainable Buildings**

Sustainable design elements are essential and should be considered at the initial design stage of the design process. These elements will influence and help determine the layout, siting and the orientation of building(s), height, form, materials, density and overall functionality as well as the aesthetics of the proposed development.

Energy efficient buildings minimise the consumption of non-renewable resources and waste and can help to create healthy and comfortable buildings and places. New development (new build, extensions and re-purposing of buildings) should employ high-quality sustainable design measures that help to mitigate and adapt to seasonal

and climate change. All new development proposals will be required to include measures that incorporate sustainable building practices, achieve the highest energy efficiency BER Ratings for all new builds and renovations and incorporate the provision of electric vehicle (EV) charging points.

The Council encourage and require that all new development proposals be designed in accordance with the standards outlined in the '*National Disability Authority - Building for Everyone; A Universal Design Approach 2012*' and *Technical Guidance Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use of the Building Regulations 2010 Document M - Access and Use of the Building Regulations 2010* or any subsequent update.

<b>Development Management Standards – Climate Change and Sustainable Buildings</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.1	Encourage renewable development proposals which contribute positively to reducing energy consumption and carbon footprint.
DMS16.2	Assess applications for development, having consideration to relevant national and regional guidelines and criteria in respect of sustainable building practices and renewable energy that serve to reduce energy demand, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change.
DMS16.3	Require that all new development proposals seek to deliver low energy buildings and the highest energy efficiency BER ratings including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Design measures which minimise energy use, including by passive solar design, energy-efficient building design and emission reduction measures;</li> <li>b) Design measures which promote renewable and low carbon energy;</li> <li>c) Is designed for flexible use throughout its lifetime;</li> <li>d) Promote the use of green roofs and natural ventilation;</li> <li>e) Promote the use of permeable surfaces to decrease runoff rates;</li> <li>f) Institute grey-water recycling schemes to decrease abstraction of potable surface water resources, thus reducing water stress during periods of low rainfall;</li> <li>g) Maximise water conservation;</li> <li>h) Avoids internal overheating and excessive heat generation;</li> <li>i) Supplies energy efficiently and incorporates decentralised energy systems such as District Heating and uses renewable energy where feasible;</li> <li>j) Procures materials sustainably using local suppliers wherever possible ensuring designs make the most of natural systems both within and around the building;</li> <li>k) Manages flood risk, including through sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and flood resilient design for infrastructure and property;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>l) Enhance flood resilience of buildings, e.g. elevated work surfaces and storage facilities, raised sockets and electrical infrastructure, enhanced flood boards;</li> <li>m) Ensures developments are comfortable and secure for users;</li> <li>n) Conserves and enhances the natural environment, particularly in relation to biodiversity, and enables easy access to open spaces;</li> <li>o) Avoids the creation of adverse local climatic conditions;</li> <li>p) Reduces air and water pollution;</li> <li>q) Promotes sustainable waste behaviour in new and existing developments.</li> </ul>
DMS 16.4	All new development proposals shall be designed in accordance with the standards outlined in the ' <i>National Disability Authority - Building for Everyone; A Universal Design Approach 2012</i> ' and <i>Technical Guidance Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use of the Building Regulations 2010 Document M - Access and Use of the Building Regulations 2010</i> or any subsequent update.

#### 16.4.2 Urban Design

All development proposals should present high quality and considered design solutions employing best practice standards. Design of development must demonstrate compliance with relevant National, Regional and Local planning policy while promoting best practice in architectural design.

<b>Development Management Standards – Urban Design</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.5	Require all developments to adequately address the 12 no. best practice principles as indicated in the <i>Urban Design of the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> (DoECLG, 2009) and to comply with the provisions and application of the <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)</i> for new development.
DMS16.6	All developments should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Building design which minimises resource consumption, reduces waste, water and energy use shall be incorporated where possible, in all new and renovated developments.</li> <li>b) Building design shall maximise natural ventilation, solar gain and daylight, where possible, all new and renovated developments.</li> <li>c) SuDS measures are required to form part of the design of all developments.</li> <li>d) The Council will seek to encourage the implementation of best practice standards with regard to access in both indoor and outdoor environments.</li> </ul>
DMS16.7	Require a detailed Design Statement to be submitted in respect of residential schemes comprising 10 or more units, large scale developments over 350sqm (e.g. commercial, business & enterprise buildings, office, retail, educational facilities etc) and any other

	<p>development proposed on key strategic or sensitive sites within the urban areas, as determined by the Planning Authority.</p> <p>The Design Statement shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Describe the design concept;</li> <li>b) Clearly demonstrate how the urban design criteria have been taken into account when designing schemes in urban area, as per the 'Urban Design Manual - A Best Practice Guide';</li> <li>c) Clearly demonstrate how the development will comply with the provisions and application of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) for new development.</li> <li>d) Set out how the development meets the relevant Development Plan Objectives, Local Area Plan, Masterplan, Public Realm Strategy etc;</li> <li>e) Provide site photographs;</li> <li>f) Provide an open space/landscape strategy which identifies any areas of ecological interest and sets out proposals for same.</li> <li>g) Set out how energy efficiency measures have been incorporated into the project design process.</li> </ol>
DMS16.8	Apply flexibility in the application of development standards with the consideration of performance-based criteria appropriate to general location, which will provide high-quality design outcomes, where appropriate.
DMS16.9	Enhance the visual amenity of existing town and village centres, minimising unnecessary clutters, and provide guidance on public realm design including wirescapes, shopfront design, street furniture and signage.

### 16.4.3 Shopfronts

Shop fronts make a significant contribution to the visual amenities of a settlement and many have strong heritage value which should be preserved. Traditional shop front designs and nameplates over shop windows should, where possible, be preserved and in these situations, regard should be had to *Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DOEHLG 2005). Contemporary shop fronts shall be designed to traditional principles of scale, proportion and detailing of the existing streetscape.

<b>Development Management Standards – Shopfronts</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.10	Adheres to the principles as set out in the Design Guidance: Shopfronts found within Annex 8 of the Development Plan.
DMS16.11	Traditional shop front designs and name plates over shop windows should, if at all possible, be retained and preserved.
DMS16.12	The design of new shopfronts should relate primarily to the architectural characteristics of the buildings of which they form part. Shopfronts should also reflect the scale and proportion of the streetscape.

DMS16.13	Where new or replacement shopfronts are proposed, the use of traditional materials will be favoured. The excessive use of illuminated plastic or neon signs is not considered appropriate.
DMS16.14	The choice of materials shall compliment the character of the building and integrate with the overall visual unity of the street scheme.
DMS16.15	Generally, individually mounted lettering or hand painted lettering is required, with letter design which shall be simple and legible.
DMS16.16	The use of roll-down or external type security screens will generally not be encouraged in town centre areas. Where the provision of screens is considered imperative, the use of perforated external and back lit screens or translucent internal screens will be considered.

### 16.4.5 Residential Development

#### 16.4.5.1 Residential Density

In general, the number of units to be provided on a site should be determined with reference to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on ‘*Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*’ (2009) or any update thereof. The concept of 15-20 min walkable communities will be sought and created and accordingly higher residential densities will be encouraged within walking distance of town centres and public transport infrastructure. There may be instances where specified densities cannot be achieved due to specific circumstances such as site constraints; however, all developments should strive to achieve the prescribed density.

<b>Development Management Standards – Residential Density</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.17	Encourage a density of 30 units/ha in Longford town centre.
DMS16.18	Encourage a density of 12 units/ha in other towns and settlements identified in <i>Chapter 4: Core, Settlement and Housing Strategies</i> of this Plan.
DMS16.19	In rural villages and rural nodes any development should take cognisance of the prevailing scale, pattern of development and services availability.

#### 16.4.5.2 Building Height

In general, heights should respect the local streetscape. However in towns, varied building heights are supported across residential, mixed use and town centre areas to support consolidation and to create a sense of place, urban legibility and visual diversity.

<b>Development Management Standards – Building Heights</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.20	Development proposals that include building heights that are greater than the prevailing building height in the area should be supported by a strong urban design rationale (as part of a Design Statement) and in accordance accord with the principles of Urban Development and

	Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), or any future amendments or updates of the same.
DMS16.21	<p>The appropriate maximum or minimum height of any building will be determined by compliance with Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), or any future amendments or updates of the same, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The prevailing building height in the surrounding area.</li> <li>• The proximity of existing housing.</li> <li>• The formation of a cohesive streetscape pattern, including height and scale of proposed development relative to width of street or area of open space.</li> <li>• The impact on any Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas and/or other sensitive sites.</li> </ul>

**16.4.5.3 Site coverage**

Site coverage standards seek to avoid adverse effects of over-development particularly in our established towns and urban areas. Applying site coverage standards can help to safeguard sunlight and daylight within or adjoining a proposed layout of buildings. Site coverage relates to the percentage of the development site covered by buildings and structures (excluding the public roads and footpaths) and is calculated by dividing the total area of ground covered by buildings by the total ground area within the site.

<b>Development Management Standards – Site Coverage</b>											
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:											
DMS16.22	<p>Site coverage will apply as follows:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Residential Developments</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retail Developments</td> <td>60%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Industrial and Commercial Developments</td> <td>75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Town Centre Zones</td> <td>80%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Redevelopment existing sites – due regard will be had and taken of the existing and established site coverage</td> </tr> </table>	Residential Developments	50%	Retail Developments	60%	Industrial and Commercial Developments	75%	Town Centre Zones	80%	Redevelopment existing sites – due regard will be had and taken of the existing and established site coverage	
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Town Centre Zones	80%										
Redevelopment existing sites – due regard will be had and taken of the existing and established site coverage											
DMS16.23	Site coverage shall generally not exceed 80%. Higher site coverage may be permissible in certain limited circumstances such as adjacent to public transport corridors; to facilitate areas identified for regeneration purposes; and in specific areas where an appropriate mix of both residential and commercial uses is proposed.										

**16.4.5.4 Plot Ratio**

Plot ratio is calculated as the gross building(s) floor area divided by the gross site area.

The gross floor area is the sum of all floor space within the external walls of the buildings, excluding basement, plant, tank rooms and above level car parking areas with the gross site area constituting all land within the curtilage of the site.

<b>Development Management Standards – Plot Ratio</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.24	Individual development proposals will be assessed on performance-based criteria dependent on location and individual site characteristics in accordance with the provisions of national policy NPF NPO 13.

#### 16.4.5.5 Private Open Space

New residential development should achieve the following minimum private open space requirements:

<b>Development Management Standards – Private Open Space</b>											
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:											
DMS16.25	Minimum Private Open Space Requirements for Dwelling Houses shall be as follows: <table border="1" data-bbox="395 958 1043 1272"> <thead> <tr> <th>Unit Type (House)</th> <th>Open Space Floor Area</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>One Bedroom</td> <td>48m<sup>2</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Two Bedroom unit</td> <td>55m<sup>2</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Three Bedroom unit</td> <td>60m<sup>2</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Four Bedroom or more</td> <td>75m<sup>2</sup></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Unit Type (House)	Open Space Floor Area	One Bedroom	48m <sup>2</sup>	Two Bedroom unit	55m <sup>2</sup>	Three Bedroom unit	60m <sup>2</sup>	Four Bedroom or more	75m <sup>2</sup>
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Four Bedroom or more	75m <sup>2</sup>										

#### 16.4.5.6 Public Open Space

The provision of accessible open space is a key part of the provision of high-quality green infrastructure for communities. Public open space must be carefully designed as an integral part of the layout of all residential schemes / mixed schemes and should be addressed at the initial design stages.

<b>Development Management Standards – Private Open Space</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.26	In greenfield sites, the minimum area of open space that is acceptable within the site is 15% of the total site area.
DMS16.27	A relaxation of these standards may be considered where the overall density of a proposal is <8 dwellings per hectare, as the provision of space within the curtilages of the dwellings above the minimum required may be taken into account.
DMS16.28	Public open space should be innovative in its design approach and designed to be functionally accessible to the maximum number of dwellings within the residential area.

