

N55

▲ 14

▲ 35

★ 35

★ 7

2,000m

2015 - 2021 →



Contents

1. Introduction and Strategic Context



1. Introduction and Strategic Context	28
1.1 Context and Terms of Reference	32
1.1.1 Introduction	32
1.1.2 Review Process and Statutory Context	34
1.1.3 How to Use this Plan	36
1.1.4 MyPlan.ie	36
1.1.5 Local Government Reform	36
1.2 Planning Context	37
1.2.1 National and Regional Spatial Context	37
1.3 County Profile	41
1.3.1 Geographical Context	41
1.3.2 Historical Settlement Context	42
1.3.3 Population and Demography	42
1.3.4 Education	45
1.3.5 Socio-Economic Context and Employment	48
1.3.6 Retail	49
1.3.7 Development Trends	50

2. Development Plan Strategy



2. Development Plan Strategy (Core Strategy)	56
2.1 Core Strategy	58
2.1.1 Core Strategy Introduction	58
2.1.2 Core Strategy Strategic Aims:	60
2.1.3 Core Strategy Policy Context and Rationale	61
2.1.4 Core Strategy Relationship with other Local Authority Plans and Development Strategies	62
2.1.5 Core Strategy Rationale	65
2.1.6 Settlement Strategy	68
2.1.7 Regional Planning Guidelines Population Targets	80
2.1.8 Core Strategy Table	81
2.1.9 Implementation and Monitoring	85
2.1.10 Future and Longevity of the current Core Strategy	87

3. Housing



3. Housing	94
3.1 Housing Strategy	96
3.1.1 Housing Strategy Introduction	96
3.1.2 Housing Strategy Synopsis and Policy	98
3.2 Settlement Policy and Requirements for Residential Development	102
3.2.1 Designated Settlements	103
3.2.2 Rural Areas	111

4. Economic Development



4. Economic Development	120
4.1 Introduction	122
4.2 Industry, Commercial and Business Development	126
4.2.1 Policies and Objectives	128
4.3 Retail Development	131
4.3.1 Key Objectives of the Retail Strategy	132
4.3.2 Strategic Guidance	132
4.3.3 Longford Town's Position in the National Retail Hierarchy	132
4.3.4 Identifying the County Retail Hierarchy	133
4.3.5 Spatial Distribution of Additional Retail within the County Retail Hierarchy	133
4.3.6 Core Retail Areas	134
4.3.7 The Sequential Approach	135
4.3.8 Consideration of Need	135
4.3.9 Policies and Objectives	137
4.3.10 Framework for the Assessment of Future Retail Developments	141
4.4 Agriculture	145
4.4.1 Policies and Objectives	146
4.5 Tourism	151
4.6 Mining and Aggregates	164
4.7 Rural Enterprise	166
4.8 Home Based Economic Activity	168

5. Infrastructure



5. Infrastructure	174
5.1 Transportation	178
5.1.1 Roads	180
5.1.2 Parking	185
5.1.3 Pedestrians and Cyclists	189
5.1.4 Public Transport	190
5.2 Water Supply and Waste Water Services	193
5.2.1 Water Supply	194
5.2.2 Existing Sewerage Schemes	195
5.2.3 Procedures of the Water Supply and Waste Water Services Department	196
5.2.4 Group Water Schemes	198
5.3 Surface Water, Drainage and Flooding	200
5.3.1 Surface Water & Drainage	200
5.3.2 Flooding	201
5.3.3 Climate Change	204
5.4 Environmental Services	205
5.4.1 Waste Recovery & Disposal	205
5.4.2 Litter and Animal Control	207
5.4.3 Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems	207
5.5 Energy and Communications	208
5.5.1 Electricity	208
5.5.2 Renewable Energy Sources	209
5.5.3 Telecommunications Structures and Broadband	213
5.6 Major Accidents Directive	215

6. Environment, Heritage and Amenities



6. Environment, Heritage and Amenities	222
6.1 Conservation and Preservation of the Environment	226
6.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment	228
6.1.2 Prevention of Pollution	230
6.1.3 Soils	233
6.2 Heritage	234
6.2.1 Archaeological Heritage	236
6.2.2 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	240
6.2.3 Architectural Heritage	248
6.2.4 Historic Gardens, Demesnes and Designed Landscapes	251
6.3 Quality and Character of Urban Areas	252
6.4 Amenities	254
6.4.1 Natural and Recreational Amenities	255
6.4.2 Social and Community	256

Quick Find Guide

Find the following regularly used sections quickly with this Quick Find guide.



Rural Housing Need Policy (CS 12)	76
Core Strategy Table	82
Parking Standards	188
Zonings (maps and meanings) Consult Appendix One in the Appendix Document	
Lands Bounding Longford Town Environs (see Appendix)	10
Granard - Key Service Town (see Appendix)	23
Edgeworthstown - Service Town (see Appendix)	33
Ballymahon and Lanesborough - Local Service Towns (see Appendix)	43
Serviced Settlements	62
Abbeysrule (see Appendix)	63
Ardagh (see Appendix)	71
Aughnaclyffe (see Appendix)	79
Ballinalee (see Appendix)	87
Ballinamuck (see Appendix)	95
Carriglass (see Appendix)	103
Clondra (see Appendix)	110
Drumlish (see Appendix)	118
Keenagh (see Appendix)	126
Legan (see Appendix)	134
Newtownforbes (see Appendix)	142

Rural Service Settlements (see Appendix) (as listed below)	150
Abbeylara (see Appendix)	152
Ballycloughan (see Appendix)	153
Ballywillan (see Appendix)	154
Barry (see Appendix)	155
Bunlahy (see Appendix)	156
Carrickboy (see Appendix)	157
Colehill (see Appendix)	158
Coolarty (see Appendix)	159
Cullyfad (see Appendix)	160
Derraghan (see Appendix)	161
Dring (see Appendix)	162
Drumhaldry (see Appendix)	163
Enybegs (see Appendix)	164
Forgney (see Appendix)	165
Killashee (see Appendix)	166
Kilnatraun (see Appendix)	167
Legga (see Appendix)	168
Lisryan (see Appendix)	169
Melview (see Appendix)	170
Moydow (see Appendix)	171
Moynes (see Appendix)	172
Mullinalaghta (see Appendix)	173
Newtowncashel (see Appendix)	174
Ratharney (see Appendix)	175
Stonepark (see Appendix)	176
Taghshinny (see Appendix)	177



Foreword

2015 – 2021 →

This County Development Plan provides a clear direction and focus for development over the next six years (2015-2021), 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 as we emerge from a period of economic uncertainty.

The policies and objectives of this plan aims 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.



Tim Caffrey
Chief Executive



Mark Casey
Cathaoirleach



2015 – 2021 →

The Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 was adopted by the elected members of Longford County Council on February 11th 2015 and is effective from March 11th 2015.

Ballymahon Electoral Area

- Mr. Mark Casey
- Mr. Mick Cahill
- Mr. Gerard Farrell
- Mr. Colm Murray
- Mr. Pat O’Toole
- Mr. Paul Ross

Longford Electoral Area

- Mr. John Browne
- Mr. Seamus Butler
- Mr. Pdraig Loughrey
- Ms. Peggy Nolan
- Ms. Mae Sexton
- Mr. Gerry Warnock

Granard Electoral Area

- Mr. Paraic Brady
- Mr Micheál Carrigy
- Mr. John Duffy
- Mr. Luie McEntire
- Mr. Martin Mulleady
- Mr. PJ Reilly

Longford County Council would also like to express a special thanks to all of those who made submissions, attended workshops and otherwise participated or assisted in the making of this County Development Plan.

Acknowledgments

2015 – 2021 →

The Longford County Development Plan was prepared under the direction of Mr. Francis Sheridan, Director of Services, by the following staff:

Mr. Dónall Mac An Bheatha
Planning Section.

Mr. Cathaldus Hartin
Planning Section.

Ms. Clare Bannon
Planning Section.

Mr. Seán Savage
GIS Technician.





Summary Strategy and Proposals

2015 – 2021 →

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 following maps 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.

As is demonstrated by the maps, it is clear that Longford, using the Plan as the central guiding framework for future development, is primed for a vibrant and flourishing 2015-2021.

At the beginning of each chapter of the Plan, a summary has been provided that has been written using the National Adult Literacy Agency's (NALA) Plain English Guidelines. The summary does not form part of the legally adopted Plan but is included to make the Plan more accessible to all readers.

LONGFORD

- 1 St. Mel's Cathedral
- 2 Lough Ree
- 3 Royal Canal Cycling & Walking
- 4 Newcastle House & Woods
- 5 Derrycassan Woods
- 6 Rebel Longford
- 7 Literary Longford
- 8 Ardagh Heritage Village
- 9 Lough Ree Visitor Centre
- 10 Peatlands
- 11 Corlea Trackway
- 12 Carrickglass Demesne
- 13 Richmond Harbour (End of Royal Canal)
- 14 The Marquee in Drumlish
- 15 Abbeysruble Airfield
- 16 Castle Forbes
- 17 Lough Gowna



LONGFORD

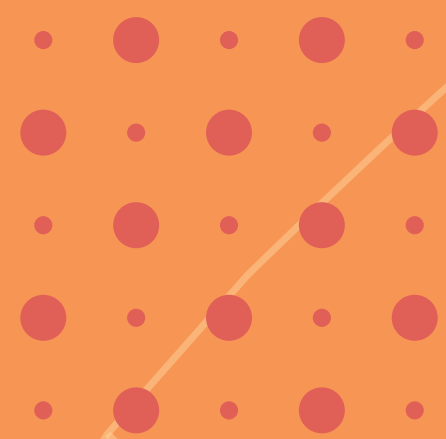
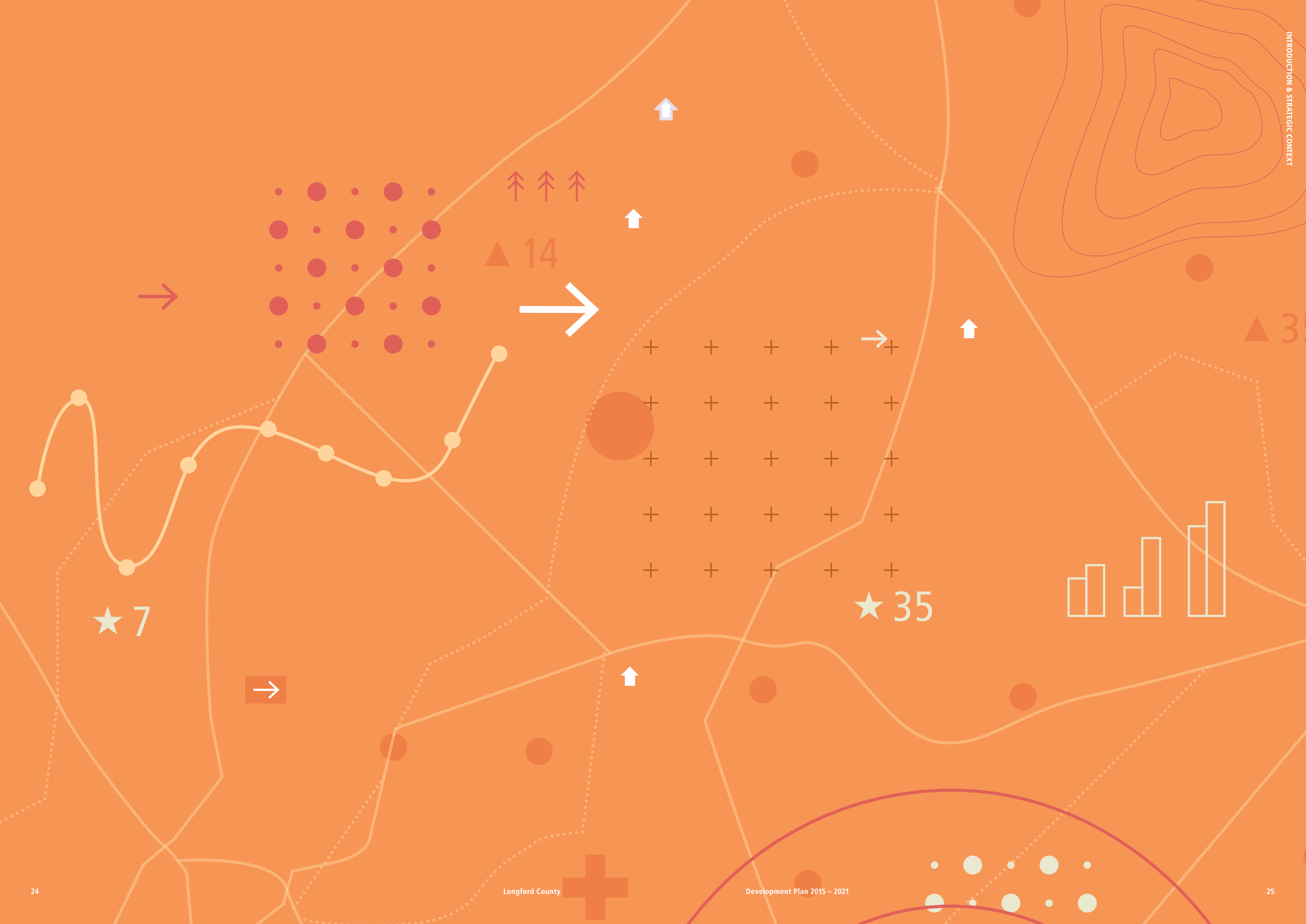
- 1 St. Mel's Cathedral
- 2 Royal Canal Harbour Regeneration
- 3 The Mall (Recreational Complex)
- 4 Business District
- 5 Enterprise Zone
- 6 Town Centre Shopping
- 7 Longford County Council
- 8 Greyhound Track
- 9 Sport & Recreation
- 10 The Backstage Theatre
- 11 Battery Road Architectural Conservation Area
- 12 Cultural Regeneration Quarter





Section A: Strategic Framework





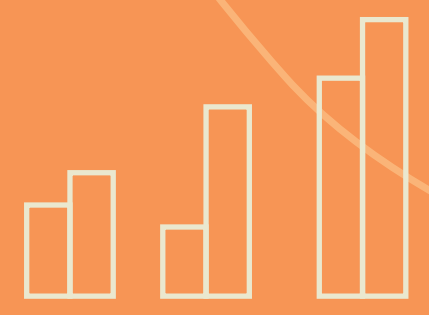
▲ 14



▲ 35



★ 35



★ 7





1. Introduction and Strategic Context



This summary has been written using NALA's Plain English Guidelines.

Summary →

Introducing the Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021

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.

The Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 has three main objectives:

- To provide a development framework – that is, to identify and define the kind of development that will benefit the area.
- To provide details of how development will be promoted and managed.
- To make sure all national and regional policies are put in place at local level.

The 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.

How is the Plan made?

There are a number of steps that must be followed in designing a new plan:

1. The first step in putting a new County Development Plan in place is to review the old one. Each plan has a six-year life, and the review process starts after the plan has been in place for four years. Therefore, the review of the 2009 – 2015 plan began in 2013. This review is the starting point of the new plan.
2. As part of the review process, a number of assessments are carried out – for example, environmental assessments, flood risk assessments, and so on.

3. A consultation process begins where local community groups, voluntary groups, service providers and so on are notified about the review process. The general public are told about the review through newspaper advertising, postal notices and public meetings. A consultation process was carried out and there are a number of public consultation stages in the review process.
4. The views and comments of the general public and interested groups are fed back to the council members, who then have 10 weeks to contribute their ideas and recommendations.
5. The plan is then drafted and put on public display for 10 weeks, allowing the public and interested groups to give their feedback. After this second consultation process, amendments are made and reviewed by the elected members.
6. The final plan is drafted and put into effect.

The Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 was finalised in February 2015 and came into effect in March 2015.

What is MyPlan.ie?

MyPlan.ie is an online public information system which people can use to access details of the plan for their area. It gives useful information about local planning matters such as land use zonings, as well as other useful information such as census figures, heritage sites, housing developments and so on. Zoning identifies land for a particular purpose such as housing, commercial, industrial, and so on.

Summary →

Can the plan change over time?

Yes. Several aspects of local government are changing, so it's possible that the plan could change as a result. For example, the transfer of water and waste services from local authorities to Irish Water. There are other changes in the offing too, such as an increased role for local authorities in the economic development and enterprise support in their region. It's important to note also that the plan must be in line with regional, national and European strategies and laws and could, therefore, change if the higher authorities change.

What's covered in the plan?

Further chapters in this plan will set out the plan in relation to:

- Development plan strategy
- Housing
- Economic development
- Infrastructure
- Environment, Heritage and Amenities

The Plan also contains appendices and annexes that include important information such as land use zonings.



1.1

Context and Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION & STRATEGIC CONTEXT →

1.1.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the background of the Longford County Development Plan review with regard to legal requirements and how the Plan is used.

This Plan was prepared under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, and replaces the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015. The Plan was adopted on 11th February 2015 and came into effect on 11th March 2015.

The main purpose of this Plan is to set out a framework for the sustainable physical development of the County, while considering the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment. It also aims to carefully consider the needs of all groups and individuals within the County and promote equal opportunities.

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

The Longford County Development Plan sets out a clear vision for County Longford which 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 three main objectives.

These are;

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



¹ Sustainable Development can be defined as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

1.1.2 Review Process and Statutory Context

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, each Planning Authority is obliged to prepare a development plan for its functional area every six years, the review of which should commence four years after its adoption. Accordingly the review process of the 2009-2015 County Development Plan began in March 2013 when extensive notification of the review process was given and notice was published and forwarded to the relevant bodies.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the process that applies to Plans and Programmes, introduced by the SEA Directive in 2004, which assesses the significant environmental impacts that are likely to arise as a result of the implementation of the Plan, if unmitigated. The SEA and CDP 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 environmental report which is available alongside the County Development Plan as adopted. The Environmental Report details the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan. An SEA Statement has also been prepared and is available alongside the Plan – this details how environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) has also 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 Natura 2000 sites in view of its conservation objectives.

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. 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. These are 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 Natura 2000 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. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [Natura 2000] site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/ or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to 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.”

These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

The AA concluded that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

The preparation of the Plan, SEA and AA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed both the Plan and the SEA. All recommendations made by the AA were integrated into the Plan.

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 preparation of the Plan, SEA, AA and SFRA took place concurrently and the findings of the AA and SFRA have informed both the Plan and the SEA. Eleven recommendations made by the SFRA have been integrated into the Plan.

CONSULTATION

Prior to the preparation of this Plan, notification of the review process was issued to all statutory prescribed bodies, local community and voluntary groups, associations, societies, statutory undertakers and service providers. The general public were consulted through a campaign of newspaper advertisements, postal notification and public meetings. Six public consultation meetings were held in Longford Town, Granard, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon, Lanesboro and Drumlish. 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 presented to the elected members of the County Council in September 2013. 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 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. After this period the Draft Plan was prepared.

The Draft Plan was placed on public display for a period of ten weeks and submissions and observations were invited from the public, prescribed bodies and all interested parties. Following this phase, a Chief Executive’s Report on all submissions received during the public consultation phase was presented to the Elected Members in July 2014.

The Elected Members considered the report of the Chief Executive and subsequently material amendments of the Draft Plan were placed on display for public consultation in October 2014. 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 in December 2014. The Elected Members considered the report of the Chief Executive and the Plan was subsequently made in February 2015 and came into effect in March 2015.



1.1.3

How to Use this Plan

The format, layout and content of the plan have been guided by the publication 'Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities', 2007. Every effort has been made to co-ordinate and cross-reference sections in order to provide a comprehensive and easy to read guide for developers and the public in general, on particular types of development. A 'Quick Find Guide' has also been included as part of the Plan to facilitate easy access to the most frequently used sections.

1.1.4

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 is an interactive map viewer that provides a one stop shop for information about plans and also provides other information which is relevant to planning decision making, including data with regard to census, heritage sites, patterns of housing developments etc. 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.

Information is available on the website regarding land use plans in County Longford, which has been supplied by Longford County Council. MyPlan.ie is a valuable resource for the public and people working in the area of planning and Longford County Council regularly contributes information to this website to ensure that the data is always up to date.

Longford County Council in conjunction with the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) and the Department of Environment prepared a set of Best Practice Guidelines for the Development of Digital Planning Boundaries and the preparation and management of geographical data within Geographical Information Systems.

Myplan.ie should always be used in conjunction with Longford County Council's statutory development plans which are available on the council website www.longfordcoco.ie.

1.1.5

Local Government Reform

There have been significant changes in the Local Government Sector in recent times. Key to this was the introduction of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and the transfer from the Local Authority to Irish Water of a range of statutory water and waste water functions. Many of the changes have current and future implications for this plan. The particular details as to how these changes will come about are still open at this stage.

These include;

- The dissolving of Longford Town Council and the inclusion of Longford Town in the County Administrative area.
- The provision of municipal districts.
- The provision for the establishment of Local Community Development Committees.
- The planning and oversight of local and community development programmes.
- The provision of an increased role for Local Authorities in economic development and enterprise support.
- 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 NSS, Regional Planning Guidelines and County Development Plans.



INTRODUCTION & STRATEGIC CONTEXT →

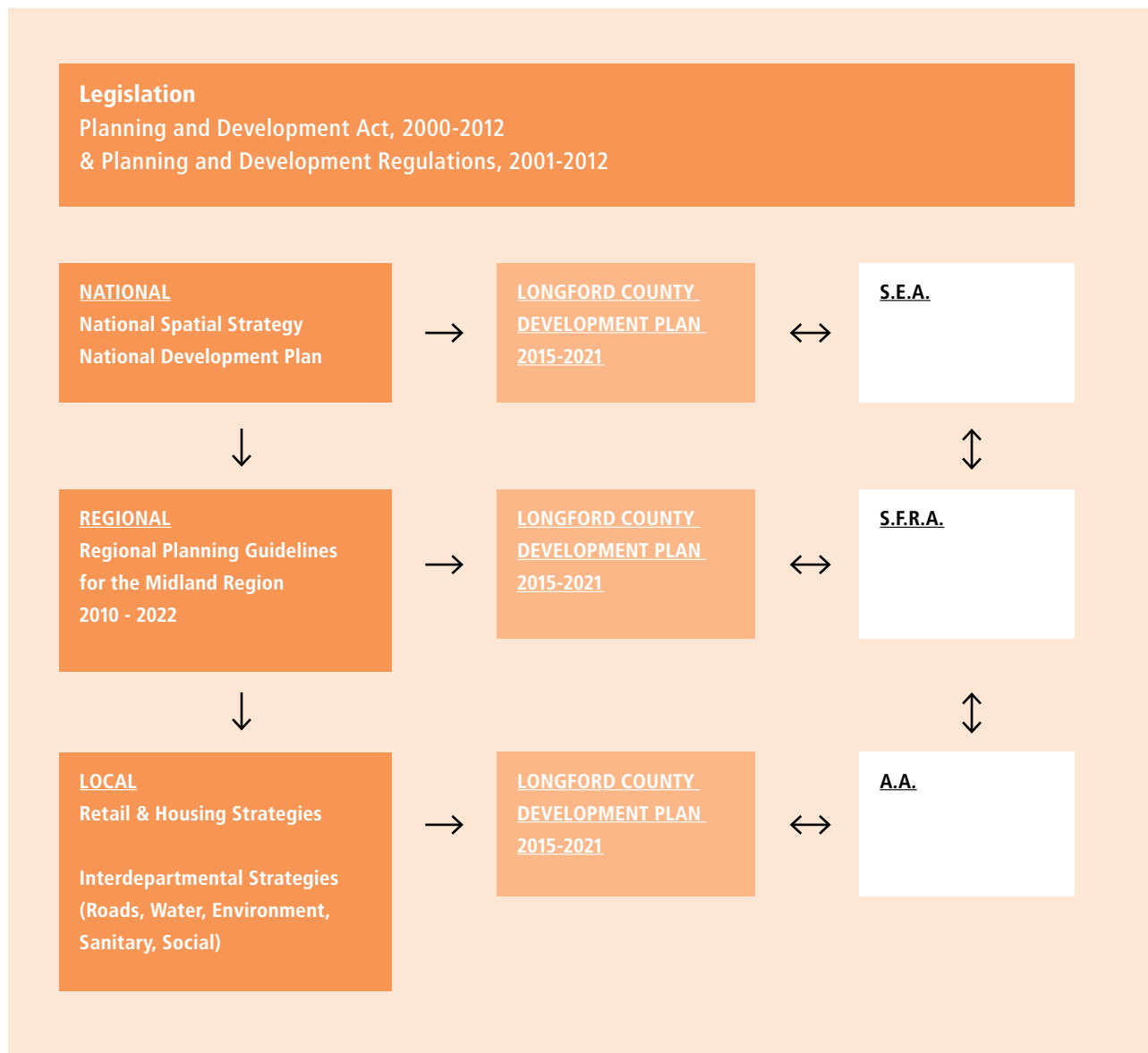
1.2

Planning Context

1.2.1

National and Regional Spatial Context

This plan should be read in the hierarchical context of legislation and plans that exist at International, National and Regional level (consult diagram on next page).



NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (NSS) 2002-2020:

The NSS was introduced in 2002 and sets out the spatial planning framework for the country. The strategy consists of a twenty year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, and physical development and population growth between regions in Ireland, and to assist in the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP). Its focus is on people and places, and on building communities. Through closer matching of where people live and where they work, different parts of Ireland will be able to sustain a better quality of life, a strong competitive economic position, and an environment of the highest quality.

The NSS has established a platform upon which policies can be put in place to ensure that more balanced development is achieved, within a well-planned spatial structure of attractive, competitive and innovative places.

In 2010 the document 'Implementing the National Spatial Strategy: 2010 Update and Outlook- Harnessing Potential, Delivering Competitiveness, Achieving Sustainability' was published by the Department.

This document reaffirmed the then Government's commitment to the NSS but included a statement of new priorities and objectives, taking account of the experience since 2002 and new environmental, budgetary and economic challenges.

Many of the measures proposed now make up current planning legislation and are relevant to this Plan. These include;

- Much closer alignment and integration between strategic planning decisions and settlement policy with the prioritisation of significant capital investment.
- Support for the Government's Smart Economy Policy.
- Better harnessing of the potential of rural areas and creation of new employment, particularly in the sustainable use of natural resources in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, renewable energy and tourism sectors, but also in other areas such as knowledge based or creative sectors which are not location critical.

- The introduction of Core Strategies thus increasing the strategic role and relevance of RPGs.
- Support for the Government's Smarter Travel Policy.

In February 2013, the then Minister for Environment announced that the NSS in its current form was to be scrapped and that a replacement would be prepared. It is clear that the publication of a revised National Spatial Strategy is likely to occur over the lifetime of this Plan. This is likely to have implications for Longford, including any future designations, levels and types of development anticipated/permitted and levels of government funding that will be made available.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP) 2007-2013:

The NDP sets out a Regional Development Strategy which supports the NSS, and is the key financing mechanism for the promotion of balanced regional development, characterised by the principles of sustainable economic growth, greater social inclusion and balanced regional development. It aligns with the objectives of the NSS and prioritises capital investment to deliver more balanced social, economic, and physical development between the regions. One of its general goals is to integrate regional development within the framework of gateway cities and hub towns to achieve economic growth in the regions and provide for major investment in the rural economy. The RPGs set out a framework for the utilisation of funds through the identification of priorities in line with the vision for the region as set out in the NSS.

This strategic approach to regional development intends to deliver an investment programme that is environmentally and economically sustainable.

MIDLAND REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES:

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs) were adopted in July 2010 and document the regional spatial planning context for the region, which includes the Counties of Longford, Laois, Westmeath and Offaly. National policy contained in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), is translated to a regional level in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, which will guide policy making decisions at a local level through the County Development Plan.

For the first time the MRPGs, in accordance with the NSS, introduce population targets for Longford which are also indicated in terms of future housing land requirements for the County. This coupled with the requirements of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, ensures that County Development Plans are now consistent with the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs), whereas County Development Plans were previously only required to have regard to the RPGs. The 'Core Strategy' contained as part of this plan is therefore central to ensuring such compliance with the RPGs.

The MRPGs provide a regional framework for the formulation of the policies and strategy contained in the County Development Plan and define a regional development model that is based on a spatial hierarchy centred on the linked gateway of Athlone, Tullamore, and Mullingar as identified in the NSS and supported by the principal towns of Longford and Portlaoise.

