

Longford Local Area Plan
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RE: Draft Longford Town Local Area Plan

Dear Sir/Madam,

The National Transport Authority ('the NTA') welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Longford Local Area Plan* and, based on the *National Sustainable Mobility Policy* and *National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland*, submits the following observations and recommendations for consideration.

1. Strategic Overview

It is the view of the NTA that the Draft LAP and associated Local Transport Plan ('LTP'), subject to the recommendations below, could provide a coherent basis for the sustainable development of Longford based on the facilitation and promotion of public transport, walking and cycling, and on close integration of land use planning and transport planning. In particular, the level of detail included from the LTP and the manner of commitment to the LTPs findings is noted and welcome.

2. Specific Transport Objectives

The NTA supports the overall thrust of the Sustainable Transport Chapter and the incorporation of the LTP schemes into the LAP as specific schemes to be pursued during the lifetime of the LAP. There are a number of matters which would benefit from further clarification, in particular in relation to the specific transport objectives set out below.

NTA Recommendations

- ST 16 – It is recommended that this objective is amended to ensure that any transport hub could only be developed in central Longford in collaboration with the NTA, and would incorporate cycle facilities in addition to public transport;
- ST 17 – The NTA recommends the addition of text underlined:
 - o “Seek the development of effective cycling infrastructure in accordance with the Cycle Design Manual along the key urban arterial routes to and from Longford Town”;
- ST 20 – The NTA recommends re-wording of this objective as follows:
 - o “Support the redesignation of on-street parking spaces in central Longford to Electric Vehicles”;

- ST 22 – The NTA would not support the provision of additional local road capacity as an alternative to the N4/N5 bypass. The main function of the National Road network is to provide for strategic traffic. Local traffic should be directed onto local roads and new roads within the plan area should be designed in such a manner as to provide access to new development areas rather than as additional strategic bypass routes (see section 3 of this submission). As such, the second part of this objective should be deleted;
- ST 24 – this objective would benefit from clarifying that it refers only to the existing N4 up to the time that the N4 Mullingar to Longford scheme is in place;
- ST 25 – this objective could be strengthened by including reference to the need for a Mobility Management Plan to accompany such planning applications; and
- ST 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 – Please see section 3 below.

3. Abbeycartron Access Strategy

The *National Sustainable Mobility Policy*, published by the Department of Transport, states that safe and green mobility will be supported by:

“Rebalancing transport movement in metropolitan areas and other urban centres away from the private car and towards active travel and public transport.”

The *National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland*, published by the Department of Transport sets out a number of investment hierarchies, including the Modal Hierarchy, which states the following:

“Sustainable modes, starting with active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) and then public transport, will be encouraged over less sustainable modes such as the private car.”

The NTA therefore welcomes the inclusion of the Alternative Sustainable Proposal Option for the development of the transport network to serve Abbeycartron. This option provides the opportunity to develop Abbeycartron in a manner which facilitates access to all development areas by car, but which would limit the potential for through movement, and is the preferred option for the NTA in terms of its consistency with national policies and priorities above.

For this reason, the NTA is of the view that, in finalising the Local Area Plan, clear direction should be given by the Council as to the approach that will be taken to development at this location and that the ambiguity of presenting two options is removed. In doing so, consistency between the Abbeycartron Access Strategy and the Walking, Cycling and Permeability Schemes could also be achieved, bringing greater clarity to the overall transport requirements for the town.

NTA Recommendation

The NTA recommends that Objectives ST 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 are revisited in their entirety and objectives are adopted which reflect the Alternative Sustainable Proposal Option only, emphasising that the development of Abbeycartron will be undertaken in a manner which promotes and facilitates sustainable transport. Furthermore, such objectives should state that the detailed planning and development of these lands will be undertaken in collaboration with the NTA and Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

4. Phasing and Sustainable Transport Accessibility

The NTA notes the intention to develop the peripheral industrial/commercial and warehousing zonings to the east of the N4 in Phase 1. Given their location adjacent to a national road junction, it is important that these sites develop in a manner which promotes and facilitates access by sustainable transport modes, including active travel for potential employees from Longford Town itself, and in a manner which minimises the use of the private car.

NTA Recommendation

The NTA recommends that the description of the Land Use Zoning for Industrial / Commercial and Warehousing in Appendix 1 is updated to include a requirement that proposals for development will promote and facilitate sustainable transport for trips to work via such measures as car parking provision and management, provision for cyclists, shuttle bus services and general workplace travel plan activities.

The NTA also recommends that an Economic Development Objective is included which states that the development of land zoned for employment-generating uses will be undertaken in a manner which promotes and facilitates sustainable transport, and which manages car use in order to protect the strategic function and carrying capacity of the national road network.

Furthermore, it is recommended that Cycle Route Schemes C-13 and/or C-22 are extended to include the N4 roundabout and indicative access junctions into these land parcels.

5. Overlapping Infrastructure Networks

There appears to have been a drafting error in the Local Area Plan whereby the wrong figure was imported from the Local Transport Plan. This relates to Figure 5.6 of the Local Transport Plan, titled "Overlap and potential conflicts between networks".

6. Concluding Remarks

With the above recommendations taken into account, the NTA would be satisfied that Longford could develop in a manner which is consistent with the principles of land use and transport integration. The NTA notes a number of references to public transport in the Local Area Plan and is committed to work with the Council in developing services as per our Connecting Ireland programme and Local Link, including enhancements to supporting facilities in Longford. In relation to Active Travel, subject to the above recommendations, the comprehensive incorporation of the schemes from the Longford Local Transport Plan into the Local Area Plan provides a clear path forward for investment in walking and cycling in the settlement.

I trust that the views of the NTA will be taken into consideration in the finalisation of the Longford Local Area Plan, and we would be available to discuss issues arising from the comments made.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Mac Aree

Head of Strategic Planning