

# Longford Town Local Area Plan 2023 - 2029:

## Pre- Draft Issues Paper



Planning  
Department  
Longford  
County Council  
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## Introduction

Longford County Council is preparing a new 6-year Local Area Plan (LAP) for Longford Town 2023-2029. The LAP is a statutory document prepared by the Planning Authority, in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The LAP will set out a land use strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town to comply with the provisions of the Longford County Development Plan 2021—2027.

The LAP will consist of a written statement and maps which set out a land use strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, incorporating a framework for the development of transportation, housing, retail, heritage, employment, social and community facilities. The LAP must be consistent with the objectives of the higher order plans, including the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (EMRA RSES) and the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 (and its population growth target for Longford Town).



The new LAP will consider the current context of Longford, in terms of population trends, socio economic factors, land use changes, the need for distribution of facilities and amenities, availability of services and infrastructure, along with heritage and environmental considerations. As such the Local Area Plan can have an important bearing on all aspects of life. Therefore public consultation is an important aspect of any plan making process in order to address issues and concerns which relate to the LAP area, and to ensure that the final LAP acknowledges community aspirations and concerns. It is an important opportunity to get involved in the plan preparation process and to help identify ‘bigger picture’ issues that need to be addressed in the LAP on how Longford should develop into the future.

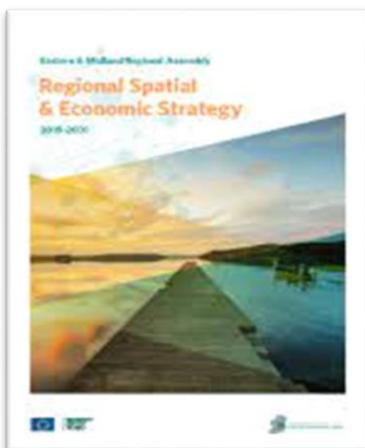
This Issues Paper aims to encourage interest and debate and invites submissions or observations and relates to the non-statutory ‘Pre-Draft’ stage of the Local Area Plan preparation process. The content of submissions or observations are not limited to the issues outlined in this paper.



The following are some areas of potential key issues:

## Potential Key Issues for Consideration of New Longford Town LAP

### 1. Compliance with Longford Key Town Regional Policy Objectives (RPO's)



In terms of higher-level regional policy, Longford Town is identified as a large economically active town located within the Gateway Region. It is recognised that the town provides important connections with adjoining regions and has the capacity and future growth potential to accommodate above average growth in tandem with the requisite investment in employment creation, services, amenities and sustainable transport. Key regional priorities for Longford Town are to promote compact growth, the regeneration of the town centre and to expand Longford's role as a hub for enterprise, employment and tourism, as listed below:

- *RPO 4.59: To 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.*
- *RPO 4.60: 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, recreational opportunities and the town's location on the Rebel Longford Trail.*

- *RPO 4.61: Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, up skilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.*
- *RPO 4.62: Support the plan-led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in the town for residential, employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities and 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 building and strategic sites.*
- *RPO 4.63: Support Longford Town as a strategic portal to the northwest and south in recognition of its location at the junction of the N55; M4/N4 Dublin/Sligo and N5; due to its proximity to the regional growth centre of Athlone; and support its role as a strategic employment centre.*

- *How can Longford Town deliver on the aforementioned regional policy objectives?*

## 2. Residential Development

The population of Longford Town was 10,008 persons in the 2016 Census. As per the Longford County Development Plan the population growth target for the town is to grown by 2,502 persons, to a population of 12,510 people by 2027. This additional growth requires 1,304 residential units. In accordance with higher level plans — the NPF, RSES and the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, these units will be provided within the existing settlement, with emphasis is placed on brownfield sites, infill sites and re-use of existing housing stock/vacant buildings (minimum 30%).

Continued population growth will create pressure on the housing market and on certain services and infrastructure including childcare, schools, transport, water, wastewater, recreation and amenity. New residential areas should be connected, attractive and well designed with a range of adaptable dwelling types and densities, creating a sense of place and a high-quality public realm.