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

NATIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES

Planning Authorities are required to have regard to any guidelines issued by the Minister. Accordingly, this plan has considered the following guidelines;

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities(2009)
- Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)
- Architectural Heritage Protection for Places of Worship - Guidelines for Planning Authorities(2003)
- Architecture Policy Guidelines 2009-2015
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (May 09) - Part 1
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual (May 09) - Part 2
- Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)
- Development Contribution Scheme for Planning Authorities – (Circular PD 5/2007)
- Development Contribution Scheme for Planning Authorities - Circular PD4/2003
- Development Management Guidelines- Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June 2007)
- Development Plans Guidelines - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June 2007)
- Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (January 2012)
- Funfair Guidance
- Implementation of new EPA Code of Practice on WasteWater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses - Circular PSSP1/10
- Implementing Regional Planning Guidelines- Best Practice Guidance (December 2010)
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment



- Provision of Schools and the Planning System – Code of Practice for Planning Authorities, The Department of Education and Science and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2008)
- Quarries and Ancillary Activities- Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)
- Retail Planning Guidelines
- Section 261A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and related provisions, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (January 2012)
- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Sustainable Rural Housing Development Guidelines (2005)
- Sustainable Rural Housing Development Guidelines - Map
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (May 09)
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007)
- Taking in Charge of Housing Estates / Management Companies
- Taking in Charge of Residential Developments Circular Letter PD 1/08
- Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures- Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1996)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Local Authorities (Nov 09)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Technical Appendices (Nov 09)
- Tree Preservation Guidelines
- Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations - Circular PD 7/09
- Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006)



INTRODUCTION & STRATEGIC CONTEXT →

1.3 County Profile

1.3.1 Geographical Context

Longford is a relatively small county of approximately 1091 km², occupying a central position within the Country and bounded by Counties Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Westmeath.

Situated in the basin of the River Shannon and the upper catchment area of the River Erne, lakeland, bogland, pastureland, and wetland typify Longford's generally low-lying landscapes with Cairn Hill being the highest point of the county at 279 m (916 feet).

In general, the northern area of the county is hilly, forming drumlin landscapes. Lough Ree forms much of the county's western boundary with the north east of the county characterised by the River Erne and Lough Gowna. The southern parts of the county are low-lying, with extensive areas of raised bogland, in relatively pristine condition and a valuable environmental habitat for rare flora and fauna and provide a unique setting for walking. In the heart of the lakelands, the County has a wealth of attractions including its wonderful lakes, rivers and canals, making it a perfect destination for fishing and watersports.

Longford has a range of unique towns and villages, impressive archeological sites, renowned angling destinations, and a wealth of literary and musical tradition coupled with a vibrant and diverse population. It has a well developed road and rail infrastructure.

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

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

1.3.2 Historical Settlement Context ²

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

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

The Slighe Assail, a medieval route that traversed the County in an east-west direction (dissecting the County in two halves) had a significant bearing on the subsequent settlement pattern. The route was traditionally the main route from Meath to Connacht, linking east coast ports to England and beyond to the continent.

A number of Anglo-Norman settlements were established along the route of the Slighe Assail with minor routes running from the Slighe Assail at Longford Town, although Longford Town was not yet an established settlement. The minor routes related to the establishment of ecclesiastical facilities and moved in a northerly direction to Granard and Abbeylara, and in a southerly direction towards Ardagh from the main Slighe Assail route. The settlement of Lanesborough was also able to develop in this era given its strategic location on the Shannon.

In the 15th century Longford and Granard developed significantly as market settlements, facilitated by their location on the main route, with Longford at a central crossroads. Indeed, the road network today remains similar. Subsequently the settlement of Longford became relatively well established and thus the County was named after it.

In the years following, the settlement pattern became more established in the 1600s when the County was systematically planted. New towns were established (although many of these pre-date this era as explained above) at Ballinalee, Granard, Longford and Lanesborough. In addition to this, estate villages such as Newtownforbes were developed and during the eighteenth century landlord villages were developed including, Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Keenagh. The construction of the Royal Canal also generated industrial villages such as Clondra.

1.3.3 Population and Demography

1.3.3.1 Current Trends

Census 2011 results show that Longford's population has continued to grow strongly since Census 2006, increasing by 4,609 persons to 39,000 persons. This represents an increase of 13.4% per cent over the 5 year intercensal period, an annual average increase of 2.7% against a state average of 1.6%. These figures build on the previous annual average increase rates for Longford between Census 2002 and Census 2006 of 2.75%.

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

Table 1.3.1: Population change in County Longford, 1991 – 2011

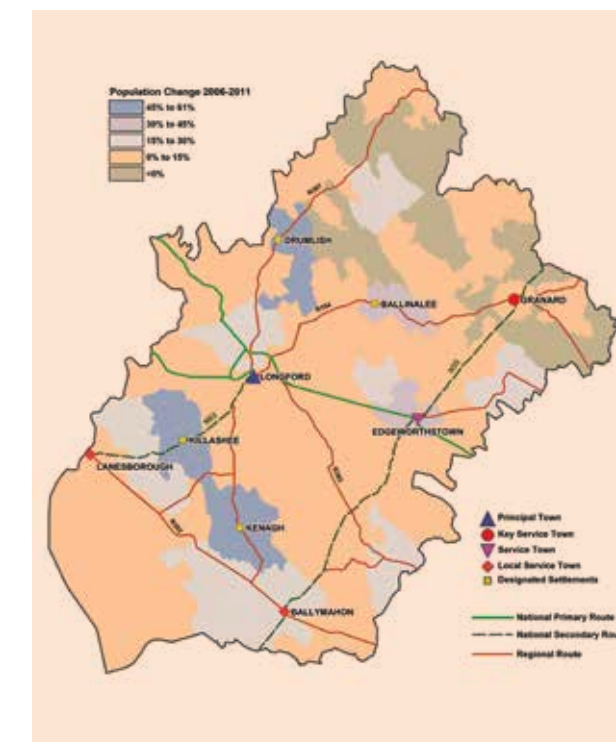
Town	1991	1996	2002	2006	2011
Longford	6393	6444	6831	7622	8002
Longford and Environs	431	540	1038	1214	1599
Granard	1221	1173	1013	933	1021
Ballymahon	816	790	827	963	1563
Edgeworthstown	801	737	726	1221	1744
Lanesboro	675	596	575	604	711
Newtownforbes	429	470	561	668	759
Drumlish	275	274	277	429	835
Keenagh	218	223	225	241	498
Rest of the County	19037	18919	19307	20496	22268
Total	30296	30166	31068	34391	39000

Given the economic turnaround in Ireland since Census 2006 along with the strong focus on emigration, the sizeable population growth may be somewhat surprising. During the inter-censal period 2006 to 2011, very high births combined with falling deaths have been the main driver of population growth.

Longford's population performance relative to other counties in the Midland Region indicates that levels of growth in County Longford was second only to County Laois (37.07%) over that period, but this trend should also be framed in the context of actual growth over that time – Longford's percentage share of the total population growth in the Midlands Region only increased marginally from 13.78% in 2002 to 13.81% in 2011.

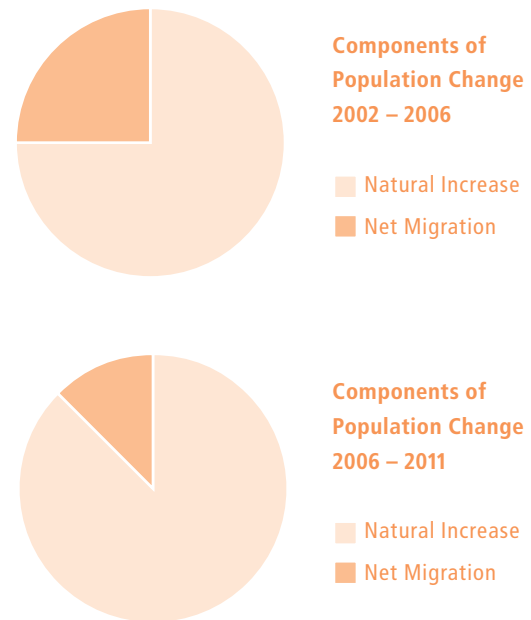
Table 1.3.1 and Figure 1.3.1 indicates that the major settlements in Longford, namely those identified within the settlement hierarchy of the RPGs and the Longford County Development Plan Core Strategy, experienced varying levels of population growth between 2006-2011. These included a 7% increase in the population of Longford Town, and a 6% increase in Granard, but more pronounced increases took place in Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon, which recorded growth rates of 23% and 29% respectively.

Figure 1.3.1: County Longford Population Change 2006-2011
Source CSO



The population and demographic profile of the County has changed substantially over the last 15 years, with more recent trends in population growth continuing over the last four years. The following figure 1.3.2 illustrates the components of population change for the County over the last two census periods.

Figure 1.3.2: Components of Population Change



The above data illustrates the strong inward migration trend that began to slow over the last intercensal periods. While this is significantly less than the previous four year period to April 2006 it is still significant given the recent economic situation in Ireland. As inward migration is likely to include a high percentage of work seeking persons in the younger and child-bearing cohorts, it is likely that this decrease reflects the current economic circumstances and this trend is likely to remain stable in the medium to long-term.

No DED's experienced any population loss over the last intercensal period compared to nine DEDs that experienced a loss in population over the 2002-2006 period. The total population growth for the County over this period was 4,609 persons.

Figure 1.3.3: Demographic Composition of Population 2011 Longford and the State
(Source: Area Profile for County Longford, Census 2011)

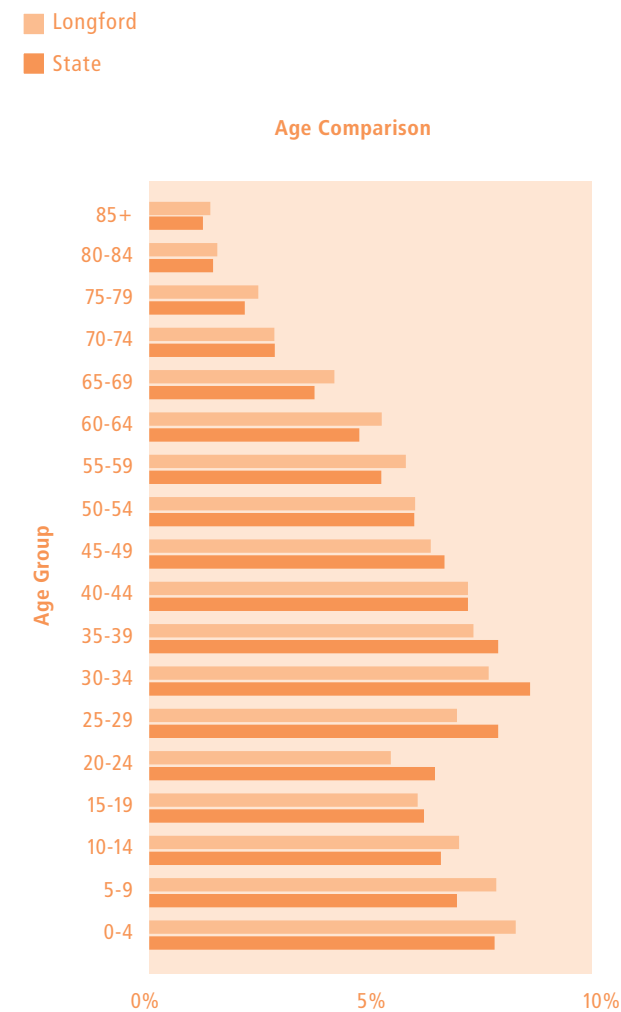
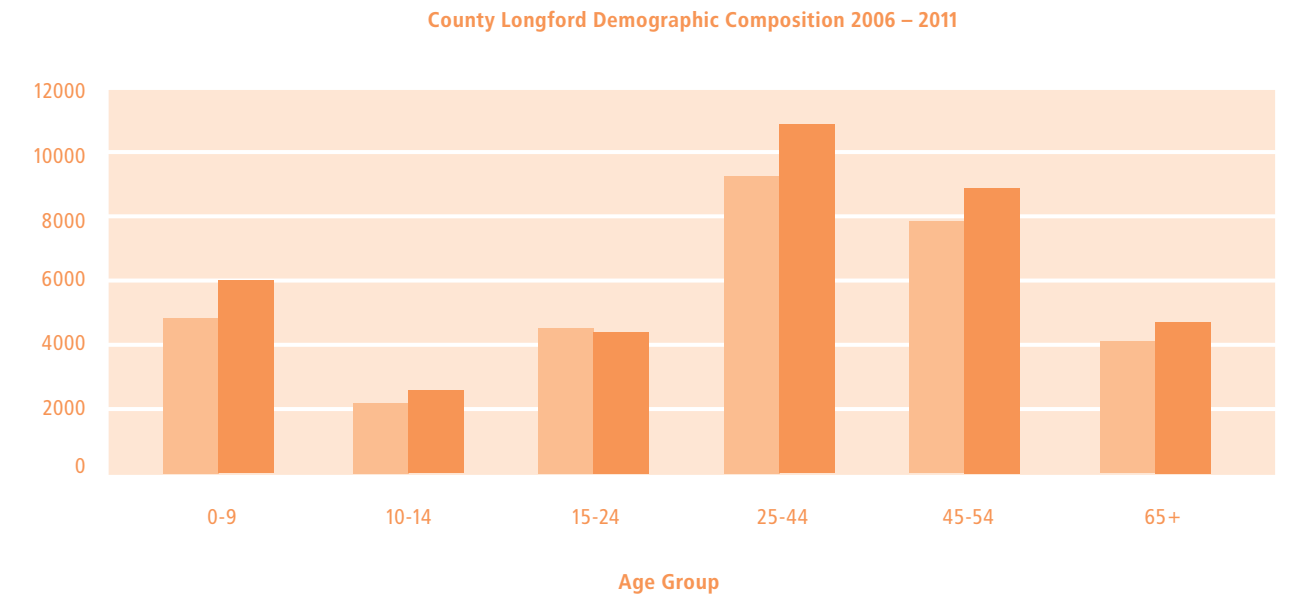


Figure 1.3.3 above shows that there is substantial correlation between the County and State in terms of age composition across the population, where as Figure 1.3.4 illustrates the level of change in a selection of age cohorts over the four year period.

The most marked changes in the demographic composition of County Longford occur in the 25-44 and 45-64 age groups, with a substantial increase in both, as Figure 1.3.4 illustrates. There was a decrease in the 15-24 age groups due to the decline in births in the late 1980s and early 1990s combined with the effects of migration, particularly on those in their mid-twenties seeking employment opportunities abroad.

The 0-9 age group has again witnessed a steady increase in growth building on the previous 11% intercensal increase by a further 24% thus highlighting the need for the provision of facilities such as education and childcare for the County, which were apparent over the period with a continued steady level of applications for school extensions and childcare facilities over the previous plan period.