DMS16.29	Public open space should be overlooked by as many dwellings as possible.
DMS16.30	Natural features, e.g. trees, hedgerows and wetland sites, should be retained, protected and incorporated into public open space areas.
DMS16.31	On large sites, areas should be identified for a hierarchy of uses, e.g. more casual 'pocket parks' for smaller children to play, informal kick about areas, areas for passive amenity, etc.

#### 16.4.5.7 Overlooking

<b>Development Management Standards – Overlooking</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.32	A minimum distance of 22 metres of separation between directly opposing rear windows at first floor in the case of detached, semi-detached, terraced units shall generally be observed.
DMS16.33	A separation distance of 35 metres will normally be required in the case of overlooking living room windows and balconies at upper floors.
DMS16.34	Reductions in this value may be considered for single storey residential units or innovative schemes where it can be demonstrated that adequate levels of privacy, natural lighting and sunlight can be achieved.
DMS16.35	Any window proposed at ground floor level should not be less than 1m from the boundary it faces.
DMS16.36	Adequate separation distances will be required for buildings overlooking school playgrounds or other sensitive uses. These will be determined at planning application stage. Innovative design solutions to avoid undue overlooking will be encouraged.

#### 16.4.5.8 Overshadowing

<b>Development Management Standards – Overshadowing</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.37	Require daylight and shadow projection diagrams to be submitted in all proposals where buildings of a significant height are involved or where new buildings are located very close to adjoining buildings. This will provide an element of control in situations where overlooking occurs.
DMS16.38	Daylight and sunlight levels should, generally, be in accordance with the recommendations of Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice (B.R.209, 2011), and any updates thereof.
DMS16.39	New residential development should be designed to maximise the use of natural daylight and sunlight. Innovative building design and layout that demonstrates a high level of energy conservation, energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources will be encouraged.

**16.4.5.9 Design and Layout**

New residential developments should deliver high quality architectural design, layout and mix.

<b>Development Management Standards</b>																
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:																
DMS16.40	Residential schemes to provide a range of dwelling sizes and typologies to accommodate emerging demographic trends in line with the County’s Housing Strategy and Housing Needs Demand Assessment or other evidence supported methodology.															
DMS16.41	Proposals for residential schemes which are proposed on infill or smaller sites should demonstrate the ability of the proposal to provide a mix of dwelling types within the locality as opposed to within the scheme itself.															
DMS16.42	Planning proposals for housing schemes are required to present a considered design approach to tailor the scale, design, layout and density of housing in responding to the individual character of the respective town or village.															
DMS16.43	Housing developments should achieve the minimum floor areas and storage requirements as follows: <table border="1" data-bbox="395 947 1273 1205"> <thead> <tr> <th>Unit Type (House)</th> <th>Floor Area</th> <th>Internal Storage Area</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>One Bedroom</td> <td>55m<sup>2</sup></td> <td>3m<sup>2</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Two Bedroom unit</td> <td>85m<sup>2</sup></td> <td>6m<sup>2</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Three Bedroom unit</td> <td>100m<sup>2</sup></td> <td>9m<sup>2</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Four Bedroom or more</td> <td>110m<sup>2</sup></td> <td>10m<sup>2</sup></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Unit Type (House)	Floor Area	Internal Storage Area	One Bedroom	55m <sup>2</sup>	3m <sup>2</sup>	Two Bedroom unit	85m <sup>2</sup>	6m <sup>2</sup>	Three Bedroom unit	100m <sup>2</sup>	9m <sup>2</sup>	Four Bedroom or more	110m <sup>2</sup>	10m <sup>2</sup>
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DMS16.44	Incorporation of measures to ensure sustainable design such as rainwater harvesting, green roofs and walls etc.															
DMS16.45	Where new developments are proposed adjacent to existing and established neighbourhoods, the design, layout and housing mix should be designed in such a way to enable positive integration, both physically and socially towards building strong integrated communities and social cohesion.															
DMS16.46	Dual aspect shall be incorporated into all dwelling units.															
DMS16.47	Adequate provision shall be made for the storage and collection of waste materials. Each house shall have adequate screened storage for at least 3 number ‘wheelie’ bins.															
DMS16.48	Terraced / townhouse schemes shall include appropriate design measures for refuse bins, details of which should be clearly shown at planning application stage. Bins should not be situated immediately adjacent to the front door or ground floor window, unless adequate screened alcoves or other such mitigation measures are provided. Innovative design solutions shall be required in this regard.															
DMS16.49	Terraced / townhouse schemes shall include appropriate design measures for bicycle storage, details of which should be clearly shown at planning application stage. Storage should be provided through one of the following:															

	<p>(a) Incorporation of a utility/store room accessed from close to the front of the house.</p> <p>(b) Provision of access to the rear of houses.</p> <p>(c) Provision of sheltered parking at a public space.</p>
DMS16.50	Require all new residential developments of 10 or more dwellings to provide an adequately sized and conveniently accessible estate store for estate management and maintenance use. Such structure shall be weather tight, lockable, well lit, and constructed in a manner in keeping with the estate design and layout.
DMS16.51	Special consideration should be given to boundary treatments particularly where these adjoin existing dwellings. Boundaries between the rear of existing and proposed dwellings shall be a minimum of 1.8m high and shall be constructed as capped, rendered concrete block or brick walls, to ensure privacy, security and permanency
DMS16.52	High quality boundary treatments are generally required to enclose private open space. A 1.8m – 2m high wall of solid block, capped and plastered on both sides, is generally acceptable. The Council will consider alternative boundary treatments on their merits. All boundaries shall be of high-quality solid construction with no gaps. Post and wire or timber post and panel fencing is not permitted.
DMS16.53	Require the provision of walls at a minimum of 1.8 metres high capped, rendered concrete block or brick walls where residential sites abut public open spaces.
DMS16.54	Require that all proposals for residential development demonstrate compliance with the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns & Villages), the Urban Design Manual-A Best Practice Guide, 2009, and the 'Urban Development and Buildings Heights Guidelines for the Planning Authorities (2018), or any updates thereof.
DMS16.55	Design that maximises access to natural daylight and minimises overshadowing and loss of light.
DMS16.56	Delivery of high quality accessible open space, public realm and landscaping.

#### 16.4.5.10 Apartments

The provision of apartment schemes shall only be considered in appropriate locations, at a suitable scale and extent. Primarily this will be in town centre locations and proximate to public transport and in the settlements as listed in the settlement hierarchy. Proposals for new apartment schemes should be designed in line with design criteria as set out in the 2018 Ministerial Guidelines - *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (or any subsequent update).

#### Development Management Standards – Apartments

The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:

DMS 16.57	<p>a) Large scale apartment complexes shall be discouraged and shall only be considered in exceptional circumstances, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) residential accommodation above commercial properties - ‘over the shop’;</li> <li>ii) Contributing to the improved continuity of existing streetscapes</li> <li>iii) Opening up of town centre backland sites.</li> </ul> <p>b) Small scale apartment developments shall be assessed on a case-by case basis.</p>															
DMS16.58	<p>A detailed design statement is required to be submitted with any development containing multiple apartment and/or duplex units, including private and communal amenity space, as per the minimum apartment design standards requirements detailed in the <i>Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018) SPPR3</i>.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="392 788 1385 1032"> <thead> <tr> <th>Minimum Apartment Floor Areas</th> <th>Floor Area</th> <th>Private Open space</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Studio apartment (1 person)</td> <td>37sq.m</td> <td>4sq.m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1-bedroom apartment (2 persons)</td> <td>45sq.m</td> <td>5sq.m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2-bedroom apartment (4 persons)</td> <td>73sq.m</td> <td>7sq.m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3-bedroom apartment (5 persons)</td> <td>90sq.m</td> <td>9sq.m</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Minimum Apartment Floor Areas	Floor Area	Private Open space	Studio apartment (1 person)	37sq.m	4sq.m	1-bedroom apartment (2 persons)	45sq.m	5sq.m	2-bedroom apartment (4 persons)	73sq.m	7sq.m	3-bedroom apartment (5 persons)	90sq.m	9sq.m
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DMS16.59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Applications for apartment schemes shall be accompanied by a schedule of accommodation setting out the number and types of apartments and for each unit;</li> <li>b) Unit floor area and how this compares to minimum standards;</li> <li>c) Amenity and storage areas;</li> <li>d) Aspect of each unit;</li> <li>e) Primary stair core and lift access point for the unit;</li> <li>f) Details of the long-term running and maintenance arrangements, and;</li> <li>g) Statement of housing and unit mix.</li> </ul>															
DMS16.60	<p>Proposals for apartment development will be assessed with due attention to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Appropriate mix to cater for different household sizes;</li> <li>b) Floor areas and room widths;</li> <li>c) Aspect – dual aspect units are encouraged;</li> <li>d) Floor to ceiling height;</li> <li>e) Lift / stair core access;</li> <li>f) Storage provision (for general, refuse and bulky items);</li> <li>g) Private and communal amenity space;</li> <li>h) Communal facilities;</li> <li>i) Car, EV (Electric Vehicle) Charging Points and bicycle parking; and,</li> <li>j) Adaptability.</li> </ul>															
DMS16.61	<p>Require the provision of ‘own door’ private access from street level for all new build residential development.</p>															

16.4.5.11 Street Lighting and Public Utilities

Well-designed schemes include a detailed lighting scheme to add vibrancy and improve safety and security. Where a residential development has not been taken in charge, the developer shall be responsible for the management and maintenance of the public lighting in the development.

<b>Development Management Standards – Street Lighting and Public Utilities</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.62	The design of all new developments shall take into consideration the layout of the proposed public lighting column locations and the proposed landscape design. Trees or vegetation shall not be planted within 7 metres of a public light column.
DMS16.63	For all residential developments of 8 or more units to require a public lighting scheme to be submitted as part of the site layout avoiding dark corners and alleyways.
DMS16.64	All new lights shall be fitted with LED light sources.
DMS16.65	Preserve the amenity and visual character of an area, and in the interests of public safety all services including electricity, public lighting, broadband and television cables shall be provided underground in appropriate ducting in all new developments.

#### 16.4.5.12 Refuse and Construction Waste Management

All new residential schemes shall include appropriately sited and designed secure refuse storage areas, details of which shall be clearly shown in pre-application discussion and planning application documentation. Regard should be had to the number of individual bins required to serve each residential unit at design stage and the requirement for segregating waste for recycling and food waste, (Refer to *Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications* for specific policies).

<b>Development Management Standards – Refuse and Construction Waste Management</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.66	In town centre locations all waste storage shall be appropriately sized and shall not be permitted on or between the public street and front façade of the development, nor visible or accessible by the general public.
DMS16.67	In residential schemes, appropriately sized bin storage areas must be provided to the front of terraced dwellings in locations which are easily accessible by the householder. These areas shall be well screened, and the design shall integrate with the dwelling.
DMS16.68	In apartment schemes, bin storage shall generally be on the ground floor level of development, be adequately ventilated, screened from public view and adjacent to the block it serves. Where appropriate, the bin storage area shall be a separate structure to the apartment building.
DMS16.69	Shared bin storage areas shall be located conveniently for residents and collection; service providers with appropriate security measures.

DMS16.70	All development proposals of five or more residential units shall include a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) with planning application documentation.  <i>Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) shall focus on waste minimisation and optimise waste prevention, re-use and recycling opportunities in the absence of a Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan (WMP).</i>
DMS16.71	In the case of development which requires the removal of soil and stones, any removal requires the appropriate permits and disposal to authorised sites.

### 16.4.6 Other Residential Developments

#### 16.4.6.1 Upper Floors / ‘Living over the Shop’

The Department of Environment has brought in exemptions in relation to vacant commercial buildings being converted to residential use (applies until 31st December 2021). In this regard, a manual was launched by the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development in 2019 entitled, ‘Bringing Back Homes’, to assist property owners, the public, local authorities and the construction industry to develop vacant buildings.