The delivery of housing in Longford Town is essential to support the overall role and success of the settlement. A key focus for the settlement is to encourage the provision of high-quality housing development at the right locations over the coming years in order to ensure wider societal benefits and the sustainability and enhancement of facilities such as schools, shops, recreation facilities and open spaces. Central to this is the requirement to provide high quality housing products that meet a variety of housing needs, including those required by employees of existing and potential industry and enterprises within the town.

- *How can the quality of existing residential areas be improved?*
- *What type and scale should new housing be?*
- *How can the impact of population growth be managed?*

### 3. Economic Development

Longford acts as a key employment centre with strong retail, administrative and service functions that serve a wide catchment. The town has a young, diverse and growing population of 10,000 people and a growth rate of 13% in the ten years to 2016.



Longford Town is home to a mix of retail, commercial, services, agri-business, food processing, medical and biopharma industries. This reflects the strong commercial, enterprise and employment function of the town with an agricultural hinterland, accessibility to the national road network and the availability of an available workforce. The town has a particularly high ratio of jobs to resident workers with significant in-commuting and employment in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, pharma and agrifood.



Local economic development will be required to address higher levels of unemployment and relative deprivation in the town. The planned development of a creative and innovation hub and co-working space on the Main Street offers opportunity to drive enterprise development and entrepreneurship in the town. There is also potential to build on significant investment in the nearby flagship Centre Parcs holiday village and the investment by the local authority in tourism and recreational infrastructure.



Regional policy identifies the town acts as a portal to the Northern and Western Region and provides a supporting role to the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone. As such economic development should strive to capitalise on this.

Furthermore 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.

- *What supports/ services are required in the town to sustain and grow employment and employment potential?*
- *What type of retail/ commercial services are required to serve the population?*
- *Is there an absence of any type of activity on the retail/ commercial zoned sites?*
- *How can Longford Town capitalise on business opportunities?*
- *How can Longford Town be further encouraged to develop in a supporting role to the regional growth centre of Athlone?*
- *How can Longford be further developed as a portal to the North West?*

#### 4. Enabling infrastructure and Utilities



Longford is strategically located on the N4/M4 from Dublin to Sligo, with national roads including the N55 to Athlone, N5 to Castlebar and N63 to Roscommon. The town is also located on the Dublin to Sligo rail line.

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 Sligo rail line and improve connections to Athlone.

This in accordance with Regional policy that the town acts as a portal to the Northern and Western Region and provides a supporting role to the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone. Opportunities to further develop this in terms of required infrastructure should be investigated.

Potential exists to stimulate economic development through the provision of broadband and natural gas within the town.

- *What are the key transport and infrastructure related issues facing Longford Town?*
- *What infrastructure is required?*
- *In terms of infrastructure how can Longford be further developed as a portal to the North West?*
- *In terms of infrastructure how can Longford be further developed in its supporting role to the regional growth centre of Athlone?*

## 5. Regeneration

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 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. There are opportunities for improved links between both ends of the town and enhanced rejuvenation of, and connections between, the Royal Canal Greenway and the former location of the canal harbour around the Market Square.



- *What are the key regeneration related issues facing Longford Town?*
- *What regeneration initiatives are required?*

## 6. Community, Services, Amenity and Recreation

The town has a young, diverse and growing population of 10,000 people and a growth rate of 13% in the ten years to 2016. The development of the town needs to be planned and managed to ensure an appropriate mix of facilities to sustain a vibrant town. The new plan will need to examine and identify any shortfalls in the provision of services.



Community infrastructure plays a vital role in contributing to the quality of life for all. The physical environment should develop in such a way that it facilitates and does not obstruct the healthy functioning of community and cultural life. Services and amenities including crèches, schools, amenities, recreation and other community facilities should be provided in tandem with residential development.