Figure 1.3.4: Demographic Composition of Longford 2006-2011



There were 14,453 private households in Longford in April 2011, of which 3,786 were single person households. Of the 10,161 families in the area, 2,881 were couples with no children. The average number of children per family was 1.5 compared with 1.4 nationally. This trend is set to continue over the plan period in line with trends throughout Europe towards smaller household sizes. This has implications for housing provision within the County, even if the population was to remain static.

As the census figures illustrate, there has been a shift from in-migration to natural increase (births minus deaths) as the major driver of population growth within the County, a trend which is likely to continue in the current economic climate. However, the substantial increase in the number of females in the childbearing cohorts (15-44) over the 2006-2011 period indicates potential for further growth in the form of natural increase going forward.

1.3.3.2 Population Forecasts

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines through the Technical Working Group have set a target population of 44,603 for County Longford up to 2022, resulting in a target population of 44,084 for the County up to 2021. Details of population growth over the plan period and the physical implications of this growth are addressed in the Core Strategy and Housing Strategy sections of this Plan.

This growth equates to 5,603 persons and represents a 1.6% growth rate year on year, reflecting the annual average increase of 1.6% witnessed in the 2011 Census figures.

1.3.4 Education

Longford remains without a third level educational institute, however, outreach facilities have been proposed under the Regional Planning Guidelines. The establishment of high tech industries in the County over recent Development Plan periods means that graduates from the County now have the opportunity to remain in, or return to their locality. Policy provision, such as that included in the County Development Board Strategy, Retail Strategy for the Town and County, and the provision of design standards, particularly for designated settlements that encourage high quality design will increase the attractiveness of the County to retain the graduate population.

At the time of the 2011 census, of those aged 15 years and over whose full-time education had ceased, 20.4 percent were educated to at most primary level only, a further 57.5 per cent attained second level while 22.2 per cent were educated to third level.

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

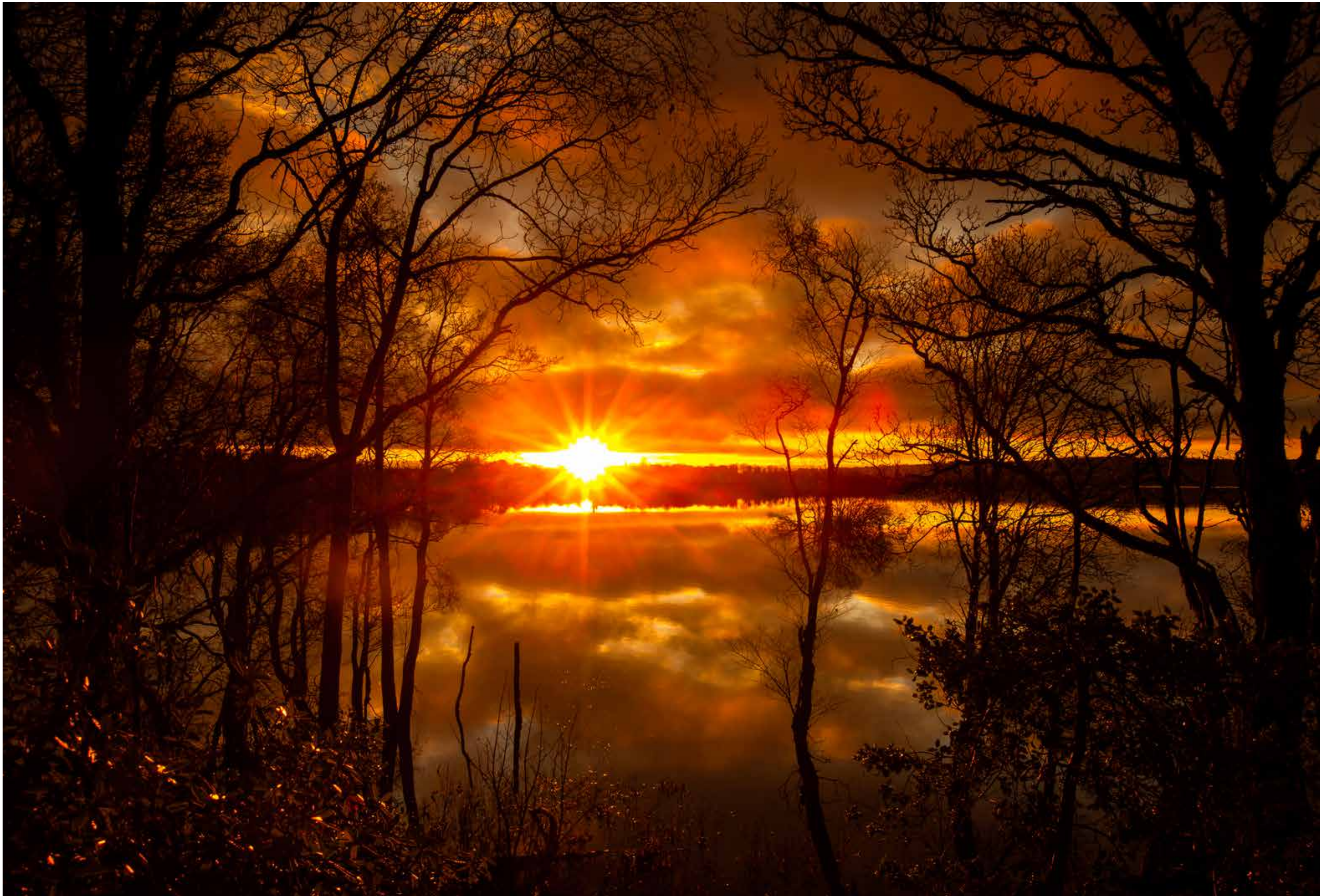
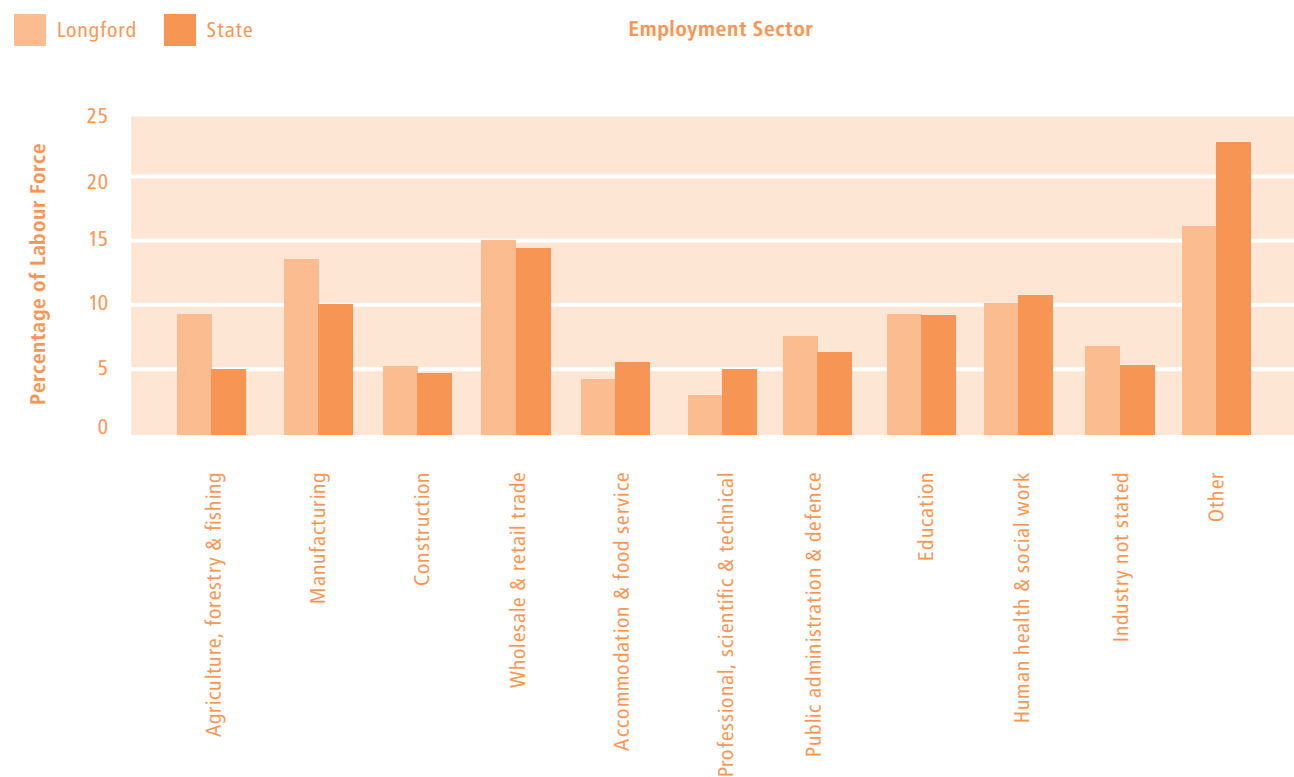


Figure 1.3.4:
Longford Employment by Sector



1.3.5 Socio-Economic Context and Employment

There has been little advancement in the industrial, business and commercial environment of the County over the last four years, a situation that is reflective in the remainder of the region. With Longford having an unemployment rate of 24.7% (5.7% above the state average) there is need to build on established local indigenous industry on the small to medium scale at the Council business parks at Longford Town, Granard, Lanesboro and Ballymahon, Enterprise units at Longford, and industrial units at the Athlone Road and at Edgeworthstown.

Of the 13,871 workers enumerated in Longford, 3,001 worked outside the area. The daytime working population (resident and non-resident) of Longford was 10,724 with commerce and trade being the largest industry.

Larger players such as Abbott Ireland, Green Isle and Panelto are major contributors to the workforce in Longford Town, along with existing industrial installations, including Cameron Ireland Ltd. The service sector has also established itself as a major employer in the County, with the decentralisation of the Prison Service now completed.

Levels of office floorspace have not grown significantly throughout the County over the previous Development Plan period. Existing notable established developments in this area include the large-scale business park at Lisnamuck, the established area at Aughadegnan and other significant developments in Granard, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon.

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

Figure 1.3.4 compares the employment levels in the County by broad industrial sector with state levels in 2011 (source CSO Census 2011). The level of workers dependent on sectors of agriculture has remained steady since the last census at 7.9% which seen a reduction from 13% in 2002 to almost 7.5% in 2006. Despite the earlier reduction in the dependence on this sector, it is still almost double the national average which was also the case in 2006. This leaves a significant portion of the County workforce open to high levels of change and uncertainty that exist over new agricultural regulations at EU level and commitments to the Kyoto protocol at global level.

The fall of employment in the construction sector reflects the collapse of the building boom and completion of local infrastructure projects. This sector is highly sensitive to external shocks such as peaks and troughs in national economic performance and interest rate fluctuations however population growth rates may stabilise activity in this sector.

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

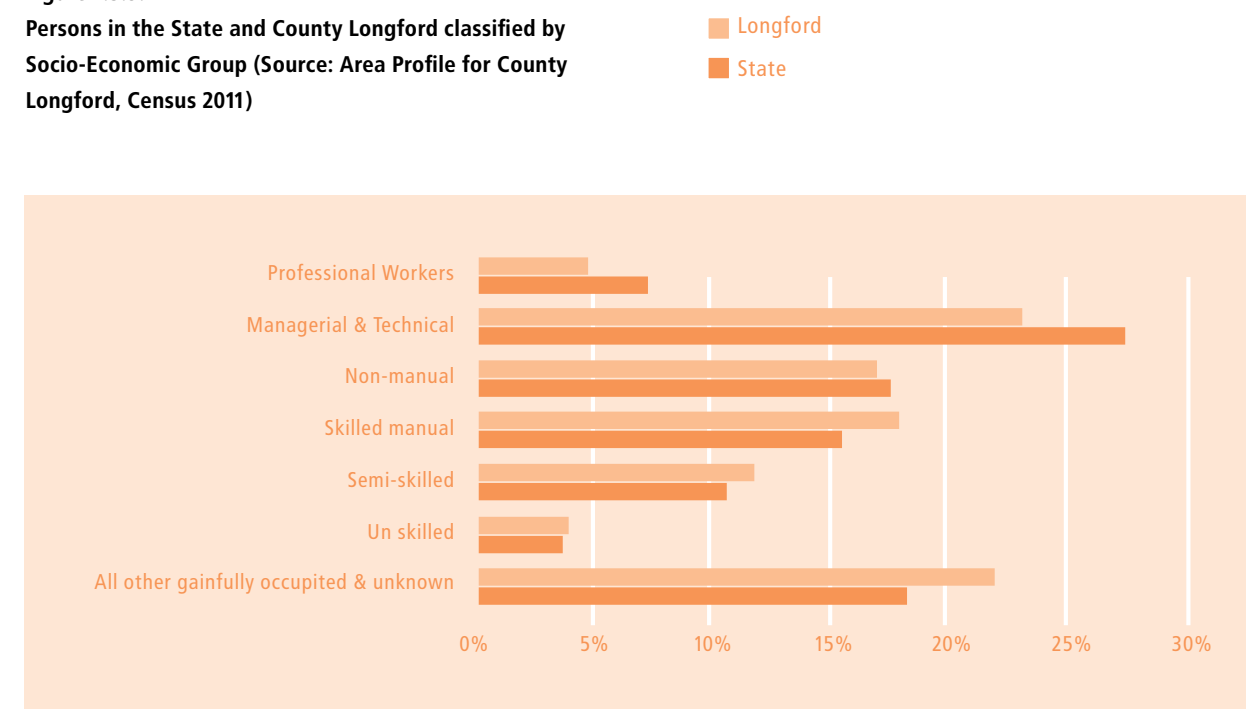
Figure 1.3.5 also reflects the difference between Longford and the state in terms of socio-economic class, in particular, the higher percentages of employers and managers and higher professionals in the state average, combined with the higher percentage of farmers especially in the Longford County figures.

1.3.6 Retail

A review and update of the County's Retail Strategy has been conducted as part of the County Development Plan Review, based on information gathered and collated in a study carried out by Future Analytics Consulting in association with, and commissioned by, Longford Local Authorities. This strategy forms the basis of retail policy contained at the Economic Development Section of this Plan.

The strategy aims to strengthen Longford's regional and Inter-regional links by providing modern retailing facilities of the highest standard. The Strategy also aims to address, as a priority, existing levels of vacancies in the County's towns including the revitalization of Longford town's high streets.