<b>Development Management Standards – Upper Flood Residential Use</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.72	Encourage residential uses in existing under-utilised or vacant building stock as a mechanism to combat vacancy in town centres.
DMS16.73	Require a high level of residential amenity ensuring natural light in living rooms and bedrooms and minimum standards are met in relation to overall floor areas and storage space requirements as set down in the <i>Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments</i> (DoHPLG, 2018).
DMS16.74	Allow a reduction in open space and car parking standards for ‘living over the shop’ accommodation proposals in town centre locations, subject to protecting residential amenity, where considered appropriate by the Planning Authority.
DMS16.75	Require that a separate and distinctive point of entry with an identifiable address be provided. Mitigation measures to address possible sources of external noise should be provided.

#### 16.4.6.2 Infill Sites in Urban Areas:

Infill development relates to development located in gaps between existing buildings in built-up urban areas. The Council will support infill development on appropriate sites that make the most sustainable use of serviced land and existing urban infrastructure.

<b>Development Management Standards – Infill Developments</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.76	Proposals for infill development shall accord with the <i>Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas- Guidelines for Planning</i>

	<i>Authorities</i> (DEHLG, 2009) and the accompanying document <i>Urban Design Manual</i> or any updates thereof; and the <i>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets</i> , 2013, Department of Environment, Community & Local Government or any updates thereof.
DMS16.77	Infill development shall take account of the character of the area and where possible retain existing features such as building line, height, railings, trees, gateways etc.

**16.4.6.3 Backland Sites in Urban Areas**

Backland residential development relates to small scale development located to the rear of existing buildings in built-up areas. Innovative and contemporary design solutions may be considered.

<b>Development Management Standards – Backland Development</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.78	Having regard to the requirement to protect the residential amenity and character of existing residential areas backland site development shall satisfy the criteria for infill development, avoid undue overlooking and overshadowing of adjacent properties and shall respect existing building lines where possible.
DMS16.79	Backland development proposals shall avoid piecemeal development that adversely impacts on the character of the area and the established pattern of development.

**16.4.6.4 Corner/Side Garden Sites**

Corner Site/Side Garden development refers to sub-division of an existing house curtilage to provide an additional dwelling in existing built-up areas.

<b>Development Management Standards – Corner / Side Garden Sites</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.80	Require corner site /side garden development proposals to have regard to the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Size, design, layout, building line and the relationship with existing dwellings and immediately adjacent properties;</li> <li>b) The external finishes;</li> <li>c) Floor areas and the accommodation standards for the occupants;</li> <li>d) Car parking for the existing and the proposed development;</li> <li>e) Private open space for existing and proposed development; Side/gable and rear access/maintenance space, where possible, and; Refuse storage areas.</li> </ul>

**16.4.6.5 Extensions to Dwellings**

Extending existing dwelling houses to meet changing family needs is an acceptable form of development which is viewed positively by the Council.

**Development Management Standards – Dwelling Extensions**

The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:

DMS16.81	<p>Ensure that extensions to residential dwellings accord with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Be subordinate in terms of scale and be complementary in terms of materials and design to the main building (presumption against the size of any extension exceeding 100% of the floor area of the existing dwelling).</li> <li>b) Complement the local area and not have a negative impact on the visual or residential amenities of neighbouring dwellers or the area in general.</li> <li>c) Flat roof extensions, in a contemporary design context, will be considered on their individual merits.</li> <li>d) The extension should not provide for new overlooking of the private area of an adjacent residence where no such overlooking previously existed.</li> <li>e) New extensions should not overshadow adjacent dwellings to the degree that there is a significant decrease in daylight or sunlight entering into the house.</li> <li>f) Not result in a significant reduction of private open space, compromise public health or necessitate amendments to existing entrance or traffic management arrangements such that they constitute a traffic hazard.</li> <li>g) Proposed side extensions shall retain side access to the rear of the property, where required for utility access, refuse collection etc.</li> <li>h) Ability to provide adequate car parking within the curtilage of the dwelling-house; In all cases where diversion or construction over existing sewerage and/or water mains is required, the consent of Irish Water will be required as part of the application.</li> </ul>
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*The Council will consider on their merits, exemptions to the above policy in the case of adaptations required to provide accommodation for people with disabilities.*

**16.4.6.6 Family ‘Granny’ Flat Extensions**

The creation of a family flat / granny flat, to be occupied by a member of the occupant’s family, is generally acceptable, provided it is not a separate detached unit, and it is possible to provide direct access to the remainder of the house. However, this is a temporary arrangement to accommodate an immediate family member and are generally acceptable in both urban and rural areas.

**Development Management Standards – Family / Granny Flat Extensions**

The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:

DMS16.82	Require applicants to submit documentary evidence to demonstrate the need for the family flat unit.
DMS16.83	Ensure that there shall be no permanent sub-division of the garden/private amenity space.

DMS16.84	The design should ensure that the unit forms an integral part of the main dwelling unit, capable of reintegration for single family use and, from public view, retains the appearance of a single dwelling unit.
DMS16.85	The proposed unit should be linked directly to the main dwelling by a connecting door.
DMS16.86	The unit shall not be let, sold or otherwise transferred, other than as part of the overall property and shall revert to being part of the original house when no longer occupied by the family member.
DMS16.87	The proposal shall not impact adversely on either the residential amenities of the existing property, or the residential amenities of the area.

#### 16.4.6.7 Rural Housing

Notwithstanding an applicants' demonstration of compliance with the rural housing criteria as set out in *Chapter 4: Core Settlement and Housing Strategies*, applicants are also required to satisfy visual impact, design standards, environmental and traffic safety issues. The design of rural housing development requires careful design consideration to ensure that all new development sensitively integrates into the landscape. Important factors to consider includes site selection, design, scale and form of the proposed development.

Development proposals must integrate with the receiving landscape by selecting naturally sheltered and screened sites and with the proposed building being of a simple built form complimented with the use of materials that are reflective of traditional vernacular. External finishes and materials used in designing in a rural location should select the materials that reinforce the texture and colours of the surrounding landscape and neighbouring and existing buildings and dwellings. Important points to consider include the following:

- The number of materials used should be limited.
- The use of plastered walls will generally be acceptable with a preference for nap or dry dash finishes.
- The use of natural stone as a feature to an external elevation will generally be acceptable. The type of stone used should have regard to the local landscape.
- The use of brick finishes in rural areas will be discouraged.

#### Development Management Standards – Rural Housing

The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:

DMS16.88	<p><u>Site Selection and Design</u></p> <p>a) The scale, form, design and siting of the development should be sensitive to its surroundings and visually integrate with the receiving landscape.</p> <p>b) Simple design forms and materials reflective of traditional vernacular should be used.</p> <p>c) Have regard to the scale of surrounding buildings.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) The design, siting and orientation of a new dwelling should be site specific responding to the natural features and topography of the site to best integrate development with the landscape and to optimise solar gain to maximise energy efficiency.</li> <li>e) The siting of new development shall visually integrate with the landscape, utilising natural features including existing contours and established field boundaries and shall not visually dominates the landscape. (Cutting and filling of sites is not desirable).</li> <li>f) New buildings should respect the landscape context and not impinge scenic views or skylines as seen from vantage points or public roads.</li> <li>g) Larger houses (e.g. in excess of 200sqm) should incorporate design solutions to minimise visual mass and scale e.g. sub-divided into smaller elements of traditional form to avoid bulky structures.</li> <li>h) Use a simple plan form to give a clean roof shape – a long plan in preference to a deep plan. This will avoid the creation of a bulky shape.</li> <li>i) Where existing vernacular structures exist on site, consideration should be given to their re-use, adaptation and extension in preference to new build.</li> <li>j) Clustering with existing rural buildings is generally preferable to stand-alone locations.</li> <li>k) The applicant should determine if the proposed development is located on any designated natural heritage, archaeological or architectural heritage site. The existence of any of these designated sites within the proposed development site may have implications for the proposed dwelling.</li> </ul>
DMS16.89	<p><u>Materials and Detailing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The detail, texture, colour, pattern, and durability of materials of the proposed development should be sustainable and of a high quality, and sensitive to its proposed location.</li> <li>b) Local stone (sandstone/limestone - area specific) and render such as stucco, traditional lime render or lime wash, rough cast render or napped render finish and glass is encouraged.</li> <li>c) Metal cladding such as copper, timber shingle, self-finished modern renders, and painted timber finish may be acceptable in certain instances or in cases where the design solution calls for an accent material.</li> <li>d) Brick, stone cladding which clearly reads as non-structural and non-local stone or dashes and cladding and other metal or timber finishes which give an engineered or artificial appearance will generally not be permitted.</li> <li>e) Where contemporary materials are proposed they should complement and harmonise with traditional materials.</li> <li>f) Simple design forms and roof designs with narrow spans (gable-widths) and pitches/profiles are preferable.</li> </ul>

	<p>g) Particular attention should be paid to the solid to void ratio of windows and doors. Openings should be proportionate to complement the style of the building.</p> <p>h) Decorative fascia and box end soffits should be avoided.</p>
DMS16.90	<p><u>Domestic garage / shed / store</u></p> <p>a) The design, form and materials should be ancillary to, and consistent with the main dwelling on site.</p> <p>b) Structures should generally be detached and sited to the rear or side of the dwelling house and be visually subservient in terms of size, scale and bulk.</p> <p>c) Storage facilities should be used solely for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling and not for any commercial, manufacturing, industrial use or habitable space in the absence of prior planning consent for such use.</p>
DMS16.91	<p><u>Access and Sightlines</u></p> <p>a) All applications for planning permission must include (at a minimum scale of 1:500) comprehensive details of the way in which safe access and egress to the site can be achieved.</p> <p>b) Existing roadside hedgerows and trees should be retained as much as possible. The entrance should be carefully considered to achieve the required sight distance with the removal of a minimum extent of existing hedgerow.</p> <p>c) Where satisfactory access can be achieved only by removing large stretches of roadside hedgerow/ditches/stone boundaries, an alternative site for the proposed development should be considered subject to satisfaction of other planning assessment criteria.</p> <p>d) The sharing of vehicular entrances will be encouraged where appropriate in order to avoid a proliferation of access points. Where a new house is to be sited adjacent to existing dwellings, use of existing entrances, avenues and driveways should be considered.</p> <p>e) Safe unobstructed sight distances should be provided and maintained thereafter from vehicular entrances onto the road network as per the details specified in DMS16.114.</p> <p>i.</p>
DMS16.92	<p><u>Surface and Wastewater Treatment</u></p> <p>Require the following criteria to be adhered to in relation to effluent disposal, drainage and water supply for prospective rural housing:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>
DMS16.93	<p><u>Boundary Treatment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Application sites should be flanked with a minimum of two established natural boundaries to aid visual integration and help soften the visual impact of the development in the landscape.</li> <li>b) Existing hedgerows and landscape features on site should be retained and augmented on site. Where hedgerow removal is required to achieve sight lines, new hedgerow(s) of a native species must be planted inside the line of visibility.</li> <li>c) New roadside frontage should be incorporated into existing roadside treatment using compatible hedgerow planting, walls, timber fencing and/or drystone work.</li> <li>d) Boundary treatment should reflect local traditions. Traditional dry-stone wall construction or limestone walls with lime mortar, and/or post and wire/timber fencing back planted with indigenous hedging are considered appropriate at entrances. Over-scaled and elaborate designs should be avoided.</li> <li>e) The design of entrance gates should be in keeping with the rural setting. Entrances, wing walls and piers which are not demonstrated to be in character with the rural location of the proposed development will generally not be permitted. All planning applications must include detailed drawings and specifications for vehicular entrance arrangements.</li> <li>f) Landscaping proposals should be submitted with all planning applications for development and shall include a schedule of indigenous native plant species and implementation timeline.</li> </ul>

**16.4.7 Community Facilities**

**16.4.7.1 Sheltered Accommodation/Step Down Housing, Residential Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Nursing Homes, Retirement Villages**

A range of accommodation options fall within this sector including: step down housing which supports independent living as support services are available in a complex arrangement, nursing homes, retirement homes etc.