Social inclusion will be key to supporting greater participation in local community and economic development and to addressing higher levels of unemployment and relative deprivation in the town.



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 Dublin-Westport Greenway and Mid Shannon Wilderness Park and key assets within the town such as St Mel's Cathedral, the River Camlin, the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall) a theatre and walking routes such as the Rebel Trail and Literary Trail.

- *Are there sufficient sports, amenity and recreation facilities?*
- *What community infrastructure and sports facilities are lacking and where should these be located?*
- *What natural features/ routes can be developed as interconnecting walking routes and cycleways?*

## 7. Built and Natural Heritage

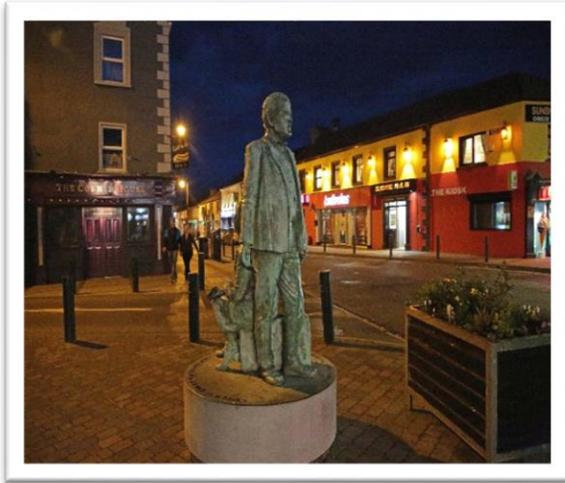


Longford Town has many fine buildings/structures, National Monuments and the River Camlin contributing to the heritage and distinctiveness of the town, in terms of placemaking and the identity of the town.

There are 155 Protected Structures in the town and many of these are also listed as National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.



There are numerous sites listed on the Record of Monuments and Places for their archaeological significance.



Longford Town's heritage is an important consideration for new developments in order to conserve the area's character and to create a 'sense of place'.

Conservation and enhancement of the area's heritage assets including green/blue infrastructure and biodiversity will contribute to the attractiveness of Longford Town as a desirable place to live, shop and work and for communities to take pride in.

- *What features of the area's natural and built heritage should be conserved and enhanced?*
- *How can key features of the area's heritage be integrated into new developments?*
- *What objectives are required to protect and enhance our natural and built heritage?*

## 8. Active Travel

Options for travel, transport and movement are critical to achieving national climate targets, healthier lifestyles, and for progressive economic development. In line with national transport policy the proposed Plan is required to encourage modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.

The potential for growth in Longford town will lead to additional demands on roads, water supply and sewerage treatment, energy supplies and telecommunication networks. The increased demand for services must be considered in the content of reducing carbon emissions and promoting a more sustainable way of living, travelling and working.

Delivering on Longford's walking and cycling strategy will improve sustainable travel and provide links to national and cross regional walking and cycling trails.

- *What are the key active travel related issues facing Longford Town?*
- *What active travel measures are required?*

## 9. Climate Change - Adaptation and Mitigation



The effects of climate change pose a serious threat to quality of life, communities, businesses, the environment and biodiversity. Longford County Council has a Climate Change Adaption Strategy addressing adaption (to minimise the effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events, greenhouse gas emissions) and mitigation (to seek ways to prevent climate change such as innovative green construction methods and materials).

- *What objectives are needed to ensure that the Longford Town Local Area Plan considers climate change?*
- *How can energy conservation and alternative sources of renewable energy be encouraged?*

## 10. Surface Water Drainage and Flooding



Flood risk is a key consideration in preparing a Local Area Plan. The National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) mapping, published by the Office of Public Works, identifies Flood Zones in Longford Town. The Longford Flood Relief Scheme will address flood considerations and support appropriate use of riverside locations.

The Council seeks to avoid flood risk, substitute less vulnerable uses, when avoidance is not possible, and mitigate/manage the risk where avoidance and substitution are not possible.

