



Forward Planning,  
Planning Department,  
Longford County Council,  
Áras an Chontae,  
Great Water Street,  
Longford

17<sup>th</sup> October 2024

**Re: Draft Longford Town LAP 2025 – 2031**

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to acknowledge receipt of notification of the above draft LAP. The Department of Education has examined the contents therein and would like to make the following submission.

In the context of future population trends and their potential impact on school place requirements, the department notes that this draft LAP refers to the population growth identified for Longford Town in the recent draft Longford CDP 2021-2027. The department notes that the population scenario envisaged for Co Longford is the high NPF target of 47,000 people by 2031. The Longford CDP envisaged a population increase of 2,502 people for Longford Town in the period from 2016 to 2027. The department considered this data and made its submissions to the draft County Development Plans regarding Longford Town on the basis of potential population growth within the town and its environs between 2022 and 2031.

In terms of future population growth in Longford Town, the department notes in section 5.1.2 Scale and Population that there is still an allowance from the date of census 2022 figures to 2027 to cater for a further population growth of 1,558 persons over the lifetime of the Longford CDP plan. In the context of the 2031 NPF population target for Longford, the department is also mindful of further potential population growth in Longford Town beyond 2027. The department also notes in section 5.1.2 Scale and Population the CDP reference to the potential development of 1,304 residential units within the town and its environs. This section states that only a small proportion of land allocated for these units has received permission for residential development. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the vast majority of these potential 1,304 residential units remain undeveloped. Therefore, allowing for the Census 2022 average of 2.71 persons per household in Longford, a development of 1,304 units could result in an additional cc 3,534 people for Longford Town in the future. If this growth materialises, it could result in an additional requirement for school provision in Longford town. Furthermore, the department has used this particular scenario in making its assessment of future school place requirements within the LAP area.



There are nine schools (five primary schools, three post-primary and one special school) located in Longford Town. The department's preference would be to expand these existing facilities (if possible) should there be a requirement for additional school places as a result of the planned population increases. The department requests the Planning Authority to examine the potential of protecting a land buffer around each of the primary schools to enable them expand further if required to meet the future population growth in Longford Town. In this regard, the department notes and welcomes Childcare and Health Facilities Objective ECH 03 where the Council will support and facilitate improvements to existing primary schools and secondary schools to resolve current capacity issues and facilitate forecasted future growth. It is also noted in Objective ECH 04 that the Council will support the provision of adequate and suitable school accommodation, as needs require, including the development of new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing ones (within the 'built up' areas within Longford).

The projected growth figures based on residential unit development could see a small increase in primary school place demand, which most likely could be dealt through extra capacity in current schools or the expansion thereof. Post-primary school place demand could have a small yet significant increase. It is currently expected that this extra requirement could be accommodated by the planned expansion of St. Mel's College which will create additional future capacity. It is also noted that Section 10.3.2 and the Education Facilities map within (page 117) references an area in Abbeycartron, Longford as being a potential site for future post-primary provision. As there will be a need to review post-primary school requirements in the future, the department considers that it would be prudent to maintain this reservation at this time.

The department notes in section 10.3.2 Education and Training it is stated that the Department of Education's approach includes a general standard that for every 1,000 dwellings in an area, circa 12% of the population will require primary school places and 8.5% will require post-primary school place. This statement is incorrect. The percentage does not apply to dwellings but to projected population growth figures and the department currently uses an average of 10.25% for such figures to determine primary school place needs and an average of 7.5% of the same figures to determine post-primary school place needs. It should be noted that these percentage figures are subject to review.

The department notes Sustainable Transport Objective ST06 that 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. The department supports the development of sustainable travel links between schools and residential areas.

In terms of assessing current and future capacity, the Department of Education has to be mindful of potential unforeseen circumstances such as the Ukrainian crisis, which



have the ability to put undue pressure on school place provision and could necessitate reassessments of school place provision from time to time. The department will engage with the Council where the findings of an assessment require a review of existing or future school site provision within a specific location. The department also anticipates that additional special education needs provision at both primary and post-primary level will be required in the future throughout the country and this may result in schools requiring additional accommodation to meet this growing need. The Department will consult with the Council if and when additional special education needs accommodation is required within specific locations.

In 2020, the department changed its name from “The Department of Education & Skills” to its current name of “The Department of Education”. Therefore, the department respectfully requests that any reference to its former name in the draft LAP be amended to its current name.

Finally, the department welcomes the continued engagement with the Council regarding the development of both new and existing schools, as appropriate, and emphasises the critical importance of the ongoing work of the Council in ensuring sufficient land is zoned for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Mairead Garry', written over a horizontal line.

Mairead Garry  
Statutory Plans,  
Forward Planning Section