<b>Development Management Standards – Sheltered Accommodation and Retirement Home Provision</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.94	Regard to the <i>National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland, 2009</i> .
DMS16.95	Proposals for this accommodation should to be located within towns and villages for reasons of sustainability, accessibility, social inclusion and proximity to services. Exceptions will only be considered where a professional and evidence-based need is demonstrated to locate in a rural environment because of the nature of the care required.
DMS16.96	Provide adequate open space with comprehensive landscaping plans, informed by the need to cater for all levels of ability and in particular the needs of an ageing population and the mobility impaired, in line with Ministerial and Departmental guidelines including <i>Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement (Department of Health) (2019)</i> and <i>Thinking Ahead: Independent and Supported Housing Models for an Ageing Population (Housing Agency) (2018)</i> .
DMS16.97	The application should include a detailed design statement including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Description of the proposed development, indicating the cohort that the development will cater for and the numbers of people to be catered for within the site.</li> <li>b) The need for the accommodation and the justification for the proposed site location.</li> <li>c) Details on accessibility, including pedestrian, cycle and public transport provisions and linkages to the proposed development.</li> <li>d) The car parking facilities for staff and set-down areas for customers.</li> <li>e) Appropriate landscaping, including open space and boundary treatments</li> <li>f) The details of the proposed design, including external finishes, the size and scale appropriate to the area and the impact on residential and neighbouring amenity</li> <li>g) Adequate signage, lighting and boundary treatments.</li> </ul>

**16.4.7.2 Healthcare Facilities**

In assessing planning applications for Health Care Services, the Structures proposed should generally comprise a simple form and function and be located on suitably zoned lands within urban areas.

<b>Development Management Standards – Healthcare Facilities</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.98	Proposed applications for such facilities should include a detailed design statement including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Justification for proposal provided by reference to anticipated demand;</li> <li>a) Adequate capacity in the local road network and car parking provisions;</li> <li>b) Details on accessibility, including pedestrian, cycle and public transport provisions and linkages to the proposed development;</li> <li>c) Intended hours of operation;</li> <li>d) Adequate signage, lighting and boundary treatments;</li> <li>e) Appropriate landscaping;</li> <li>f) A detailed Mobility Management Plan.</li> </ul>
DMS16.99	Extensions to healthcare facilities will generally be accepted subject to scale, high quality design and satisfactory integration with the existing structure. Extended facilities should not negatively impact on adjoining amenities and amenities within the school site.

### 16.4.7.3 Childcare Facilities

Applicants are encouraged to seek the advice and support of the County’s Childcare Committee, Tulsa, Health Safety Executive and other relevant bodies in the design and layout of proposed childcare facilities prior to the submission of a planning application.

<b>Development Management Standards – Childcare Facilities</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.100	The provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations as set out in accordance with the provisions of the DoEHLG ‘ <i>Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> ’ (2001) and seek to apply <i>Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings</i> (2019) from the National Disability Authority and Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Early Childhood Ireland.
DMS16.101	Appropriate provision of at least one childcare facility to cater for 20 places in developments of 75 houses, including local authority and social housing schemes in accordance with DoEHLG Guidelines.
DMS16.102	Development of childcare facilities at the following locations will normally be encouraged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Areas of concentrated employment and business parks;</li> <li>b) Neighbourhood centres;</li> <li>c) Schools or major educational facilities;</li> <li>d) Within existing town, villages and rural nodes;</li> <li>e) Within new and existing residential developments;</li> <li>f) Large retail developments;</li> <li>g) Adjacent to public transport nodes.</li> </ul>

DMS16.103	Applications for childcare facilities in a residential area will be assessed based on their impact in terms of noise, loss of residential amenity, traffic generation and general disturbance.
DMS16.104	Proposed applications for such facilities should include a detailed design statement including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Suitability of the site and the adequacy and availability of indoor and outdoor play space.</li> <li>b) Nature of the facility and the detailed opening hours and times of operation.</li> <li>c) Numbers and ages of children attending the facility</li> <li>d) The car parking facilities for staff and set-down areas for customers, cycle facilities.</li> <li>e) Open Space provision and measures for management of same.</li> <li>f) Description of cumulative impact when taken together with other childcare facilities in the vicinity.</li> <li>g) Impact on residential amenity and mitigation measures, if appropriate.</li> <li>h) Local traffic conditions and the proximity to public transport nodes and pedestrian and cycling facilities.</li> <li>i) Number of such facilities in the area. In this regard, the applicant shall submit a map showing the locations of childcare facilities within the vicinity of the subject site and demonstrate the need for an additional facility at that location.</li> <li>j) A detailed Mobility Management Plan.</li> </ul>
DMS16.105	In the case of proposals within an existing dwelling the Council will consider whether there is sufficient private open space remaining for the enjoyment of the occupant of the dwelling. The potential impact on the residential amenities of adjoining residences will also be considered. In such cases a significant residential component shall be retained.
DMS16.106	In general, the Council will discourage the complete conversion of existing semi-detached and terraced dwellings within housing estates to childcare facilities.
DMS16.107	The childcare use should remain secondary and the bulk of the house should be retained for residential purposes. In new housing estates, purpose-built facilities are normally required.

**16.4.7.4 Schools and Education Facilities**

The Council will be guided by the Department of Education and Skills as to the need for new educational facilities or expansion of facilities at existing schools. Please refer to *Chapter 7: Placemaking* for specific policies in respect of educational facilities.

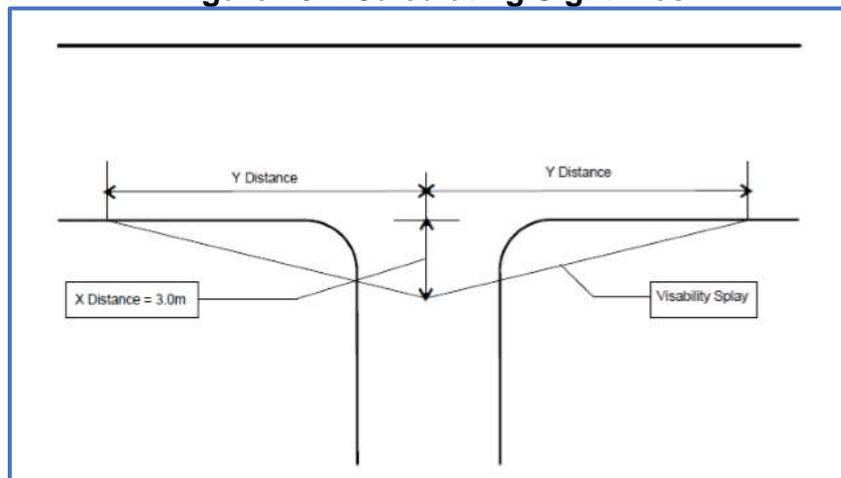
<b>Development Management Standards – Schools and Education Facilities</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.108	Compliance with the ‘ <i>Guidelines on The Provision of Schools and the Planning System – A Code of Practice</i> ’ (2008).

DMS16.109	<p>Proposed applications for such facilities should include a detailed design statement including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The need for school accommodation.</li> <li>b) Justification for proposed site location.</li> <li>c) Details on accessibility, including pedestrian, cycle and public transport provisions and linkages to the proposed development.</li> <li>d) Provision of adequate, secure, covered cycle facilities.</li> <li>e) Adequate and safe set-down and collection areas to facilitate peak traffic movements and adequate car parking for staff.</li> <li>f) Adequate play area(s) for pupils, including sporting facilities.</li> <li>g) School buildings and sports facilities should be multi-functional and be available for extended community use outside of school term and daily use.</li> <li>h) Adequate signage, lighting and boundary treatments.</li> <li>i) A detailed Mobility Management Plan.</li> </ul>
DMS16.110	<p>Extensions to schools will generally be accepted subject to scale, high quality design and satisfactory integration with the existing structure. School extensions should not negatively impact on adjoining amenities and amenities within the school site.</p>
DMS16.111	<p>Temporary classrooms will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be accepted for a temporary period not exceeding five years and such classrooms should not interfere with onsite car/cycle parking spaces or unduly impact the usability of outdoor play/sports facilities. Any such proposal shall be accompanied by a timeline for the construction of permanent facilities.</p>

**16.4.8 Road Safety and Access**

The provision of a safe vehicular access is a prerequisite for all development proposals in the interest of traffic safety for all road users. *Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications* provides the policy context in ensuring the provision of efficient and sustainable infrastructural network.

**Figure 15.2 Calculating Sightlines**



The building line required will relate to the nature and design of the buildings being proposed, and the nature of the layout of the area. The function of building lines in the urban environment is to:

- Provide protection from noise and fumes associated with traffic;
- Allow for the provision of off-street car-parking;
- Allow for future road development; and,
- Ensure that new development is consistent with neighbouring development and appropriate in the context of the surrounding streetscape.

<b>Development Management Standards – Road Safety and Access</b>						
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:						
DMS16.112	All planning applications will be assessed in accordance with the policy context set out in <i>Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications</i> and to the <i>Design Manual for urban Roads and Streets</i> ; DTTS and DECLG (DMURS, 2019).					
DMS16.113	Require all applications for planning permission to include (at a minimum scale of 1:500) comprehensive details of the way in which safe access and egress to the site can be achieved and include the sightline visibility.					
DMS16.114	Safe unobstructed sight distances should be provided and maintained thereafter from vehicular entrances onto the road network as follows:					
	<b>Speed Limit</b>	<b>Road Type</b>			<b>Applicable Standard</b>	
		<b>National Primary</b>	<b>National Secondary</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>Local</b>	
	120kph	295m	295m	-	-	TII Publications
	100kph	215m	215m	215m	-	TII Publications
	80 kph	160m	160m	160m	160m desirable but subject to road width and alignment, traffic volumes and traffic speeds and where a lesser distance is shown to be adequate in terms of safety.	TII Publications
	60 kph	65m	65m	65m	65m	DMURS
	50 kph	49m	49m	49m	49m	DMURS

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>40 kph</td> <td>36m</td> <td>36m</td> <td>36m</td> <td>36m</td> <td>DMURS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30 kph</td> <td>24m</td> <td>24m</td> <td>24m</td> <td>24m</td> <td>DMURS</td> </tr> </table> <p>a) In general, only the minimum interference with existing roadside boundaries and hedges shall be permitted.</p> <p>b) Third Party consent letters and accompanying Land Registry Maps for the provision of adequate Sight Distance Triangles should be submitted, if applicable.</p> <p><i>In terms of Local Roads, this is also subject to the discretion of the Planning Authority where a lesser distance is demonstrated to be adequate in terms of traffic safety.</i></p>	40 kph	36m	36m	36m	36m	DMURS	30 kph	24m	24m	24m	24m	DMURS
40 kph	36m	36m	36m	36m	DMURS								
30 kph	24m	24m	24m	24m	DMURS								
DMS16.115	<p>Require the following minimum building lines for all structures facing the public road:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Road Type</th> <th>Setback Distance from existing / proposed carriageway edge</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National Primary Road</td> <td>35 metres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>National Secondary Road</td> <td>35 metres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Regional Road</td> <td>25 metres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Road</td> <td>15 metres</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Road Type	Setback Distance from existing / proposed carriageway edge	National Primary Road	35 metres	National Secondary Road	35 metres	Regional Road	25 metres	Local Road	15 metres		
Road Type	Setback Distance from existing / proposed carriageway edge												
National Primary Road	35 metres												
National Secondary Road	35 metres												
Regional Road	25 metres												
Local Road	15 metres												
DMS16.116	<p>New rural entrances should not be located within the following distances of junctions:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Road Type</th> <th>Separation Distance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National Primary Road</td> <td>150 metres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>National Secondary Road</td> <td>100 metres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Regional Road</td> <td>100 metres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Road</td> <td>40 metres</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>The development by itself or combined with another or other development shall not give rise to a traffic hazard.</i></p>	Road Type	Separation Distance	National Primary Road	150 metres	National Secondary Road	100 metres	Regional Road	100 metres	Local Road	40 metres		
Road Type	Separation Distance												
National Primary Road	150 metres												
National Secondary Road	100 metres												
Regional Road	100 metres												
Local Road	40 metres												
DMS16.117	<p>For large developments requiring the submission of a Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) as part of the planning application it is advised that applicants should consult with the Council's Roads Department in conjunction with the Planning Department prior to the submission of an application.</p>												
DMS16.118	<p>Where the capacity, width, alignment or the surface condition of the road are inadequate development will not be favoured.</p>												
DMS16.119	<p>Discourage the proliferation of road access points onto public roads, especially in areas where the maximum speed limits applies or where road safety is of concern.</p>												
DMS16.120	<p>The sharing of vehicular entrances will be encouraged where appropriate in order to avoid a proliferation of access points. Where a new house is to be sited adjacent to existing dwellings, use of existing entrances, avenues and driveways should be considered.</p>												
DMS16.121	<p>Retain existing roadside hedgerows and trees as much as possible. New and or extended entrances should be carefully considered to achieve the required sight distance with the removal of a minimum extent of existing hedgerow. The new boundary should be planted</p>												

	with suitable indigenous species and plants and these should be identified within a detailed landscape plan.
DMS16.122	Where satisfactory access can be achieved only by removing large stretches of roadside hedgerow/ditches/stone boundaries, an alternative site for the proposed development should be sought.
DMS16.123	Where new development would adversely impact road drainage development will not be permitted, unless applicants agree proposals with the Council to improve the road and drainage.