- *What areas have experienced flooding?*
- *What issues have caused flooding?*

## Submissions

Public participation is essential to help deliver an effective Local Area Plan. We are interested in hearing from everybody, not just those directly affected by the LAP, to identify 'bigger picture' issues that need to be addressed in the LAP on how Longford should develop into the future. Whether you are a younger or an older person, an individual or a community/sports group, a business, a resident, an

entrepreneur or a voluntary organisation, your opinion matters.

Your submissions on the Issues Paper will assist Longford County Council in identifying the local issues that will inform the preparation of the proposed draft Longford Town LAP 2023-2029, the first stage in the plan making process. If you are interested in making a submission at the pre-draft stage, you can make an observation or submission via the following options:

- Email: [lap@longfordcoco.ie](mailto:lap@longfordcoco.ie) (please include 'Longford Local Area Plan' in subject box).
- Writing to: 'Longford Local Area Plan', Administrative Officer, Forward Planning, Planning Department, Longford County Council, Áras an Chontae, Great Water Street, Longford, N39 NH56.

Observations or submissions can be made **from 7/10/22 until 4.00pm on 18/11/2022.**

Submissions and observations must include the full name and address of the person(s) making the submission and where relevant, the body or organisation represented.

Children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are entitled to make submissions or observations.

All submissions received during this period will be considered by the Council in the drafting of the draft Longford Local Area Plan.

Please do not include personal, confidential or other sensitive information in submissions.

**Please note that by giving your contact details you are agreeing to the Council GDPR policy.**

### **What happens next?**

Following on from Pre-Draft public consultation, Longford County Council will commence the preparation of the Draft LAP informed by the submissions received as part of the pre- draft consultation/stakeholder engagement. When the Draft LAP has been prepared, the statutory process will begin and the Draft Plan will go on public display for a period of 6 weeks, during which time you may make submissions and attend a public consultation/drop in event to view and discuss the Draft Plan.

The submissions received will be considered by the Elected Members of Longford County Council, who can decide to adopt, amend or revoke the Draft LAP. Any proposed amendments or material alterations to the Draft Plan requires public consultation for a period of 4 weeks. All submissions received will be considered by the Elected Members, who can decide to adopt the Draft LAP, with or without the material alterations. The LAP comes into effect 4 weeks after adoption.

## Key Stages in the Local Area Plan-Making Process

In accordance with planning legislation and Ministerial Guidance, the key steps in making the plan are set out below:

<p><b>1. Pre-Draft Stage <b>** CURRENT STAGE **</b></b></p> <p>Forming the issues to be addressed in the Plan and gathering information from consultation with relevant stakeholders and interested parties.</p>
<p><b>2. Draft Plan Stage</b></p> <p>Following a review of collated information, a Draft Plan will be prepared by the Planning Authority. The Draft will afford the public the first opportunity to gauge the direction that the final Plan is heading.</p>
<p><b>3. Notice of Draft Plan</b></p> <p>The Draft Plan will be available for inspection for at least 6 weeks. We will publish a notice in local papers letting you know that the Draft is available for inspection and inviting your submissions.</p>
<p><b>4. Chief Executive's Report</b></p> <p>A Chief Executive's Report will be prepared based on the submissions received and containing the opinion of the Chief Executive and his recommendations in relation to the Plan.</p>
<p><b>5. Consideration by Elected Members</b></p> <p>The Elected Members will consider the Chief Executive's Report and then make, amend or revoke the Plan as appropriate in accordance with the recommendations of the Chief Executive.</p>
<p><b>6. Material Alterations</b></p> <p>In the event of material alterations or amendments, we will publish notice of this and invite further submissions. A similar process to that outlined at stages 4 and 5 is then repeated.</p>
<p><b>7. Final Plan</b></p> <p>Following consultation on Material Alterations, a further Chief Executive's Report will be prepared, to be considered by the Elected Members. The Elected Members will consider the report and then adopt then Plan.</p>