Figure 1.3.5:
Persons in the State and County Longford classified by Socio-Economic Group (Source: Area Profile for County Longford, Census 2011)



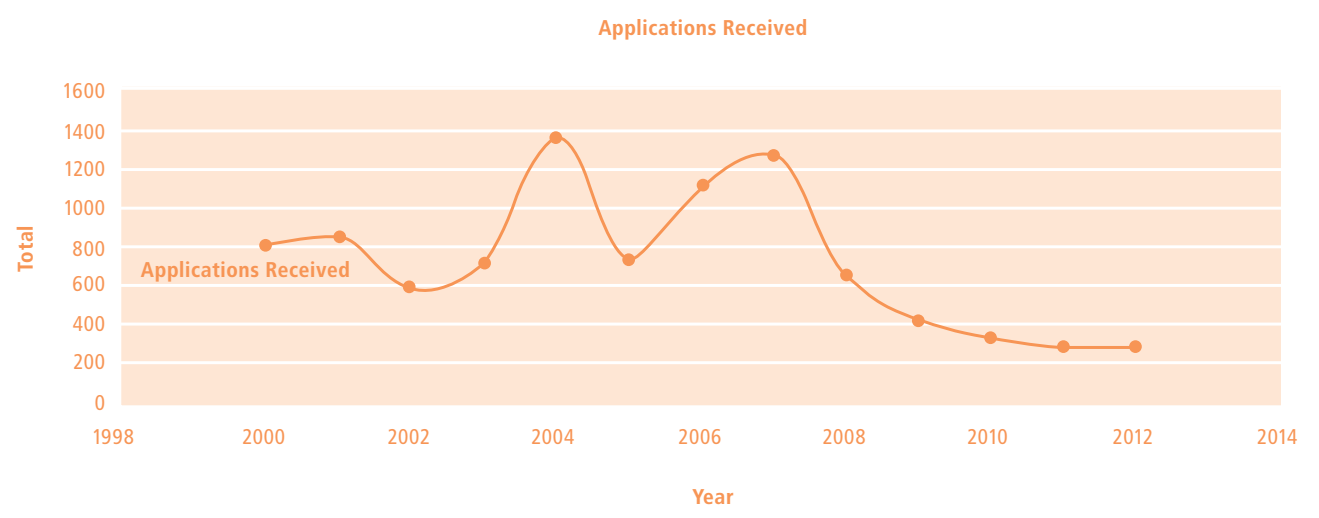
1.3.7 Development Trends

The planning application figures over a 12 year period from 2000 to 2012 are outlined at Figure 1.3.6 below. These illustrate the sharp drop off in applications lodged over the previous Development Plan period as a result of the recent housing crash and economic collapse.

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

These interventions also coincide with the policy interventions of the previous County Development Plans and the designation of towns and villages across the County, leading to a more focussed concentration of applications of larger developments in areas where infrastructure and services exist, or have the potential to, in the medium to long-term. This has been particularly successful in terms of directing industrial/commercial and larger-scale residential development to the larger settlements such as Granard, Lanesboro, Newtownforbes, Edgeworthstown, Drumlish and Ballymahon. Despite these changes, it is evident from the graph that the rate of planning applications has declined considerably over the previous Development Plan period, reflecting the current challenging economic environment.

Figure 1.3.6: County Longford Planning Applications Received 2000 – 2012





2. Development Plan Strategy (Core Strategy)



This summary has been written using NALA's Plain English Guidelines.

Summary →

What is the Development Plan Strategy?

The Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2011 state that the planning strategy of a county development plan must be in keeping with the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and Regional Planning Guidelines. The NSS is a 20-year national plan which aims to manage the country's social, physical and economic development in a balanced and beneficial way. The provisions of the NSS are adopted by different regions to form regional planning guidelines. The regional planning guidelines, in turn, guide the policy and planning decisions at local level.

Therefore, the strategy at the core of the Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 is to identify the scope of development possible for the county while remaining consistent with the NSS and the Midland's Regional Planning Guidelines. The plan will take things like population distribution and residential needs into account in a way that is in keeping with these national and regional guidelines.

What are the main aims of the strategy?

The main aims of the plan's core strategy are:

1. To design planning systems that will support strong and sustainable development over the lifetime of the plan.
2. To approach the overall development of the county in an inclusive, integrated way – that is, to make sure that all aspects of development work well together.
3. To build on the growth of recent years with a view to achieving sustainable economic and social benefits.
4. To create and maintain a lively and vibrant living and working environment for the county's population by making the most of the economic, social and physical development of the county.
5. To work and plan in a way that is consistent with the national plan and regional guidelines.

6. To work in a co-operative way to bring local area plans in line with regional policies.
7. To identify the scope of development needed to support future population growth.
8. To make sure that lands are developed in a way that works with public transport and other existing services.
9. To examine and assess existing housing and settlement patterns so that informed decisions can be made when planning new developments.
10. To provide an overall plan that will make the best use of the county's resources to support the sustainable development of infrastructure, amenities and economic investment in the area.

It is important to note that the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines adopted in July 2010 prescribe population targets for Longford. The County Development Plan, therefore, must work to the target figures which will have a direct bearing on housing land requirements into the future. The core strategy of the plan, therefore, uses the target figures as the starting point for planning.

2.1 Core Strategy

DEVELOPMENT PLAN STRATEGY →

2.1.1 Core Strategy Introduction

Section 10 (1A)³ of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2011, requires that a development plan shall include “a core strategy which shows that development objectives in the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and regional planning guidelines.”

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 National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs).

In summary, 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).

³ Inserted by Section 7 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010.



To demonstrate consistency with national and regional development objectives outlined in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the Midland's Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs) the Core Strategy contains the following;

- Population targets;
- Quantification of the requirements for zoning of lands for residential purposes;
- Existing and future distribution of population within a defined settlement hierarchy;
- A written statement which outlines the origins and broad aims of the strategy including population targets;
- 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.

2.1.2 Core Strategy Strategic Aims:

The strategic aims of the Core Strategy are set out as follows:

AIM 1

To provide a framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County over the plan period.

AIM 2

To provide alignment and integration between strategic planning and settlement policy and the prioritisation of physical infrastructure investment.

AIM 3

To build on the unprecedented growth which has occurred over recent years and maximise the economic and social benefits that can be achieved from this in a manner which is compatible with the principles of sustainable development.

AIM 4

To secure the future vitality and viability of County Longford through optimising the County's economic, social and physical development.

AIM 5

To demonstrate that the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region and other national guidelines and policies.

AIM 6

To facilitate the closer alliance of County and sub-county level plans with regional policy.

AIM 7

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 the National Spatial Strategy and Midland Regional Planning Guidelines.

AIM 8

To develop this quantum of land in a manner that supports public transport and existing services.

AIM 9

To provide a framework supported by evidence based settlement strategy, for deciding on the scale, phasing and location of new development, having regard to existing services and planned investment over the coming years.

AIM 10

To provide a framework within which the provision of sustainable infrastructure, amenities, economic investment and development can take place to maximize the use of resources in the plan area.

2.1.3 Core Strategy Policy Context and Rationale

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT: - THE NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY AND THE MIDLAND REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES 2010-2022

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs), made in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), define a regional development model that is based on a spatial hierarchy centred on the linked gateway of Athlone, Tullamore, and Mullingar as identified in the NSS and supported by the principal towns of Longford and Portlaoise. National Policy contained in the NSS, is translated to a regional level in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022, which subsequently guide policy making decisions at a local level through the County Development Plan.

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines were adopted in July 2010. For the first time the MRPGs introduce population targets for Longford which are also indicated in terms of future housing land requirements for the County.

This, coupled with the requirements of the Planning and Development (amendment) Act 2010, ensures that County Development Plan policies are now consistent with the RPGs, whereas County Development Plans were previously only required to have regard to the RPGs. The 'Core Strategy' contained as part of this plan is therefore central to ensuring such compliance with the RPGs.

In addition to the above, the Settlement Strategy contained in the MRPGs identifies Granard as a 'Key Service Town', Edgeworthstown as a 'Service Town' and Ballymahon and Lanesboro as 'Local Service Towns'. Supporting this, the next tier of the settlement strategy as defined by the MRPGs is the 'Rural Hinterland' which includes the other towns, villages and open countryside. Accordingly, population allocation within the region is reflective of this model. The settlement hierarchy and policy outlined as part of the Core Strategy aligns itself with the terminology and goals set out in the MRPGs and are also informed by guidelines set out at a national level in relation to rural and urban residential development.

Figure 2.1.1: Midland Region-Spatial Settlement Strategy.



In light of the Midland Region Spatial Settlement Strategy, the MRPGs define population targets for County Longford, as follows;

Table 2.1.1:
Population Targets as defined by the MRPG's

	2006	2016	2022 RPG	2022 RTWG ⁴
County Longford	34,391	39,392	41,392	44, 603
Longford (Principal Town)	7622	10,747	12,622	12, 926
County Balance	26,769	28,645	28,770	31, 677

⁴ Figures as set out under the Regional Technical Working Group. The document to which this section refers is a mathematical exercise that uses the 2011 census to adjust population figures based on the proportions adopted in the RPGs in 2010. The need for this paper arose from the release of the 2011 census figures that illustrated an underestimation of the 2010 population figures for some areas of the region (note that RPG targets were based on 2006 census figures) meaning that some areas had reached or exceeded targets for 2016 and beyond.

In order to address this issue, this mathematical exercise was carried out (by the Regional Technical Working Group in 2013 which includes the four senior planners from the region, the regional Director and Planner and a senior representative from the DECLG) to recalculate these targets in the same proportions as adopted, using a corrected 2010 baseline in order to inform the four development plan processes (Westmeath, Longford, Offaly and Athlone) that were in progress at this time and the Laois mid-term review to be carried out in the Autumn.

It is important to emphasise as part of this description that this paper does not alter adopted RPG policy as the prioritised growth of the urban network remains in a hierarchical manner with originally adopted proportions intact and the linked-gateway remaining the key focus.

The above population target for 2022 takes account of the up to date population forecasts for County Longford of the Regional Planning Guidelines of the Midland Region. The MRPG's also set out a total **housing land requirement of 163 hectares up until 2016**, with 65 hectares and 98 hectares allocated to Longford Town and the remainder of the County respectively. It is now considered that this land requirement is sufficient to cater for the population allocation up to 2022. **Accordingly, the population and housing land requirement figures defined by the MRPGs are the starting point for the Core Strategy.**

Longford is also located within the Northern Development Area as set out under the MRPGs with the sequential development of Longford Town the principal town driving this area a key priority. Expansion of linkages to the Border and West, promotion of enterprise and the economy, consolidation of transport and infrastructure and the promotion of social, community and tourism development are all key policy objectives for the Northern Development Area and as such are promoted throughout this Core Strategy. Furthermore, the identified importance of consolidating smaller towns and villages with the provision of physical, social and community infrastructure is also reflected in the Settlement Hierarchy for the County and its associated policy objectives.

2.1.4 Core Strategy Relationship with other Local Authority Plans and Development Strategies

Longford Town Development Plan and the Northern and Southern Environs Local Area Plans for Longford Town-

The Longford Town Development Plan, 2009-2015, is currently still used for the area and includes a detailed Core Strategy that was incorporated by way of variation in 2013. The Town Development Plan, however, is set within the previously applicable legislative framework and needs updating to reflect the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 that abolished Longford Town Council.

The Northern (2008-2014) and Southern Environs (2010-2016) Local Area Plans for Longford Town, relate to areas that immediately bounded and straddled the now abolished Longford Town Council administrative boundary.

On adoption of this Plan, the Longford Town Development Plan and the Northern and Southern Environs Local Area Plans for Longford Town shall be reviewed. It is considered likely that following the abolition of the Town Council and thus the administrative boundary of the Town Council boundary, that the provisions of the above mentioned Plans be merged and prepared as one overarching plan for the Longford Town area.

HOUSING STRATEGY

Under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2011, each planning authority is required to review and include a Housing Strategy within the Development Plan to cover the plan period. The Housing Strategy for Longford, that also outlines the requirements of Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000-2011, is contained at Annex 1 of this Plan.

In determining the housing demand, the Housing Strategy at the outset based the projection of the Longford County population on the following detailed methodology.

STEP 1

A detailed assessment of the Longford County population projections for the period 2015 to 2021 based on the revised Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region population forecasts.



STEP 2

Calculation of average household size and additional households required to cater for the projected additional population from 2015–2021, including implied assumptions on average household size over that period.



STEP 3

Estimated distribution of household disposal incomes in the County for 2015–2021 based on the 10 decile income ranges set out in the CSO Household Budget Survey (2012)



STEP 4

Calculation of household disposable income distribution from 2015–2024 based on the ESRI Medium Term Review 2013 – 2020 (July 2013).



STEP 5:

Assessment of average house prices in the State and in Longford County and Town from 2000–2012 – based on the DoECLG Database Direct for Housing Statistics (August 2013).



STEP 6

Calculation of projected house price bands for Longford County for the years 2015– 2021 based on evidenced assumptions relating to average house price decreases and increases over the time period.



STEP 7

Determination of annual income distribution of total households in County Longford from 2015 – 2021 based on the 10 income decile ranges, with reference to source documents including the CSO's Household Budget Survey 2009–2010 and 2004–2005.



STEP 8

Determination of income distribution of annual additional households required for Longford from 2015–2021, based on 10 decile income ranges, County Longford Development Plan 2009–2015, DoECLG's 'A Model Housing Strategy and Step-by-Step Guide, 2000'.



STEP 9

Calculation of house price affordability for Longford County from 2015–2021, based on the calculated household disposable income distribution and the application of the annuity formula.



STEP 10

Calculation of anticipated social and affordable housing need and associated shortfall for Longford County from 2015-2021 based on the number of households required, housing affordability, household band position, house price bands, number of houses required within each band, and percentage and number of housing units projected to be provided within each band.



In line with the methodology employed, the population targets defined as part of the Housing Strategy are in line with the MRPGs population targets and support the settlement hierarchy outlined within the current MRPGs by reinforcing the roles of Longford (Principal Town), Granard (Key Service Town), Edgeworthstown (Service Town), Lanesboro and Ballymahon (Local Service Towns).

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 housing types, meeting the needs of varying households and incomes. In this regard it is considered that a total of 2,335 units will be required over the period to 2022.

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.

RETAIL STRATEGY

The Longford County Retail Strategy is contained in full at Annex 2 of this Plan and relevant policy in this regard is contained at Section 4.3 of this document. The Retail Strategy identifies a retail hierarchy for County Longford, in line with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines whilst recognising the existing retail functions of the settlements defined.

The retail hierarchy reinforces the role of the settlements within the settlement hierarchy and, most importantly, the hierarchy recognises the importance and reinforces the role of Longford Town, as a Principal Town, and places it at the top of the retail hierarchy. In order to cater for the 2022 target population, it is considered that a total of 2,000-3,000m² convenience, 1,500-2,500m² comparison and 4,500-5,500m² bulky floor space is required over the period to 2022.