### 16.4.9 Car parking

The car parking standards set out in Table 16.1 Car Parking Standards shall apply.

**Table 16.1 Car Parking Standards**

Land Use	Car Parking Space Requirement
Houses (outside town centres)	2 per dwelling
Houses (town and village centre location)	1 space per unit in Longford Town 1.5 space per unit in all other settlements
Apartments / Flats	1 space per unit + 1 visitor space per 4 apartments in suburban locations towns and villages
Retail	1 per 25m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space within speed limit 1.5 per 25m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space outside speed limit
Offices	1 per 30m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space within speed limit 1.5 per 30m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space outside speed limit
Financial Institutions	1 per 20m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space
Retail Warehousing	1 per 35m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space
Cash And Carry Outlets	2 per 90m <sup>2</sup> plus adequate loading/unloading and circulation facilities
Industry	1 per 30m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space or 1 per 4no. employees, whichever is greater
Warehousing	1 per 100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area or 1 space per 4no. employees, whichever is greater
Hotels, B&B, Guesthouses*	1 space per 2 bedrooms within the speed limit 1 space per bedroom outside the speed limit
Bars And Lounges*	1 per 7m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area within the speed limit 2 per 7m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area outside the speed limit
Dance Halls, Dance Areas And Function Rooms	1.5 per 7m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area within the speed limit 3 per 7m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area within the speed limit
Restaurants	1 per 7m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area within the speed limit 2 per 7m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area outside the speed limit
Take Away	6 per unit
Commercial Garage	1 per 30m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area
Service Station	1 per 300m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area + shop requirements
Showrooms	1 per 100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area + shop requirements
Marinas	1 per berth
Hospitals	1 per bed
Nursing Homes	1 per 3 bedrooms

Land Use	Car Parking Space Requirement
Surgeries/Clinics	3 per consulting room
Funeral Homes	1 per 10m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area
Childcare, Creche, 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 Clubs	1 per 45m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space plus 2%
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 Services Hairdressers/ Barbers/ Bookmakers	3 per 100m <sup>2</sup> gross floor area

Development Management Standards – Car Parking Provision	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.124	The standards set out in Table 16.1 Car Parking Standards shall apply to all new developments, be it new construction or a new extension or a material change of use of existing buildings.
DMS16.125	In the case of any specific uses not listed in Table 16.1 Car Parking Standards, the Council will specify its requirements in relation to parking.
DMS16.126	Non-residential car parking standards are set down as maximum standards and the number of spaces should not exceed the maximum provision set out in the table 15.11.
DMS16.127	The car parking standards shall be applied at the discretion of the Council in the County's rural towns and villages having regard to the availability and adequacy of on street parking, existing or proposed off street parking to serve the development and the settlement.
DMS16.128	All parking areas shall be clearly demarcated and numbered with indelible paint which shall be permanently maintained to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.
DMS16.129	Age Friendly car parking spaces should generally be provided, where possible, in all developments.
DMS16.130	Accessible car parking spaces shall generally be provided at a rate of 5% of the total number of spaces, for developments requiring more than 10 car parking spaces, with the minimum provision being one space (unless the nature of the development requires otherwise). Such spaces shall be proximate to the entry points of buildings and comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations.
DMS16.131	Adequate car parking bays should be provided within the confines of the public areas of residential areas to address public needs

DMS16.132	<p>a) All developments, including new and extended developments (residential, community and commercial) should provide facilities for the charging of battery-operated cars at a rate of up to 10% of the total car parking spaces. The remainder of the parking spaces should be constructed so as to be capable of accommodating future charging points, as required.</p> <p>b) New residential development should accommodate at least one car parking space equipped with an EV charging points for every ten car parking spaces being provided for the associated development.</p> <p>c) EV charging spaces should be clearly demarcated with appropriate signage.</p>
DMS16.133	Rapid charge points should be provided within centres of commercial activity and clearly demarcated with appropriate signage, in collaboration with ESB networks.
DMS16.134	Parking areas shall be reserved solely for the parking of vehicles and should not be used for the storage of materials or goods associated with the development, nor for the parking of goods or other heavy vehicles.
DMS16.135	Where parking is permitted in the view of the general public, adequate soft landscaping shall be provided to soften the appearance of hard surfaced areas.

**16.4.10 Cycle Parking**

The Planning Authority requires the provision of a minimum level of secure bicycle parking facilities in association with new development and a change of use. This is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Department of Transport’s *National Cycle Policy Framework (2009)*. Where the provision of bicycle parking facilities is intended for use by the staff of that particular development, cycle stands should be covered and located within the curtilage of the development to ensure security and supervision. Cycle stands for use by visitors should be located to maximise convenience to the entrance of buildings, and positioned so as to ensure safety, security and supervision. The cycle parking standards set out in Table 16.2 Cycle Parking Standards shall apply, and cycle parking provision should be in accordance with the *National Cycle Manual, NTA (2011)*.

**Table 16.2 Cycle Parking Standards**

Land Use	Cycle Parking Space Requirement
Houses	1 space per dwelling
Apartments	1 stand per bedroom and 1 visitor stand per 2 units
Studio Flats	1 stand per unit and 1 visitor stand per 2 units
Retail	1 storage space per 100 sq. m
Offices	10% of employee numbers, (subject to minimum of 10 bicycle storage places or one bike space for every car space, whichever is the greater)
Financial Institutions	1 unit per 40 sqm GFA, or 1 space per car space whichever is greater

Retail Warehousing / Cash And Carry	1 space per 20 parking spaces whichever is greater
Industry & Warehousing	1 per 100sq.m GFA
Hotels, B&B, Guesthouses*	2 stands per unit accommodation
Cinemas/Theatre	1 space per 10 seats
Surgeries/Clinics	1 space per 5 members of staff and 0.5 space per consulting room
Childcare, Creche, Montessori	1 space per 5 members of staff and 1 space per 10 children
Schools	10% of pupil registration numbers, minimum 10 places. Consider separate teacher/ employee storage
Community Centre, Sports Clubs	1 space per 20 sqm GFA
Golf And Pitch And Put Courses	4 spaces per course
Golf Driving Range	2 spaces per facility
Public Transport Hubs (Rail / Bus)	5% of number of daily boarders at that point/ station
Other Developments	1 bike storage space for every car space

**Development Management Standards – Cycle Parking Provision**

The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:

DMS16.136	The standards set out in Table 16.2 Cycle parking standards shall apply to all new developments, be it new construction or a new extension or a material change of use of existing buildings.
DMS16.137	In the case of any specific uses not listed in Table 16.2 Cycle Parking Standards, the Council will specify its requirements in relation to cycle parking.
DMS16.138	Suitable and appropriate shower and changing facilities shall be required and apply to all new developments, be it new construction or a new extension or a material change of use of existing buildings in accordance with the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 1 shower per workplaces over 100m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 5 employees).</li> <li>b) A minimum of 2 showers for workplaces over 500m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 25 employees).</li> <li>c) 1 shower per 1000m<sup>2</sup> thereafter.</li> <li>d) Changing/drying areas, toilets and lockers should be provided in association with shower facilities.</li> <li>e) Lockers for the storage of clothing and equipment in addition to that provided for staff personal effects etc. should be provided for 20% of all staff members (not whole-time employees).</li> </ul>

**16.4.11 Retail**

Retail has an important contribution to make to the character and sense of place of urban spaces. It is essential therefore that retail development is of a high design quality and at an appropriate scale to the centre in which it is located. This section deals with specific retail 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 Longford's location at 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 area and to maintain its position within the Regional Retailing Hierarchy, the potential for regional shopping facilities will be considered subject to the relevant planning criteria contained within this plan.

**(b) District Shopping Centres** - District shopping centres will be considered in the context of their location. Applicants will be required to illustrate the compatibility of their proposal within 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 proposed additional floorspace. In accordance with the provisions of the Core Strategy, District Centres shall be restricted to Longford Town including, but not restricted to, the Northern Environs area.

**(c) Retail Parks and Retail Warehouses** - Retail warehouses, due to their large retail floorspace requirements, the bulky nature of their goods and the consequent heavy requirement for car parking are generally located on the edge or outside of the built-up urban area. Due to the specialist nature of these parks, it is not considered that their location outside of the commercial core will adversely impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre. Consideration will be given to retail parks where goods sold are predominantly bulky goods that are difficult to accommodate within the town centre. Grouping of units into retail park situations to facilitate sustainable transport patterns and reduce congestion in the town centre will be encouraged.

Individual retail warehousing units in out-of-centre locations will generally be subject to a minimum gross retail floorspace in the region of 700m<sup>2</sup>. 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 6,000m<sup>2</sup> (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.

**(d) 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.

Shops in neighbourhood centres in our larger settlements perform a key function locally providing services including convenience shopping, laundry, hairdresser, takeaways etc. The aim of providing such shopping facilities locally serve catchment areas within approximately 800 metres is to reduce the necessity to travel by car to the town centre to avail of basic services and thereby ensure reduced traffic congestion and improved sustainability.

**(e) 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:

1. Small scale shops attached to permitted tourist or recreational development.
2. Retail outlets associated with other rural activities where the retail aspect is secondary to the operation – shops selling agricultural produce, crafts etc.
3. The development of a small shop in association with an existing post office or petrol station will generally be allowed.

The Planning Authority encourages and is supportive of new retail development in the County in accordance with the Retail Strategy (see *Annex 9: Retail Strategy and Chapter 8: Economic Development*), which will make a positive contribution to achieving the aims of the economic strategy and also the core strategy (see *Chapter 4: Core, Settlement and Housing Strategies*).

<b>Development Management Standards – Retail</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.139	Require that the scale, design and proposed uses of all retail development comply with <i>the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> in April 2012, accompanying <i>Retail Design Manual</i> , (or any updates thereof) and the Council’s Retail Strategy.
DMS16.140	Require a Retail Impact Assessment to be carried out for development proposals in the following general circumstances: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Proposals featuring greater than 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of net floorspace for both convenience and comparison type developments in the four main towns;</li> <li>b) Proposals featuring greater than 500m<sup>2</sup> of net retail floorspace for both convenience and comparison type developments in district towns and other settlements;</li> <li>c) Or where the Planning Authority considers the development may impact on the vitality and viability of a town centre.</li> </ol>
DMS16.141	The Retail Impact Assessment shall include, at minimum, the criteria set out in the <i>Retail Planning Guidelines 2012</i> and should demonstrate how the proposed development: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Supports the overall strategy for town centres as set out in the development plan;</li> <li>b) Does not materially diminish the prospect of attracting private sector investment into one or more town centres;</li> <li>c) Does not cause an adverse impact on one or more town centres, either singly or cumulatively with recent</li> </ol>

	<p>developments or other outstanding planning permissions, sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its role in the economic and social life of the community;</p> <p>d) Does not diminish the range of activities and services that a town centre can support;</p> <p>e) Does not cause an increase in the number of vacant properties in the primary retail area that is likely to persist in the long term; and,</p> <p>f) Ensures a high standard of access both by public transport, foot and private car so that the proposal is easily accessible by all sections of society.</p> <p><i>The onus will be on any applicant to demonstrate in a Retail Impact Assessment that the proposed floorspace is appropriate, having regard to the quantum of floorspace required within that specific urban centre or settlement, in addition to evidencing all other relevant variables as specified within the Retail Planning Guidelines.</i></p>
DMS16.142	All retail proposals exceeding 1,000 sqm shall provide a Transport Impact Assessment (TIA) in addition to any other information deemed necessary by the Council.
DMS16.143	Encourage the provision of local convenience shops, exclusive of service stations, at an appropriate scale in rural villages and nodes where there is a clear deficiency in retail provision, subject to the protection of residential amenity.

**16.4.12 Service Stations**

The role of service stations has become more diverse with the expansion from merely selling fuel to also providing convenience services and goods including functioning as rest areas. Ancillary uses include tyre repair, collection points for online retail activity and self-service laundrettes. Service stations must be located on the outskirts of the town or village, but inside the 50km to 60km speed limits.

Service stations and associated truck parking facilities in locations at or near national roads will be assessed having regard to the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012).

<b>Development Management Standards – Service Stations</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.144	Proposals for new and extended service stations will be carefully considered and will not generally be encouraged within the core retail area of urban centres or in rural areas outside of villages and rural nodes and shall be located in all cases within the speed limit restriction zones.
DMS16.145	Service stations will not generally be permitted in/adjoining residential areas, unless; it can be clearly demonstrated there will be no significant effect on residential amenities by reason of noise, traffic, visual obtrusion, safety considerations or fumes and smells. Hours of operation will be limited if a service station is permitted in a residential

	<p>area. Proposals to demonstrate the above will be required to be submitted as part of pre-application discussion and planning application documentation.</p>
<p>DMS16.146</p>	<p>The following shall be submitted as part of pre-application discussion and/or planning application documentation for a service station:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A detailed design statement for the proposed development.</li> <li>b) A high-quality design including roof design, layout and external finishes to ensure it integrates and complements the surrounding environment.</li> <li>c) 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</li> <li>d) 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.</li> <li>e) 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.</li> <li>f) 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</li> <li>g) The layout should provide for safe pedestrian access to the shop and rest facilities.</li> <li>h) Adequate provision of rest areas and toilets accessible safely by pedestrians and cyclists.</li> <li>i) Where the development would be likely to have a significant impact on the historic or architectural character of the area, the use of standard corporate designs and signage may not be acceptable.</li> <li>j) 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.</li> <li>k) 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.</li> <li>l) 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</li> <li>m) Any retailing component shall not exceed 100 sqm. of retailing area and shall be restricted to convenience goods only. Where permission is sought for a retail floorspace in excess of 100sq.m, the sequential approach to retail development shall apply.</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n) Forecourt lighting, including canopy lighting, should be limited where possible.</li> <li>o) All external lighting shall be cowled and diverted away from the public roadway to prevent a traffic hazard.</li> <li>p) The placing of signs on footpaths, grass verges or any part of a public roadway will not be permitted. No advertisements or other structures, whether temporary or permanent, shall be placed on the forecourt which would interfere with the sight lines of motorists entering / egressing the site.</li> <li>q) EV Charging points for electric cars shall be provided with every new/extended service station.</li> <li>r) Detailed landscaping proposals in order to effectively integrate the proposed development into its surroundings.</li> </ul>
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**16.4.13 Fast Food/Takeaway Outlets**

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. Fast food outlets have the potential to cause noise, and littering, and can also detract from the visual and residential amenities of an area. Therefore, proposals for new or extended outlets will be carefully considered, particularly in locations where a proliferation of such uses already exists. An over concentration of such uses may impact the achievement of the *Healthy Longford Strategy* and will be discouraged.

<b>Development Management Standards – Fast Food / Takeaway Outlets</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.147	Assess the appropriateness of any proposal for a new or extended takeaway/fast food outlet on the potential cumulative effect of these uses on the amenities of an area.
DMS16.148	Give careful consideration to the appropriateness and location of fast food outlets in the vicinity of schools and, where considered appropriate, to restrict the opening of new fast food/takeaway outlets in close proximity to schools so as to protect the health and wellbeing of school-going children.
DMS16.149	Only consider drive-through restaurants in locations where development will not interfere with the free flow of traffic or detract from the visual or residential amenities of an area.

DMS16.150	<p>Require that all proposals for new or extended fast food/takeaway outlets address the following as part of any pre- application discussion or planning application documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The likely impact of the development upon the amenities of the area, including noise pollution, litter, odour and general disturbance, including the location of vents and other external services.</li> <li>b) Car parking is of critical importance and the premises will not be permitted at locations where adequate car-parking is not available.</li> <li>c) Developments will not be permitted where they have potential to detrimentally impact on traffic circulation and safety in an area.</li> <li>d) Details should be supplied at application stage on opening times and traffic.</li> <li>e) Applications for such development may be favourably considered in mixed use locations such as town centres.</li> <li>f) Proximity to residential development will be an important planning consideration in assessing applications for take-away premises.</li> <li>g) The cumulative effect of the fast food outlets on the amenities of the area.</li> <li>h) Litter bins shall be provided inside the premises.</li> <li>i) Where take-away premises are permitted, noise and disturbance levels will be controlled by imposing strict closing times on the premises.</li> <li>j) Façade design will be carefully controlled and, in particular, the amount and type of advertising signage and lighting. The design shall respect and enhance the existing street character. Corporate logos will be permitted, only where they meet Local Authority design criteria.</li> </ul>
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**16.4.14 Industrial, Warehousing, Business Parks and Enterprise Hubs**

The Planning Authority places significant emphasis on ensuring development proposals are of high design quality, suitably landscaped, provide good facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and include staff facilities. Enterprise Hubs provide opportunities and places for people to work in hubs within the local community and reduce the necessity for commuting to work and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

<b>Development Management Standards - Industrial, Warehousing, Business Parks and Enterprise Hubs</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.151	The principle of development proposed, intensity and nature of the proposed use relative to the receiving environment and the likely impact on amenities of the surrounding area.
DMS16.152	Achieve an appropriate density and scale of development, including a landscaped buffer zone (minimum 5-10 metres) for industrial /

	warehousing development where the lands adjoin another zoning, or where it would impact on the amenities of adjoining land uses.
DMS16.153	Require innovative contemporary designs for new industrial, office, warehousing and business park developments. All planning applications should include a detailed design statement.
DMS16.154	Ensure that enterprise hub sites are located where there is an adequate and suitable broadband connection and speed available.
DMS16.155	Developers encouraged to seek the re-use and the adaptation of existing vacant buildings within town centres and to include green technologies into the overall design in order to reduce the carbon footprint of the facility.
DMS16.156	For enterprise hubs provide a variety of spaces for individual work spaces, group working and potential meeting rooms which could be used by a variety of groups and individuals within the local area.
DMS16.157	Potential impact of traffic movement and parking provision. Parking allocation should visually integrate with the overall site and not present as large swathes of forecourt parking.
DMS16.158	Quality of design and the treatment of ancillary utility equipment including roof top infrastructure such as vents, elevator shafts, cooling systems etc.
DMS16.159	Sustainable waste management measures including location and screening of waste facilities.
DMS16.160	Proposals should incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other measures that address adaptation to climate change including rainwater harvesting, the creation of integrated wetlands, the construction of green/living roofs whereby opportunities for existing solar energy and wind energy are taken.
DMS16.161	Proposals to achieve a positive modal shift towards sustainable transport alternatives.
DMS16.162	Require that all new developments to submit a Mobility Management Plan.
DMS16.163	Require a detailed landscape plan including a survey of any existing vegetation on site. For larger schemes open space shall be provided in suitable locations as part of the development in order to enhance the development and provide amenity and passive recreation for future employees.

**16.4.15 Home Based Economic Activity**

Home based economic activity is defined as small scale commercial activity carried out by residents of a house or person’s main residence; being subordinate to the use of the house as a single dwelling unit and includes working from home.

<b>Development Management Standards – Home Based Economic Activity</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.164	In determining applications for developments involving working from home, the Council will have regard to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The use remains ancillary to the main residential use and the applicant continues to reside in the house.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) The nature and extent of the work.</li> <li>c) The effects on the amenities of adjoining occupiers, particularly in relation to hours of work, noise and general disturbance.</li> <li>d) Anticipated levels of traffic generated by the proposed development and the potential increased demand for parking.</li> <li>e) Arrangements for the storage of refuse and collection of waste.</li> </ul>
DMS16.165	Permissions for home-based economic activity will generally be restricted to use by the Applicant only.
DMS16.166	Applications may be subject to a temporary permission, in order to enable the Planning Authority to monitor the impact of the development.

**16.4.16 Rural Enterprise**

**16.4.16.1 Agricultural Development**

The design, scale, siting and layout of agricultural buildings should respect, and where possible, enhance the rural environment. All new and existing agricultural developments will be required to ensure that all effluent, including yard run-off, is collected and stored within the confines of the development. When assessing the adequacy of effluent handling facilities, the following will be considered to be soiled waste: Slurry; soiled water run-off; milk washings; silage effluent; and, dung stead. The Council will encourage farming practices and production methods that have regard for conservation, landscape protection, the protection of wildlife habitats, endangered species of flora and fauna and water quality.

<b>Development Management Standards – Agriculture</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.167	Developments shall comply with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, (GAP Regs 2014).
DMS16.168	The design, scale, siting and layout of agricultural buildings should respect, and where possible, enhance the rural environment.
DMS16.169	The Council will generally seek to cluster agricultural buildings and structures together and siting to assimilate effectively into the landscape. To require that buildings are sited appropriately in order to minimise obtrusion on the landscape, having regard to <i>Chapter 14: Landscape Character</i> and <i>Annex 11: Landscape Character Assessment</i> .
DMS16.170	Buildings should generally be located a minimum of 100metres from the nearest dwelling other than the applicants dwelling.
DMS16.171	The use of harmonious external materials should be used to minimise obtrusion on the landscape. The use of dark coloured cladding, notably dark browns, greys, greens and reds are most suitable for farm buildings, and roof areas should be darker than walls.
DMS16.172	The re-use of redundant farm buildings for small-scale rural enterprise will be considered where; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the building was previously in agricultural use for a reasonable period.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) it is no longer required for agricultural purposes.</li> <li>c) the use proposed can be largely contained within the existing building.</li> </ul>
DMS16.173	Encourage the adoption and implementation of greener farming practices and technologies, including the inclusion of solar panels, small scale wind turbines and other systems to help generate more of the local energy requirements.

**16.4.16.2 Forestry**

The afforestation of the County is broadly acceptable in principle due to the economic and environmental benefits that such developments can provide especially in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions through sequestering carbon. Whilst contributing to the local economy, forestry development can impose visual and environmental effects on the rural environment.

<b>Development Management Standards – Forestry</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.174	<p>In terms of forestry the Council will seek to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Landscapes of scenic value are not unduly eroded.</li> <li>b) Areas with environmental and archaeological protections are safeguarded.</li> <li>c) Access from forestry development onto public roads for the purposes of thinning and felling do not compromise traffic safety.</li> <li>d) A mixture of broadleaf and conifer species should be planted where possible so as to support a variety of flora and fauna species and to enliven the forestry landscape. Geometric planting patterns should be avoided.</li> <li>e) A planting free buffer zone of 100m from existing residential dwellings.</li> </ul>

**16.4.16.3 Extractive Industry**

In the assessment of planning applications for new development, intensification of use or diversification of activity, the Council will have regard to the nature of the proposal, the scale of activity proposed, the impact on the adjoining road network, the effect on the environment including important groundwater and aquifer sources, natural drainage patterns and surface water systems and the likely effects that any proposed extractive industry may have on the existing landscape and amenities of the county, including public rights of way and walking routes.