In line with the Retail Planning Guidelines and having regard to the Retail Hierarchy, Longford Town and Environs is the only location within the County that has been identified as being suitable for the provision of District Centres for the purpose of providing retailing and amenities to serve its catchment population. In this regard 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 economy of Longford and promote the town as the northern driver for the Midland Region is also highlighted. Accordingly, the lands to the north of the town, in proximity to existing IDA lands, have been identified as a district for employment generating and supporting uses (including supporting retail uses), to promote the development of Longford Town as the main driver in the Northern Development Area.

2.1.5 Core Strategy Rationale

This section sets out the methodology used for the core strategy to ensure that the Longford County Development Plan will be consistent with the National Spatial Strategy, the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines and Government guidelines.

The Core Strategy assigns regionally prescribed population targets as set out under the Regional Planning Guidelines, building upon the existing objectives of the Longford County Development Plan.

- A target population for the year 2022 has been allocated to County Longford by the Midland's Regional Authority through the Midland's Regional Planning Guidelines 2010–2022 and the Regional Technical Working Group.
- Longford Town is addressed under this Core Strategy as it is the Principal Town in the County Settlement Hierarchy.
- The Core Strategy identifies a population target of 44,603 by the year 2016 with a target population of 12,926 identified for the principal town of Longford Town.
- The target population of County Longford is accommodated under the Core Strategy.
- The Core Strategy provides target populations for the Key Service Town of Granard, Service Town of Edgeworthstown and Support Service Towns of Ballymahon and Lanesborough as well as aggregate population targets for each of the remaining settlements throughout the County in addition to open countryside.

A Core Strategy was incorporated in to the previous County Development Plan 2009-2015 (Variation No.1) on 19th September 2012. The amount of undeveloped residentially zoned lands previously available (prior to Variation No. 1) under the CDP 2009-2015 up to 2016 was 926ha. This compares to a figure of 163ha identified for County Longford as part of this plan.

This Core Strategy also ensures that development objectives in the Plan are consistent as far as practicable with the current MRPGs, specifically in terms of quantum of lands zoned, densities applied and the roles of existing settlements within the County.

In this context this Core Strategy introduces revised population targets ensuring consistency with updated national and regional population targets and policies as expressed in the **Core Strategy Table** and associated **zoning maps**.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Development Plan has appropriately considered all aspects relating to the housing market. Section 2 of the Housing Strategy assesses prevailing economic and local market conditions via detailed quantitative and qualitative assessments, which included drawing on local auctioneer market expertise, to ascertain a full picture of both current and future outlook.

While challenges exist in the housing market in Longford, there is consensus that activity should gather pace over the next couple of years as part of an envisaged recovery scenario for the economy. The Council has planned positively for the growth of the housing market on that basis, recognising the important role it will play on the wider sustainable development of the County.

EXTANT PLANNING PERMISSIONS

A detailed review of extant planning permissions has been undertaken. It has concluded that there are a number of unknowns with respect to the deliverability of these units. While the Council has worked closely with associated parties to assist in bringing forward these sites for development, external market forces may inhibit this. It is considered likely that a significant number of these permissions will wither over the early life of the forthcoming Plan. Many of those that benefit from extension of durations pursuant to Section 42 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2013 may also not come forward, owing to issues of viability and non-compliance with the amended building regulations (namely from additional incurred costs).

VACANT HOUSING STOCK

The 2011 Census identified that 22% of housing stock in Co. Longford was vacant. Approximately 8% of recorded vacancy in the County is holiday homes.

There will always be a level of vacancy in the housing market. Based on established modelling approaches to projecting future requirements, it is necessary to factor in a 'frictional' vacancy rate to foster competition, choice and mobility in the market, allowing it to remain fluid. We note the approach used by the Housing Agency in their recent report 'Housing Supply Requirements in Ireland's Urban Settlement 2014-2018', which applied a nominal 11% frictional rate in the Longford area.

The geographical location of vacancy has also been examined. As expected, there are notably higher than average concentrations of vacancy in rural areas, where examples include Clonee (32%) and Cashel West (30%). The devised settlement-based approach to future requirements in the Plan takes account of geography and scale issues with respect to housing provision across the County. The restriction of growth in Longford Town and designated settlements where services are available on the basis of identified vacancy in rural areas would serve to undermine the development of the County as a whole.



DEMOGRAPHICS - MIGRATION PATTERNS AND POPULATION PROFILE

The levels of pick-up in the housing market in Longford referenced above reflect a return to trends of positive net immigration to the County. The preferred CSO M2F2 'Traditional' scenario of population projection includes an assumed reversal to the 1996 stable pattern of inter-regional flows. It is considered prudent to plan for this envisaged growth.

An assessment of the changing demographic profile of the County indicates that there will be a need to provide a greater number and mix of housing types in the future. Almost 50% of the adult population of County Longford is unmarried (including separated/divorced). At 11.9% of households, the proportion of lone parent families in the County is higher than that of the state (10.9%). In line with the applied methodology set out in the Housing Strategy, trends towards a decreasing average household size will also continue over the Plan period.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF UNFINISHED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

In relation to unfinished estates, only units complete and vacant will be of supply benefit over the Plan period. According to the latest figures, this extends to 283 units in the County. As stated in the Housing Strategy, each case here has unique issues and it is difficult to appropriately gauge current desirability for these units in the market, owing to the partial completion of some sites, with location factors also key.

LANDS IDENTIFIED AS STRATEGIC RESERVE

The concept of the strategic reserve designation facilitates the identification of lands that would not form part of lands expected to be developed over the plan period and which are retained free of development that might compromise any potential future uses and to facilitate their consideration in a future plan review. Policy is included as part of the Plan that reinforces this and which monitors same in order to ensure compliance.

Any proposal for development on lands identified as Strategic Industrial Reserve, will only be considered whereby a clear evidence based need for the release of the lands has been demonstrated, including compliance with a sequential approach to such development.

RURAL SETTLEMENT DESIGNATIONS

The introduction of Rural Service Settlements, as described in Appendix 1F, arises from the need for an effective response to the potentially excessive proliferation of one-off housing that characterises many of those counties with a significant rural habitation profile, while at the same time recognises the intrinsic historical and immediate importance rural settlements have in the settlement structure in Co. Longford.

The locations identified as Rural Service Settlements, whilst not adopting a "zoned based approach", have existing residential settlement patterns, with key services such as schools, shops, post offices and public houses available. Their designation is reflective of guidance given by the Department in both the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005) and the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) in offering an effective alternative to the provision of single houses in unserved rural areas.

Essential criteria in assessing any proposed development of these areas will be the adequate demonstration of local need, similar to the current one-off housing policy, and strong emphasis augmenting and supporting the local character of these areas. It is vital to stress that the level of development envisaged for these areas is not commensurate with those levels associated during the Celtic Tiger years. Rather, only small-scale development, reflective of the character of the existing settlements which alleviate the pressure for one-off housing in the countryside will be permitted.

It is clearly acknowledged that the quantum of lands designated are to cater for the short, medium and long term development of these areas, whilst recognising the existing settlement structure and extent. In this regard and as part of the documented Core Strategy, the development potential of these areas will be commensurate with their position in the Settlement Hierarchy, whilst still providing for a level of development which is supportive to the role of the settlement and wider rural hinterland. Policy is also included as part of the Plan to monitor development in these areas to ensure compliance.

Over the lifetime of the Plan, the Council will investigate the designation of the settlements and, as part of this investigation, identify the catchments that these areas are designed to cater for and where the need arises address the extent of the currently defined settlements.

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

The Settlement Hierarchy reflects the provisions of the Core Strategy, which outlines the anticipated location, extent and scale of development over the lifetime of the Plan. The Hierarchy prioritises areas for development within the County over the lifetime of the plan, on a tiered basis, having regard to the regional Settlement Hierarchy as set out under the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands Region including the designation of Longford Town as a Principal Town, the complementary role of other towns and villages, the availability of services, infrastructure and transport linkages and a recognition of the rural nature, community needs, settlement structure and rural economy of the County.

CORE STRATEGY TABLE

The Core Strategy Table indicates the distribution of future population and housing across the County's settlements. The position of each town in the Settlement Hierarchy has been clearly linked to the quantitative population allocations as set out under the Core Strategy Table. The Core Strategy Table illustrates clearly how the population targets as set out for County Longford at table 4.3 of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region (including Regional Technical Working Group updates) are to be distributed across the County proportionate to a settlements positioning in the Settlement Hierarchy.

ZONING MAPS

Following the population allocations set out in the Core Strategy Table, zoning maps are provided at Appendix 1 to reflect these figures and to indicate the quantum and locations of future development for the plan period. It is considered that the lands identified for residential development are sufficient to meet the population targets set out in the Core Strategy Table and reflect each settlements role in the Settlement Hierarchy.

The amount and location of zoned lands required within each settlement was determined using an 'evidence based' approach which consisted of the following considerations;

- Position of the Settlement in the Regional Settlement Hierarchy and the population allocations set out under the Regional Planning Guidelines;
- Availability of services and infrastructure- planned and existing e.g. Smarter Travel and Irish Water's Capital Investment Plans;
- Potential for economic and social development of the settlement;
- Sequential Test;
- The need to consolidate settlements, keeping them physically compact;
- Flood risk assessment;
- Ground and surface water vulnerability;
- Environmental impact, including S.E.A and H.D.A. requirements;
- Planning history;
- Market availability/choice;

The extent to which development is permitted under these zonings, including areas identified as at risk of flooding are referenced in the zoning descriptions provided at Appendix 1 of the Plan under the heading 'Flooding'.

(Explanatory Note: - Flood risk mapping is contained as part of Appendix One in the main plan document and is the same mapping contained in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment that formed part of the Draft County Development Plan that was placed on display).

The SFRA has assessed the revised zonings to ensure that any potentially incompatible zoning – taking into account the flood risk zones, the provisions of the Guidelines and the flood risk management provisions contained within the Plan - has been removed from undeveloped lands.

RESIDENTIAL STRATEGIC LAND RESERVE- ZONING OBJECTIVE

A Residential Strategic Land Reserve has been included as part of the zoning strategy for the County. In order to comply with the housing land requirement and population allocations identified by the MRPGs, some lands identified for residential development over previous Development Plan periods are now contained under this zoning which prevents the release of these lands over the current County Development Plan period. These lands, while not considered for development purposes under the current Plan, will be reconsidered in the context of subsequent County Development Plan reviews.

SITE RESOLUTION OBJECTIVE

It is important to acknowledge that there are a number of unfinished housing developments that exist within the County and in recognising this, the Core Strategy has identified a number of areas for the purpose of site resolution under the zoning 'Site Resolution Objective' in order to provide opportunity to complete these areas to an appropriate and acceptable standard of development. This zoning identifies the challenges that these areas bring and aims to facilitate their development to provide improved residential amenity and enhance their cultural, heritage, social and economic sustainability.

The zoning is flexible in nature and allows for the provision of community needs including education, childcare, healthcare, specialised housing such as OPDs, opportunities for local business and enterprise, active/ passive recreation and amenity, community facilities and local shop facilities where such facilities would be commercially viable. Proposals for residential development in these areas will be assessed in accordance with the settlement's position within the Settlement Hierarchy and monitored in line with the population targets as set out under the Core Strategy Table and in accordance with Policy IMP CS 3.

The zoning also encourages potential applicants to actively engage with the Planning Authority in an effort to produce agreed development schemes for the identified sites which will improve the existing amenities of the areas and ensure a level of protection to the character of the areas within which they are located.

ESTABLISHED RESIDENTIAL

To improve legibility, existing residential developments have now been mapped. This zoning is intended primarily for established housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to improve the residential amenity of residential communities such as schools, crèches, small shops, doctor's surgeries, small scale residential, playing fields, etc.

RURAL SERVICE SETTLEMENT AND HINTERLANDS

The remaining lands designated as Rural Service Settlement and Hinterlands, will now cater for local housing need and demand while providing associated local level services appropriate to the area.

2.1.6 Settlement Strategy

2.1.6.1 Introduction and Background

This Settlement Strategy has been aligned with the Settlement Strategy of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region and provides a framework to guide the location and scale of new development for the Plan period.

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

Accordingly, the settlement strategy aims to provide for vibrant and viable settlements in urban and rural areas that provide a range of jobs, services and housing choice commensurate with their position on the hierarchy, with the capacity to facilitate the long-term sustainability of rural communities. The strategy was developed within the spatial development framework of national and regional policy, to ensure that the specific needs of communities are provided for, and to facilitate future development in a plan-led manner.

2.1.6.2 Key Aims of the Settlement Strategy

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

CS 1:

The Council shall continue to support the strengthening of the urban and village network throughout the County in accordance with the hierarchy outlined in the following sections and supported by the Regional Planning Guidelines, Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, issued by the DECLG. Development priority will be accorded to Longford Town in order to fulfil its role as a Principal Town within the five town polycentric model for the region and targeted growth directed to other urban settlements supporting the expansion of linkages with the Border and West Regions.

CS 2:

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

CS 3:

The Settlement Strategy aims to create vibrant and thriving urban and rural communities, firmly rooted in the concepts of sustainability and maintaining a high quality of life. The extensive village network shall be used to support rural communities through the provision of neighbourhood level facilities, community services and social functions, and transport initiatives will be promoted in order to enhance links between settlements and their rural hinterland in order to ensure that rural areas benefit from a strengthened town and village structure. Development shall be commensurate with the level of infrastructural provision anticipated over the lifetime of the plan (see infrastructural section – programme of works).

CS 4:

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

2.1.6.3 Settlement Hierarchy

The settlement Hierarchy for the County has been assigned in line with the spatial structure as set out in the Regional Settlement Hierarchy defined in the MRPGs and categorises areas for development within the County on a priority basis across six tiers.

The settlement hierarchy outlined in the MRPGs for County Longford is as follows:

Longford – Principal Town
Granard – Key Service Town
Edgeworthstown – Service Town
Ballymahon & Lanesboro – Local Service Towns
Village Networks – Serviced Settlements & Rural Service Settlements

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

Further to the adherence of this settlement strategy to the Regional Hierarchy outlined above, the strategy builds on this structure by subdividing the village network tier into two levels, resulting in a settlement structure which is based on the prioritisation of key urban settlements in terms of population and investment growth, supported by a strong road network while sustaining and revitalising rural areas. A number of other factors have influenced the position of settlements within the hierarchy, including:-

- the existing size of the settlements;
- the availability of infrastructure and services such as education facilities;
- public transport and the ability of the settlement to absorb such growth;



The position of a settlement within the Hierarchy provides an indication of the potential scale of population growth permissible over the lifetime of the Plan and therefore plays a key role in the appropriate delivery of the population targets in order to achieve balanced development at local level, through the strengthening of urban settlement structures, while ensuring that the resources of rural areas are developed in a sustainable manner in meeting the needs of its people.

The policy of the Council is to promote the development of Longford Town as the primary County/Regional centre for the area. The Town Council area is covered by the Longford Town Development Plan. Lands immediately outside the town boundary within the County area are addressed in Appendix 1 as Longford Environs.

2.1.6.4 Hierarchy Tiers

The following paragraphs outline the Settlement Hierarchy for the County based on the Midland's Regional Planning Guidelines, refined to reflect the functional roles of these settlements at a County Level.

TIER 1. **LONGFORD TOWN – COUNTY TOWN** **OF REGIONAL IMPORTANCE**

Longford Town is identified in the MRPGs as the main driver of development in the north of the region, with substantial retail and administrative functions and considerable social infrastructure serving a broad, cross-regional hinterland and hence has been identified as the main focus for population growth during the current Development Plan period. The majority of industrial, commercial, business and retail development will also be channelled to Longford Town.

The urban area is covered by a separate Town Development Plan. It is important to note that the Town Council was dissolved during the statutory review period of this County Development Plan. Accordingly the Town and County Council administrative boundaries, with respect to the Longford Town area, are no longer in effect. Local Area Plans for the Southern and Northern Environs cover the environs areas of Longford Town that straddle both the county and town administrative areas that were previously applicable.

In addition to both Local Area Plans, there are existing zoned lands to the south west, east and north of the town, contained within the historic County Council administrative area, which allow for the natural growth of Longford Town and relate to existing zonings that fall within the town boundary as previously defined.

It is policy of the Council that lands adjoining Longford Town in the historic County Administrative area including those lands unzoned outside the bypass may be considered for development other than residential development where appropriate, to be assessed on a site by site basis, subject to the availability of services and compliance with the development management standards and other policies and objectives contained within this plan. The Longford Northern and Southern Environs Local Area Plans are available as separate documents however, zonings to the south-west, east and north of the town and objectives for these areas are outlined in Appendix 1.

These zonings, contained as part of Appendix 1, are intended to be flexible, provided that the basic concepts of proper planning, residential amenity and good design practice are adhered to. Any proposed development should be compatible with the primary zoning use and should not detract from the amenity of the area. These zonings should be read in conjunction with the Development Plan Standards, particularly in relation to design, materials, public open space and parking requirements.

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

LUTS – LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION **STUDY OF LONGFORD TOWN AND ENVIRONS**

A Land Use and Transportation Study was previously prepared in order to enhance the attractiveness of the town as a commercial destination and as a prime location to live, work and visit, and in order to address potential pressures on existing infrastructure that may threaten the continued prosperity, quality of life and overall vitality and viability of Longford Town and its environs, through increasing traffic congestion and resultant deterioration of the pedestrian environment. The findings of this study have helped to underpin all land use plans for the County.

It is envisaged that the status of the LUTS will be re-evaluated as part of the preparation process of the updated plan for the Longford Town area.

TIER 2. **GRANARD – KEY SERVICE TOWN**

Granard is a county growth centre with a regional element. Granard acts as an important driver for local economies in the area (remote from the main population centers of the region) with well established economic, administrative and social functions. The town performs important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for local rural hinterlands and supports the principal town of Longford.

Strong emphasis will be placed on the growth of the local economy in Granard and the development of its vital administrative and social functions to support and complement growth in the region, developing and enhancing synergistic links with the adjacent Border Region and building on its artistic and archaeological assets and tourism potential.

TIER 3. **EDGEWORTHSTOWN – SERVICE TOWN**

Edgeworthstown serves a wide hinterland and provides important local level residential, retailing, social and leisure functions to its rural hinterland as well as facilitating service provision and accommodation. The town is located along a number of national and regional arterial routes and has good levels of public transport relative to the remainder of the County.

Emphasis will be placed on maintaining Edgeworthstown's role as a County service centre, by way of orderly consolidation and expansion of services to meet the needs of the locality, commensurate with its position in the Settlement Hierarchy in a manner that supports the upper tiers of the urban hierarchy including the linked gateway and principal towns.

TIER 4. **BALLYMAHON AND LANESBOROUGH –** **LOCAL SERVICE TOWNS**

Ballymahon and Lanesborough are established towns within the County which have an important role in the provision of local level retailing, social and leisure functions and local services to wider rural hinterland.

Emphasis will be placed on the maintenance and consolidation of growth in these towns in line with their position in the Settlement Hierarchy in a manner that enhances their strong visual character and built fabric, natural heritage assets and amenities including the development of Lough Ree, with its diverse habitats and early Christian archaeological heritage in terms of tourism development.

Having regard to the above mentioned Settlement Hierarchy tiers, the following policy shall be applied;

CS 5: KEY SERVICE TOWN, SERVICE TOWN, **LOCAL SERVICE TOWNS**

Proposals for residential development in the settlements defined above and as shown on the maps contained at Appendix 1 will be determined in accordance with the requirements of the settlement hierarchy defined, the Core Strategy Table with regard to population return, the ability of the proposal to enhance the character of the settlement, the demand/need for the proposed level and type of residential development in the settlement and compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the Development Plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which the settlement forms part.

TIER 5. **SERVICED SETTLEMENTS**

Abbeysrule, Ardagh, Aghnaccliffe, Ballinamuck, Ballinalee, Clondra, Carriglass, Drumlish, Keenagh, Legan, Newtownforbes

The important complementary role of the existing network of towns and villages of the County is recognized in the Settlement Hierarchy. These established settlements have unique attributes in terms of natural and/or built heritage and specific cultural and historic associations that require specific designation to protect and enhance their character. Each town also has the *necessary infrastructure capacity available* to act as local growth settlements and serve the needs of their hinterlands while playing an important role in servicing and driving the rural economy of the county. The towns provide services to rural communities, including housing, neighbourhood level retail and social facilities and are of particular importance in the delivery of these services and as such, are critical for the on-going viability of these rural communities. A number of these settlements have been consolidated and in certain instances there are a number of existing developments which have commenced but have not been completed, therefore requiring site resolution.

CS 6: SERVICED SETTLEMENTS

Serviced Settlements have been defined in accordance with the fact that infrastructure provision exists within these settlements and represents a tier of the settlement hierarchy that has most diversity amongst the settlements contained within it.

Having regard to the above, proposals for residential development in service settlements, as shown on maps contained at Appendix 1, will be determined in accordance with the population allocations of the Core Strategy, the character and nature of the existing settlement and the ability of the proposal to enhance this, the ability of the settlement to absorb further development, the demand/need for the proposed level and type of residential development in the settlement and compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the Development Plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which the settlement forms part.

Residential development will also be considered on lands identified as Site Resolution Objective in accordance with the relevant zoning provision standards. Any residential development in these settlements will also be determined in accordance with the population allocations of the Core Strategy, the character and nature of the existing settlement and compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the Development Plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which the settlement forms part.

TIER 6.

RURAL SERVICE SETTLEMENTS & HINTERLAND

Abbeylara, Ballycloughan, Ballywillan, Barry, Bunlahy, Carrickboy, Colehill, Coolarty, Cullyfad, Derraghan, Dring, Enybegs, Forgney, Killashee, Kilnatraun, Legga, Lisryan, Melview, Moydow, Moyne, Mullinalaghta, Newtowncashel, Ratharney, Stonepark, Taghshinny

The Settlement Hierarchy acknowledges the importance of Rural Areas in Longford for sustaining the vitality of rural communities. The emphasis in terms of the development of these areas will therefore be on a stabilisation of the population and the retention and enhancement of existing services and facilities and also the retention and creation of local level employment opportunities.

These locations (see Appendix 1) have existing congregation areas and services such as schools, shops, post offices, public houses and residential houses available. Residential development in these areas will be only permitted at a small scale, reflective of the character of the existing settlements. Small-scale residential development which will alleviate the pressures for one-off housing in the open countryside 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). Given the existing distinct character of these settlements which have experienced a certain level of recent development, it is envisaged that these areas will also provide limited local level services such as post offices, neighbourhood shops, national schools etc. There shall be a strong emphasis on the creation and maintenance of a sense of identity and local character in the proposed development of these areas.

It is not envisaged that these lands will be developed in their entirety over the duration of the current Development Plan period and it is intended that the quantum of lands designated will cater for the short, medium and long term population targets. In this regard and as part of this Core Strategy, the development potential of these areas will be commensurate with their position in the Settlement Hierarchy, whilst still providing for a level of development which is supportive to the role of the settlement and wider rural hinterland. Accordingly policy is inserted as part of this Core Strategy to monitor development in these areas to ensure compliance.

Village Policy Statements may be prepared to address development issues in these Rural Service Settlements. In the interim the area contained within each identified village envelope shall be zoned for 'small scale residential reflective of the existing character of the settlement and limited local level services such as post offices, neighbourhood shops, schools etc', except where specifically stated otherwise.

CS 7: RURAL SERVICE SETTLEMENTS

Proposals for residential development in settlements defined as 'Rural Service Settlements' and as shown on the maps contained in Appendix 1 will be determined in accordance with the requirements of the Core Strategy Table with regard to population return, the sequential test, the creation and maintenance of a sense of identity, recognition of the local character, the availability of appropriate infrastructure and sustainable community services and compliance with technical, legislative, environmental, design policy and/or criteria contained within the Development Plan or any other relevant plan, the functional area of which the settlement forms part.

Proposals for one-off dwellings may also be considered on these lands and proposals in this regard will be determined in accordance with rural policy contained at 3.2.2.

The following objectives shall also be considered in terms of development of Rural Service Settlements.

CS 8:

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

CS 9:

Applications for development in Rural Service Settlements will be subject to assessment in terms of the size of development considered appropriate to the location, their visual impact and other normal planning criteria, including their ability to consolidate and enhance existing village character, and create or strengthen a sense of identity and distinctiveness for the settlement.

Small scale residential clusters and limited local level services such as post offices, neighbourhood shops, schools etc. only will be considered in these settlements.

CS 10:

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

It is an objective that the towns designated in tiers 1 – 4 above will account for the majority of the population growth of the County over the duration of the Development Plan, in line with Figure 2.3.3, resulting in a strong urban structure within the County in order to support its hinterland areas.

2.1.6.5 Rural Areas/Open Countryside

Where an area of land is outside a designated settlement (i.e. an area not included in the zoning maps at Appendix 1, or covered by a Local Area Plan), and is not otherwise zoned as part of the Longford Town Development Plan, this area is termed 'rural' for the purposes of the plan. This section should be read in conjunction with the Infrastructure and Environment, Heritage and Amenities sections of this plan.

For Holiday/Second home developments see Tourism Section

SUSTAINING RURAL AREAS

i) Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines

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

- People who are part of the Rural Community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas, including those under strong urban pressures
- Anyone wishing to build a house in rural areas suffering persistent and substantial population decline will be accommodated
- The development of the rural environs of the major urban areas, including the gateways and hubs identified in the NSS and County and other larger towns over 5,000 in population needs to be carefully managed in order to assure their orderly development and successful functioning into the future

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

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

ii) Rural Areas

This County Development Plan has 40 designated settlements, excluding Longford Town and Environs, for which different levels of plan have been identified and specific development envelopes applied. The Northern Environs Local Area Plan and Southern Environs Local Area Plan also identify zoned lands. It is now proposed that areas other than the aforementioned and lands zoned as part of this plan, Longford Town Plan and any future plan prepared, are designated as rural.



CS 11:

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

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

The County Development Plan aims to create a balanced approach to rural housing and includes a definition of where development in rural areas will be considered. This closely mirrors the suggestions put forward at 3.2.3 of the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines and is defined below as CS 12 for the purposes of this Plan. However, it should be noted that relevant applications for permission will remain subject to normal planning criteria and design and siting requirements contained in the relevant plan section.

CS 12:

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

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

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

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

iv) Rural areas suffering persistent and substantial decline

There are few areas within the County that suffer from decline of this magnitude, particularly over the last census period.

In the period 1996 to 2002, 24 district electoral divisions (DEDs) lost population, totalling 670 persons (compared with an overall County population growth of 902 persons). The heaviest losses were in Longford and Granard Urban areas, totalling 148 and 160 persons respectively. This would suggest that there was a substantial movement within the County from urban to rural areas.

During the period from 2002 to 2006, this timeframe tells that there were significant changes, with 9 DEDs experiencing population loss, only 3 of which overlap with the 24 DEDs experiencing loss over the previous intercensal period. These were Granard Urban, Cashel East and Ballymough.

The 2006-2011 timeframe tells a similar story to the previous intercensal period with only 8 DEDs witnessing decline and none of which overlap areas that witnessed decline over the previous intercensal period. Total population loss in the 8 DEDs amounted to only 78 persons.