<b>Development Management Standards – Extractive Industry</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.175	Require that all extract industry development complies with the requirements of Section 261 and Section 261A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), the <i>Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines 2004</i> or any updates thereof <i>EPA Guidelines for</i>

	<i>Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry 2006</i> or any updates thereof and Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry..
DMS16.176	<p>Require Developer's / Applicant's to submit the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) An appropriate map detailing total site area, area of excavation, any ancillary proposed development and nearest dwelling and/or any other development within 1km of the application site.</li> <li>b) A description of the aggregate to be extracted, method of extraction, any ancillary processes (crushing etc), equipment to be used, stockpiles, storage of soil and overburden and storage of waste materials.</li> <li>c) The total and annual tonnage of extracted aggregates expected in the life time of the extraction, maximum extent and depth of working and a phasing programme.</li> <li>d) Details of water courses, water table depth and hydrological impacts, natural and cultural heritage impacts, traffic impact, waste management and the impacts upon landscape and walking and cycling routes.</li> <li>e) Assessment of cumulative impact when taken with any other extractive operations in the vicinity.</li> <li>f) Likely environmental effects including visual impact on sensitive landscapes and proposed mitigation measures and restoration.</li> <li>g) Detailed Rehabilitation and after-care proposals. These should include a report with plans and section drawings, detailing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anticipated finished landform and surface/landscape treatments (both of each phase proposed (where applicable) and the excavation as a whole)</li> <li>2. Quality and condition of topsoil and overburden</li> <li>3. Rehabilitation works proposed</li> <li>4. Type and location of any vegetation proposed</li> <li>5. Proposed method of funding and delivery of restoration/reinstatement works etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>h) Current Legal Planning Status of the Existing Development (Quarry/Sand and Gravel Pit).</li> <li>i) Justification on need for the development proposed, the extent of existing authorised quarry supplies available and the impact of the development on the local environment.</li> <li>j) Limited duration on permissions may be provided to allow for the re-evaluation of the development in light of unforeseen environmental implications and in light of changes in environmental standards and technology.</li> </ul>
DMS16.177	Encourage the rehabilitation and suitable re-use of disused pits and quarries where appropriate having regard to all appropriate environmental considerations.
DMS16.178	Consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), with regard to any developments likely to have an impact on Sites of Geological Importance listed in the County Development Plan (see <i>Chapter 12</i> :

	<i>Natural Heritage and Environment and Appendix 7: Natural Heritage and Environment).</i>
DMS16.179	Require by way of planning condition that the developer lodge a financial bond to ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site following the completion of extraction. This bond shall be index linked.
DMS16.180	A special contribution levy may be required from the developer towards the cost of upgrading or repairing the local roads serving the quarry and to minimise the adverse impacts of associated quarry operations on the road network.

**16.4.17 Renewable Energy Developments**

The Council recognises the importance of Renewable Energy and its potential in contributing to the reductions in fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions. EMRA will be working with the Council and other County Councils in the region to identify potential Strategic Energy Zones. In addition, during the lifetime of the Development Plan the Council will produce a Renewable Energy Strategy (Including a Wind Energy Strategy) for the County.

**16.4.17.1 Wind Energy**

The Council recognises the importance of wind energy as a renewable energy source and its potential in contributing to reductions in fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions. *Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Communications and Energy* of the plan outlines the policy context for Wind Energy and should be referred to in the consideration of proposed development. The Council will have regard to the *Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, prepared by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, or any update made thereto. Further, regard should be given to the Landscape Character Assessment which is detailed in *Chapter 14: Landscape Character* and *Annex 11: Landscape Character Assessment* of this Plan.

**16.4.17.2 Solar Energy**

The Council recognises that solar farms as a renewable energy source, can contribute to reductions in fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions. Currently, there is no national policy guidelines on solar farms. In the assessment of any applications for solar farms, the Council will consider *Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications* of this plan which provides the policy context and criteria required in the assessment of solar farms within the County. Further regard will be given to policy and guidance detailed in *Chapter 14: Landscape Character* and *Annex 11: Landscape Character Assessment* of this Plan.

**Development Management Standards – Renewable Energy**

The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:

<p>DMS16.181</p>	<p>In the assessment of renewable energy development proposals such as wind and solar energy schemes (but not limited to), the Council will take the following criteria into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The proper planning and sustainable development of the area;</li> <li>b) The environmental and social impacts of the proposed development including those on residential properties, such as noise and shadow flicker;</li> <li>c) Traffic impacts including details of haul routes;</li> <li>d) Glint / Glare and the potential impact on the adjoining road networks and dwellings through the submission of an associated report.</li> <li>e) Impact of the development on the landscape and the Zone of Visual Influence (see <i>Chapter 14: Landscape Character and Annex 11; Landscape Character Assessment</i>);</li> <li>f) Impact on protected Views and Prospects (see <i>Chapter 14: Landscape Character and Appendix 9 and Annex 11; Landscape Character Assessment</i>);</li> <li>g) Impact on public rights of way and walking / cycling routes, blueways, greenways and peatways;</li> <li>h) Impact of the grid connection from the installation to the ESB network and National Grid (where applicable);</li> <li>i) Mitigation features, where impacts are inevitable;</li> <li>j) The protection of designated areas - NHAs, SPAs and SACs, areas of archaeological potential and scenic importance, proximity to structures that are listed for protection, national monuments, etc. (see <i>Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage; Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment and Chapter 13: Green Infrastructure</i>);</li> <li>k) The cumulative Impact of proposal development on protected bird and mammal species;</li> <li>l) Decommissioning of obsolete infrastructure and after-use.</li> <li>m) The length and duration of renewable energy projects planning permissions and the life of the project shall be considered on a case-by-case basis and subject to agreement of the Planning Authority.</li> </ul>
<p>DMS16.182</p>	<p>Ensure that proposals for the development of wind farms are not located within areas identified as being within Flood zones A or B as per the <i>Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities</i> (or any updated guidelines).</p> <p>Ensure that proposals for the development of solar farms located within areas identified as being within Flood zones A or B are subject to a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment as per the <i>Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities</i> (or any updated guidelines).</p>

**16.4.18 Telecommunications and Broadband**

High quality communications and information technology networks are critical for the continued implementation of the Economic Strategy. Refer to *Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy and Communications* for relevant policies.

<b>Development Management Standards – Telecommunications</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.183	Require compliance with the requirements of the “ <i>Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> ” July 1996, except where they conflict with <i>Circular Letter PL 07/12</i> which shall take precedence, and any subsequent revisions or expanded guidelines in this area.
DMS16.184	All proposed applications to address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To encourage the location of telecommunications structures at appropriate locations within the County, subject to environmental considerations, providing open access networks in all developments.</li> <li>b) To require the co-location of antennae on existing support structures and where this is not feasible require documentary evidence as to the non-availability of this option in proposals for new structures.</li> <li>c) To avoid the location of structures in sensitive landscapes, in nature conservation areas, in highly sensitive landscapes and where views are to be preserved (see <i>Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage</i>, <i>Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment</i> and <i>Chapter 13: Green Infrastructure</i>).</li> <li>d) Within the life of a planning permission, opportunities to modify and improve existing structures shall be taken into consideration. In the event of obsolescence, the antennae and their support structure shall be demolished / removed, and the site reinstated at the operator’s expense. This will be a condition of planning permission.</li> </ul>
DMS16.185	Discourage the use of wires or other devices affixed to the facade of buildings in town and village centres and to secure the underground and ducting of wires in future developments.

**16.4.19 Applications Proximate to Overhead Power Lines**

<b>Development Management Standards – Overhead Power Lines</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.186	<p>In determining applications proximate to overhead power lines, the Planning Authority will have regard to the clearance distances as recommended by the Electricity Supply Board (ESB):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) For development in proximity to a 10kv or a 38kv overhead line, no specific clearance is required by the ESB.</li> <li>b) For development in proximity to a 110kv overhead line, a clearance distance of 20 metres either side of the centre line or 23 metres around a pylon is recommended.</li> <li>c) For development in proximity to a 220kv overhead line, a clearance distance of 30 metres either side of the centre line or around a pylon is required.</li> </ol>

**16.4.20 Tourism and Recreation**

The Council is keen to promote and encourage sustainable forms of tourism, niche tourism and recreation in the countryside, in appropriate locations; and recognises that certain facilities may be required in order to enhance, grow and develop the tourism product and offer.

Development management issues that should be considered include:

- Adherence to Landscape Protection Development Policies.
- Sympathetic relation to the scale and level of activity in the locality.
- Avoidance of traffic hazard.
- Protection of groundwater sources.
- Protection of residential amenities.
- Cognisance of environmental, archaeological and historical considerations referred to in *Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage* and *Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Environment*.

<b>Development Management Standards – Tourism and Recreation</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.187	<p>Require a detailed statement confirming the following to be submitted for all pre-planning and to be submitted with any planning application which indicates the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for the development and the facility to be provided.</li> <li>• Justification for the proposed site location.</li> <li>• Details on accessibility, including pedestrian, cycle and public transport provisions and linkages to the proposed development.</li> <li>• Provision of adequate, secure, covered cycle facilities.</li> <li>• Adequate and safe set-down and collection areas to facilitate peak traffic movements and adequate car parking for staff.</li> <li>• Adequate and appropriate signage, lighting and boundary treatments.</li> </ul>
DMS16.188	In terms of sustainable forms of niche tourism and recreation, facilities should be located within existing structures, or in buildings of character requiring renovation or in traditional farm houses, where possible.
DMS16.189	Where new buildings are proposed, they should be modest in scale, sensitively located and designed having regard to existing buildings, topography and landscaped and be adequately serviced and suitably managed.

**16.4.21 Built and Cultural Heritage**

**16.4.21.1 Protected Structures**

No works which would affect the character of the structure, or any element of it, which contributes to its special architectural heritage interest may be carried out to a Protected Structure without planning permission.

In assessing proposals for development affecting Protected Structures, the following normally constitute development which is not exempt from the requirement for a formal planning application:

- Works, both to the exterior and interior, which materially affect the character of a protected structure or any element of the structure which contributes to its special interest and which might be regarded normally as minor alterations to buildings may not necessarily be regarded as such in the case of Protected Structures.
- Window replacement and fenestration changes.
- Wholesale plastering/pointing/painting or painting of previously unpainted elements.
- Modifications of brickwork and stonework.
- The removal/alteration of architectural detailing including joinery and decorative plasterwork. Inappropriate interior works including the removal of walls, the creation of openings and partitioning of rooms.

- Works to roofs and railings involving the removal of original materials and replacement with inappropriate materials.

<b>Development Management Standards – Protected Structures</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.190	<p>When making a planning application for permission to restore, refurbish, demolish, develop or change of use of Protected Structures and other buildings of significant heritage interest, the Planning Authority requires that the following information should be submitted with each application:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An Architectural Assessment Report as per the <i>Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines</i> 2004;</li> <li>2. A comprehensive schedule of proposed work as per the above guidelines to include the following:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Outline the significance of the building.</li> <li>b) A detailed survey of the building, including a comprehensive photographic survey.</li> <li>c) Detail the proposed works it is intended to carry out.</li> <li>d) Contain a full assessment on the materials and method proposed to carry out these works, their impact on the character of the structure; and, the reversibility of the proposed works.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

**16.4.21.2 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)**

The overall guiding principle is to protect and positively enhance the unique qualities that make a place special because of its particular character. The requirements for planning application documentation for development within Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and for their subsequent assessment is set out in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines* (DOEHLG, 2004).

<b>Development Management Standards – Architectural Conservation Areas</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.191	In the assessment of applications for development within an Architectural Conservation Area, account shall be taken of the <i>Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> (2004) (DAHG).
DMS16.192	<p>Development works within an ACA, that involves a new building, reuse or change of use and extensions will generally be required to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the ACA;</li> <li>b) Respect the scale, massing, proportions, design and materials of existing structures;</li> <li>c) Retain important exterior architectural features that contribute to the character and appearance of the ACA.</li> </ol>
DMS16.193	Demolition works within an ACA will generally not be permitted unless the Council is satisfied that the structure, or building does not

	contribute positively to the character, or appearance of the ACA, or the building /structure is beyond viable renewal.
DMS16.194	<p>The Council will only normally permit development proposals in an ACA where the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The development preserves and enhances the character of the area.</li> <li>b) The development is in sympathy with the built form of the area.</li> <li>c) The form, scale, materials and detailing of the development respects the characteristics of the area.</li> <li>d) Where appropriate, views of importance, including within, into and out of the area are preserved.</li> <li>e) Landscape features of significance, including important strands of trees and hedgerows that contribute to the character of the area are protected.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>

**16.4.21.3 Archaeology**

The importance of the preservation in-situ of all archaeological remains is recognised by the Council. It is also recognised that in exceptional circumstances, preservation by record may be required. In the assessment of any application for development which is sited within the designated Zone of Archaeological Potential and/or on sites on or abutting monuments identified by the Sites and Monuments Record, and any development that may affect archaeological remains due to ground and sub-surface works and disturbance, the following considerations will be taken into account:

<b>Development Management Standards – Archaeology</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.195	In general, development within a 20m radius of a recorded monument will not be permitted; and proposed development within a 75 metres radius discouraged (subject to other policies contained within this Plan).
DMS16.196	In terms of development proposed within designated Zones of Archaeological Potential and in sites on or abutting Monuments identified by the Sites and Monuments Record, the Council will refer such applications to the National Monuments Service of the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG), to ascertain their requirements and consider their response to same.
DMS16.197	A preliminary archaeological investigation by a licensed archaeologist will normally be required where a proposed development would result in significant ground disturbance within a Zone of Archaeological Potential.
DMS16.198	A comprehensive archaeological report from a licensed archaeologist will normally be required to be submitted to the Council and to the National Monuments Service of the DAHG, for their assessment, prior to the commencement of any development on site, or where

	considered appropriate prior to the decision by the Council on a planning application.
DMS16.199	Where a proposed development would result in significant ground disturbance leading to potentially significant archaeological implications in a Zone of Archaeological Potential or in sites on or abutting Monuments identified by the Sites and Monuments Record, it will be a requirement that a licensed archaeologist be retained on site to monitor all site works, and in appropriate circumstances the preservation of all or part of any archaeological material so discovered will be required.
DMS16.200	The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria: where conditions are imposed for the protection or preservation of the archaeological heritage, the costs of implementing these shall be borne by the developer.

**16.4.22 Natural Heritage Protection**

<b>Development Management Standards – Natural Heritage Protection</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.201	Permit development on or adjacent to designated Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature Reserves or those proposed to be designated over the period of the Plan, only where an appropriate level of assessment can clearly demonstrate that it will have no significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site.
DMS16.202	Require all development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) the submission of an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.
DMS16.203	Ensure that proposals for development do not lead to the spread or introduction of invasive species. If developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are or were previously present, the applicant will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species as part of the planning process and to comply with the provisions of the European Communities Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).

**16.4.23 Landscape Character**

<b>Development Management Standards – Landscape Character</b>	
The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:	
DMS16.204	Require landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals to be submitted with planning applications for development which may have significant impact on landscape character areas of medium or high sensitivity.

16.4.24 Flooding

**Development Management Standards – Flooding**

The Council in assessing development proposals will consider the following criteria:

DMS16.205

Flood Zones and Appropriate Land Uses

The table below indicates the types of land uses that are appropriate in each of the Flood Zones identified within the Plan area, in accordance with the 2009 Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Departmental Circular PL2/2014 (or any updated/superseding legislation or policy guidance).

Where developments/land uses are proposed that are considered inappropriate to the Flood Zone that may be identified in the future at project level following adoption of the Plan, then a Development Management Justification Test and site-specific Flood Risk Assessment will be required in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 (and as updated).

Flood Zones	Overall probability	Planning implications for land uses		
		Highly Vulnerable Development	Less Vulnerable Development	Water Compatible Development
Flood Zone A	Highest	Inappropriate – if proposed then Justification Test and detailed Flood Risk Assessment is required	Inappropriate – if proposed then Justification Test and detailed Flood Risk Assessment is required	Appropriate – screen for flood risk
Flood zone B	Moderate	Inappropriate – if proposed then Justification Test and detailed Flood Risk Assessment is required	Inappropriate due to climate change – if proposed then Justification Test and detailed Flood Risk Assessment is required	Appropriate – screen for flood risk
Flood Zone C	Lowest	Appropriate - detailed Flood Risk Assessment may be required	Appropriate - detailed Flood Risk Assessment may be required	Appropriate – screen for flood risk

	<p>Notes (refer to Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 and ‘SFRA for the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027’ for additional detail):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly Vulnerable Development – Houses, schools, hospitals, residential institutions, emergency services, essential infrastructure, etc.</li> <li>• Less Vulnerable Development – Economic uses (retail, leisure, warehousing, commercial, industrial, non-residential institutions, etc.), land and buildings used for agriculture or forestry, local transport infrastructure, etc.</li> </ul> <p>Water Compatible Development – Docks, marinas, wharves, water-based recreation and tourism (excluding sleeping accommodation), amenity open space, sports and recreation, flood control infrastructure, etc.</p>
<p>DMS16.206</p>	<p><u>Structural and Non-Structural Risk Management Measures in Flood Vulnerable Zones</u></p> <p>Applications for development in flood vulnerable zones shall provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures to include, but not be limited to specifications of the following:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>a) Floor Levels</i></p> <p>In areas of limited flood depth, the specification of the threshold and floor levels of new structures shall be raised above expected flood levels to reduce the risk of flood losses to a building, by raising floor heights within the building structure using a suspended floor arrangement or raised internal concrete platforms.</p> <p>When designing an extension or modification to an existing building, an appropriate flood risk reduction measure shall be specified to ensure the threshold levels into the building are above the design flood level. However, care must also be taken to ensure access for all is provided in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations.</p> <p>Where threshold levels cannot be raised to the street for streetscape, conservation or other reasons, the design shall specify a mixing of uses vertically in buildings - with less vulnerable uses located at ground floor level, along with other measures for dealing with residual flood risk.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>b) Internal Layout</i></p> <p>Internal layout of internal space shall be designed and specified to reduce the impact of flooding [for example, living accommodation, essential services, storage space for provisions and equipment shall be designed to be located above the predicted flood level]. In addition, designs and specifications shall ensure that, wherever reasonably practicable, the siting of living accommodation (particularly sleeping areas) shall be above flood level.</p> <p>With the exception of single storey extensions to existing properties, new single storey accommodation shall not be deemed appropriate</p>

where predicted flood levels are above design floor levels. In all cases, specifications for safe access, refuge and evacuation shall be incorporated into the design of the development.

*c) Flood-Resistant Construction*

Developments in flood vulnerable zones shall specify the use of flood-resistant construction aimed at preventing water from entering buildings - to mitigate the damage floodwater caused to buildings.

Developments shall specify the use of flood resistant construction prepared using specialist technical input to the design and specification of the external building envelope – with measures to resist hydrostatic pressure (commonly referred to as “tanking”) specified for the outside of the building fabric.

The design of the flood resistant construction shall specify the need to protect the main entry points for floodwater into buildings - including doors and windows (including gaps in sealant around frames), vents, air-bricks and gaps around conduits or pipes passing through external building fabric.

The design of the flood resistant construction shall also specify the need to protect against flood water entry through sanitary appliances as a result of backflow through the drainage system.

*d) Flood-Resilient Construction*

Developments in flood vulnerable zones that are at risk of occasional inundation shall incorporate design and specification for flood resilient construction which accepts that floodwater will enter buildings and provides for this in the design and specification of internal building services and finishes. These measures limit damage caused by floodwater and allow relatively quick recovery.

This can be achieved by specifying wall and floor materials such as ceramic tiling that can be cleaned and dried relatively easily, provided that the substrate materials (e.g. blockwork) are also resilient. Electrics, appliances and kitchen fittings shall also be specified to be raised above floor level, and one-way valves shall be incorporated into drainage pipes.

*e) Emergency Response Planning*

In addition to considering physical design issues for developments in flood vulnerable zones, the developer shall specify that the planning of new development also takes account of the need for effective emergency response planning for flood events in areas of new development.

Applications for developments in flood vulnerable zones shall provide details that the following measures will be put in place and maintained:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of flood warnings, evacuation plans and ensuring public awareness of flood risks to people where they live and work;</li> <li>• Coordination of responses and discussion with relevant emergency services i.e. Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue, Civil Defence and An Garda Síochána through the SFRA; and</li> <li>• Awareness of risks and evacuation procedures and the need for family flood plans.</li> </ul> <p><i>f) Access and Egress During Flood Events</i> Applications for developments in flood vulnerable zones shall include details of arrangements for access and egress during flood events. Such details shall specify that: • flood escape routes have been kept to publicly accessible land; • such routes will have signage and other flood awareness measures in place, to inform local communities what to do in case of flooding; and this information will be provided in a welcome pack to new occupants.</p> <p><i>g) Further Information</i> Further and more detailed guidance and advice can be found at <a href="http://www.flooding.ie">http://www.flooding.ie</a> and in the Building Regulations.</p>
DMS16.207	<p><u>Surface Water Drainage and Flooding</u> Developments will be subject to the following requirements with regard to surface water drainage and flood prevention and management:</p> <p><i>a) Surface Water Drainage</i> Drainage from paved surfaces may, after suitable treatment, be discharged to available watercourses or to adequate soakage areas on site. In any event, surface water shall not be permitted to flow on to the public road from any proposed development. Accesses and road frontage should be designed in such a manner as to deal with surface water and ensure that it does not impact on the public road. For rural houses, existing roadside drainage shall be maintained by the incorporation of a suitably sized drainage pipe. Each application shall be accompanied by design calculations or appropriate evidence to support the size of the pipe selected.</p> <p><i>b) Surface Water Run-Off</i> Land uses shall not give rise to increases in the run-off characteristics above those that currently exist.</p> <p><i>c) Sustainable Drainage Systems</i> The use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) shall be encouraged in new developments to minimise the risk of flooding and contamination and to protect environmental and water resources. The Council will seek to ensure applicants incorporate sustainable drainage systems for significant developments in both urban and rural areas and will encourage them for other developments. SuDS is an approach that seeks to manage the water as close as possible to its origin by various engineering solutions that replicate natural drainage</p>

processes, before it enters the watercourse. The incorporation of SuDS techniques allows surface water to be either infiltrated or conveyed more slowly to water courses using porous surface treatments, ponds, swales, filter drains or other installations. SuDS should be designed to be cost-effective and require minimum maintenance.

d) *Flooding*

Development should not itself be subject to an inappropriate amount of flooding or exacerbate the risk of flooding at other locations. Development must so far as is reasonably practicable incorporate the maximum provision to reduce the rate and quantity of run-off. In particular, where appropriate:

- Hard surface areas (car parks. etc.) should be constructed in permeable or semi-permeable materials;
- On site storm water ponds to store and/or attenuate additional run-off from the development, should be provided.

e) *Floodplains*

Appropriately designed development that is not sensitive to the effects of flooding may be permissible in floodplains, provided it does not reduce the floodplain area or otherwise restrict flow across floodplains. Examples of such development might include park areas, sports pitches, certain types of industry warehousing, etc. designed to be flood resistant and/or sensitive. Such developments should only be permitted provided it incorporates adequate measures to cope with the over-existent flood risk, for example, adequate drainage systems, safety measures, emergency response facilities and/or warning and response systems, and where it is considered that flooding would not result in significant hardship/ financial loss or cost.

f) *Watercourses*

For developments adjacent to all watercourses of a significant conveyance capacity or where it is necessary to maintain the ecological or environmental quality of the watercourse, any structures (including hard landscaping) must be set back from the edge of the watercourse to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance/vegetation. Development consisting of the construction of embankments, wide bridge piers or similar structures will not normally be permitted in or across floodplains or river channels, as these structures restrict/obstruct flow and increase the risk of flooding to property and land upstream. It is considered necessary in exceptional cases to permit such structures, however they should be designed to minimise and/or compensate for any potential negative effects.