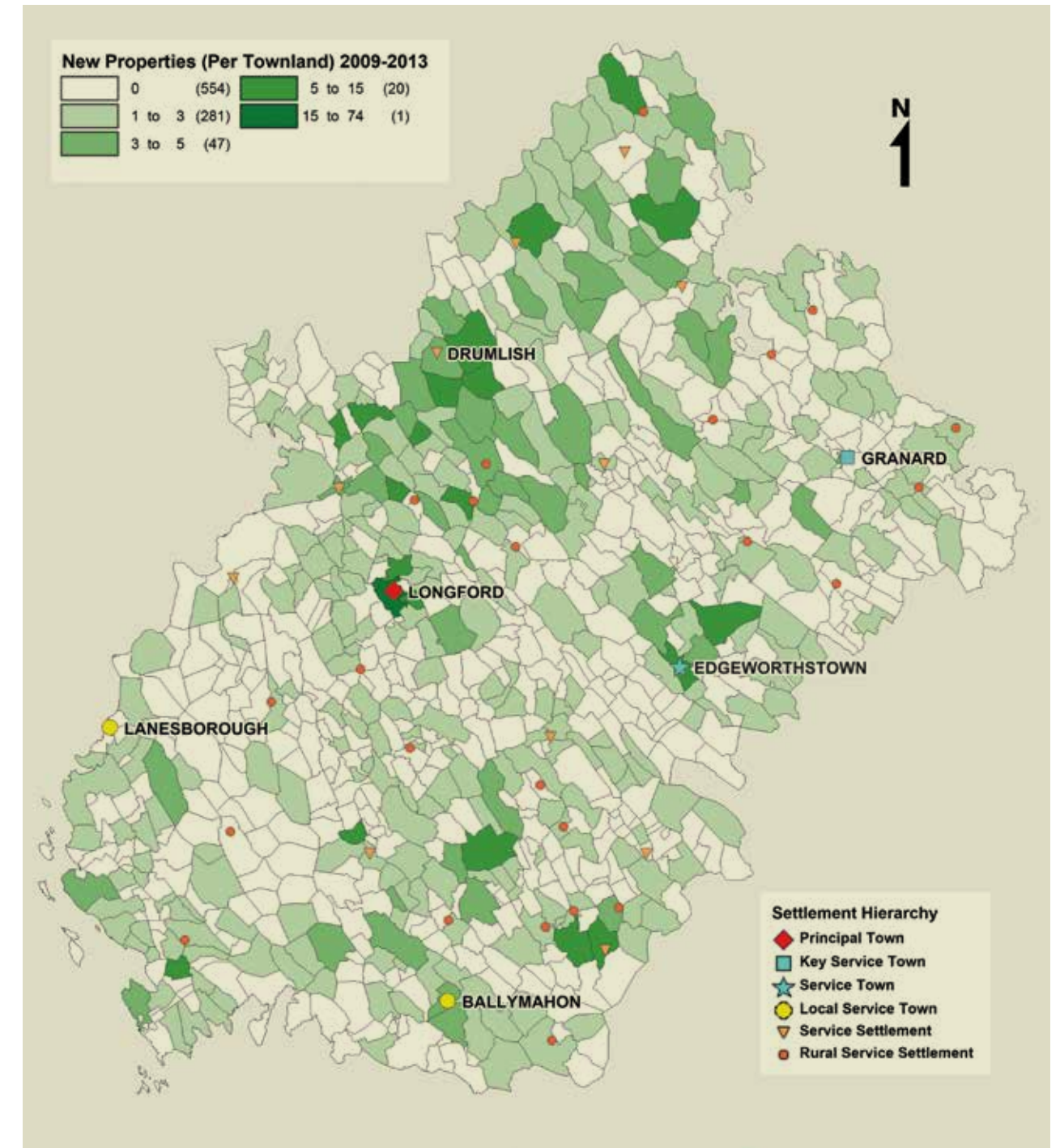
The 13.4% growth in the County population over the same period and the lack of any overlap between rural DEDs experiencing losses would suggest that population losses in rural areas of County Longford tend to be transient in nature and minor in extent.

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

v) Rural Environs of Urban Areas

Figure 2.1.2 below provides a visual and spatial demonstration of new properties in the County between 2009 and 2013. The map indicates a relative level of success that policy contained in the Development Plans has had in directing development to designated settlements as defined and thus absorbing population growth. It is also acknowledged that there is still need to protect the rural environs of urban areas from inappropriate and urban generated housing. This is contained at Section 3.2.2 of this plan.

Figure 2.1.2:
Spatial Distribution of new Development 2009-2013



CS 13:

In accordance with the policies outlined in the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Longford County Council shall strictly apply policy CS 12 in the vicinity of Designated Settlements in order to prevent over-proliferation of urban-generated one-off housing in the rural area. Further ribbon development on all approaches to Longford Town, regional routes R194 and R198 in particular, shall be discouraged.

Figure 2.1.3:
Settlement Hierarchy

Tier	Settlement*	Role	Summary Description
Tier 1	Longford Town	Principal Town	The main driver of development in the north of the region, with substantial retail and administrative functions and considerable social infrastructure serving a broad, cross-regional hinterland.
Tier 2	Granard	Key Service Town	Important driver for local economies in the area (remote from the main population centers of the region), with established administrative, economic and social functions.
Tier 3	Edgeworthstown	Service Town	Important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for local rural hinterlands and support the upper tiers of the urban hierarchy including the linked gateway and principal towns.
Tier 4	Ballymahon, Lanesborough	Local Service Towns	Important local level residential, retailing, social and leisure functions and providing appropriate local services to a wider rural hinterland (more remote from the linked gateway and principal towns).
Tier 5	Abbeysrule, Ardagh, Aghnaclyffe, Ballinamuck, Ballinalee, Clondra, Carriglass, Drumlish, Keenagh, Legan, Newtownforbes	Serviced Settlements	Local growth settlements with infrastructural capabilities to accommodate residential development at appropriate scales and provide important local services to rural communities.
Tier 6	Abbeylara, Ballycloughan, Ballywillan, Barry, Bunlahy, Carrickboy, Colehill, Coolarty, Cullyfad, Derraghan, Dring, Enybegs, Forgney, Killashee, Kilnatraun, Leggah, Lisryan, Melview, Moydow, Moyne, Mullinalaghta, Newtowncashel, Ratharney, Stonepark, Taghshinny Open Countryside	Rural Service Settlements & Hinterland	Important historic settlements with distinct rural character which (in conjunction with one – off housing in the open countryside in accordance with Rural Housing Policy) primarily fulfill local housing needs alongside limited local level services appropriate to their status.

2.1.6.6
Longford Core Strategy Map

The Core Strategy Map (Figure 2.1.4) provides a visual representation of the settlement distribution throughout the County and identifies the settlement hierarchy in the context of transport and infrastructure available, including the county's national primary and secondary routes along with regional and local roads and the county's railway line.

The Map provides a geographical illustration of how Longford is envisaged to develop over its Plan period in line with the availability and integration of services, transport, infrastructure and economic activity whilst also preserving its natural environment and amenities.

In respect of core strategy requirements as set out under section 7 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, rural areas in respect of which planning guidelines relating to sustainable rural housing issued by the Minister under section 28, are identified by way of diagrammatic map at section 2.1.6.5.

Figure 2.1.4:
Core Strategy Map.



2.1.7 Regional Planning Guidelines Population Targets

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022⁵ set out population projections for the region with specific targets for each County, the linked Gateway and Principal Towns. The population targets prescribed for County Longford are set out under table 2.1.2 below. The guidelines indicate population targets of 43, 080 for County Longford to the period 2016 and 44, 603 to the period 2022. Of these targets 11, 051 and 12, 926 are indicated for Longford Town to the periods 2016 and 2022 respectively. The remaining balances of population are to be located across the remainder of the County in line with the Settlement Hierarchy.

Table 2.1.2: Midland Regional Planning Guidelines Population Allocation⁶

	Target 2016	Target 2022
County Longford	43,080	44,603
Longford (Principal Town)	11,051	12,926
County Balance	32,029	31,677

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines provided for a growth ratio of 60:40 overall population allocation split for Longford Town and the remainder of Longford County respectively.

Table 2.1.3: Midland Regional Planning Guidelines Housing Land Requirements 2016

	Target Population Growth -2022 as per RPG's	Hectares of housing land required (+50%)	Density	Number of Units Required
Longford (Principal Town)	4,924	102	30 units / ha.	2, 052
County Longford	679	98 (35 yield)	12 units / ha.	283
County Balance	5 603	137		2, 335

Since the adoption of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, the population allocation for Longford was revised and the overall population allocation split revised to a ratio of 88:12 as determined by the Midland Regional Authority Technical Working Group, for Longford Town and the remainder of the County respectively in line with the County Settlement Hierarchy.

It was determined that the growth ratio population split between Longford Town and the County should be revised to correct previously higher growth rates in the County compared with the level of growth in Longford Town.

The population targets set out for County Longford provide for a population growth of 5,603 up to 2022. Longford Town, which is a principal town as designated under the RPG's and which accordingly sits at the top tier in the County Settlement Hierarchy, is allocated a population growth of 4,924 persons, resulting in the provision of targeted growth of 679 persons outside of Longford Town. In order to meet these targets an appropriate level of housing land must be made available for development over the lifetime of the Plan. Table 2.1.3 which follows, sets out the amount of lands required in hectares and the number of units required over the duration of the Development Plan in order to accommodate these population targets.

In order to cater for the population growth of 4,924 persons for Longford Town over the lifetime of the plan, 2,052 residential units are required which equates to 102 hectares of residentially zoned land.⁷

In order to cater for the population growth in the reminder of the County, the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines indicate that 98 hectares of land is necessary. From these 98 hectares, a housing yield of 35 hectares is required to be developed during the lifetime of the plan in order to meet the population growth of 679 persons and provide the required 283 residential units needed.⁸

Accordingly and as demonstrated by the following table, at this point in the Plan period, there is no requirement within the County area for any additional zoning as part of this Development Plan review.



2.1.8 Core Strategy Table

INTRODUCTION

In compliance with the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, and the requirements for a Core Strategy under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), Table 2.1.4 illustrates the distribution of target population throughout each of the settlements in County Longford. Building on the Settlement Strategy, the Core Strategy Table provides a quantitative expression for the spatial development of the County over the Development Plan period.

The **Core Strategy Table** gives a summary of the amount of land zoned for housing purposes under the Plan in order to meet the population targets and future housing land requirement as set out under the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines.

⁵ The population figures contained have been updated and determined under the Midland Regional Authority Technical Working Group.

⁶ These population figures have been determined under the Midland Regional Authority Technical Working Group.

⁷ This is based on an average household size of 2.4 persons in accordance with national trends, housing provided at an average density of 30 units/ha and in accordance with the methodology used by the MRPGs, allowing for 50% headroom to facilitate market choice and help ensure that population targets can be met.

⁸ This is based on an average household size of 2.4 persons in accordance with national trends, housing provided at an average density of 12 units/ha and in accordance with the methodology used by the MRPGs, allowing for 50% headroom to facilitate market choice and help ensure that population targets can be met.

Table 2.1.4:
Core Strategy Table (up to 2022)

Settlement Designation	Core Strategy Population Allocation	Housing Requirement in Hectares ⁹	Previous Zoning in Hectares ¹⁰	Zoning in Hectares ¹¹	Housing Yield ¹²	Previous Excess Zoning in Hectares	Shortfall of residentially zoned land in Hectares
County ¹³	5603	137	163	163	140	0	0
County Town ¹⁴ Longford Town Principal Town	4924	102	65	65	65	0	37
County Balance ¹⁵	679	35	98	98	35	0	0
Other Towns ¹⁶ ↓							
Granard ¹⁷	n/a	4	14	13	4	0	0
Edgeworthstown ¹⁸	n/a	3	12.5	11.5	3	0	0
Ballymahon ¹⁹	n/a	1.5	7.5	7	1.5	0	0
Lanesborough ²⁰	n/a	1.5	7	5	1.5	0	0
Serviced Settlements	n/a	11	32.5	32.5	10	0	0
Rural Service Settlements & Hinterland	272 ²¹	14	39.5	14*	14	0	0

⁹ Expressed in hectares and taken from Table 4.3 of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 – 2022 as updated by the Regional Technical Working Group

¹⁰ Amount of land zoned in Longford Development Plans and associated Local Area Plans prior to this review, primarily for housing and expressed in hectares

¹¹ Amount of land zoned as a result of the Plan, primarily for housing units, expressed in hectares. Additional lands have been provided as per explanation at Columns 5,6 & 7 of 2.1.8.1, Core Strategy Table Explained, overleaf.

¹² Housing yield is expressed in hectares. As defined by Guidance Note on Core Strategies, Housing Yield should be equal to column 3 'Housing Requirement in Hectares'. A density assumption of 30 units per hectare applies to Longford Town and an average density of 12 units per hectare applies to the remaining County Balance.

¹³ Population allocation has been taken from Table 4.3 of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 – 2022 and subsequent Regional Technical Working Group population update

¹⁴ Population allocation has been taken from Table 4.3 of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 - 2022 and subsequent Regional Technical Working Group population update

¹⁵ Population allocation has been taken from Table 4.3 of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 - 2022 and subsequent Regional Technical Working Group population update

2.1.8.1 Core Strategy Table Explained

The following summary sets out an explanation of the headings contained in the Core Strategy Table.

COLUMN 1 **'SETTLEMENT DESIGNATION'**

The first column sets out each of the settlements within County Longford, defined in line with the Settlement Hierarchy.

COLUMN 2 **'CORE STRATEGY POPULATION ALLOCATION'**

The second column Core Strategy Population Allocation sets out the population allocations for Longford as expressed at Table 4.3 of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 – 2022 and the subsequent Regional Technical Group population update. A target population growth of 5,603 persons has been allocated to County Longford with 4,924 persons assigned Longford Town and the residual balance to be distributed across the remainder of the County in line with the Settlement Hierarchy.

40% of the County balance of 272 persons is to be located in the Open Countryside in line with the assumptions of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, 'Future Housing Land Requirements 2016' calculations.

COLUMN 3 **'HOUSING REQUIREMENT IN HECTARES'**

Column three Housing Requirement in Hectares sets out the amount of land required for each settlement in order to accommodate the population targets in column number two 'Core Strategy Population Allocation'. The figures provided for each settlement are in accordance with the 2016 land allocation as set out under Table 4.3 of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 – 2022 and subsequent Regional Technical Working Group update and have incorporated 50% headroom in accordance with the document, 'Development Plans, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DoEHLG June 2007'.

An average household size of 2.4 is used for the purpose of calculating the zoned land requirements. A density of 30 units per hectare has been applied for Longford and an average of 12 units per hectare has been applied for the County balance. The densities applied are considered averages as some settlements will have the ability to accommodate higher densities depending on the availability of services, infrastructure and proximity to public transport, whilst some settlements may be more suitable to lower densities.

¹⁶ The Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the guidelines on Core Strategies define town as settlements over 1,500 persons in the last census. Longford Town, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon are the examples of such town in the County. In order to address this situation, towns designated as Key Service Towns, Service Towns and Local Service Towns under the Regional Settlement Strategy in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 – 2022 are aggregated for the purposes of the table

¹⁷ Granard is defined as a Key Service Town as set out under the Regional Settlement Strategy in the current Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region

¹⁸ Edgeworthstown is defined as a Service Town as set out under the Regional Settlement Strategy in the current Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region

¹⁹ Ballymahon is defined as a Local Service Town as set out under the Regional Settlement Strategy in the current Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region

²⁰ Lanesborough is defined as a Local Service Town as set out under the Regional Settlement Strategy in the current Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region

²¹ Figure calculated at 40% of the County Balance as per Table 4.3 of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010 - 2022 & subsequent Regional Technical Working Group update

* The figure of 14 ha. is reflective of the population yield that this quantum of zoned land would generate. It should be noted however that given the nature of these areas contained within this tier of the Hierarchy i.e. open countryside, location specific parcels of residentially zoned land have not been defined.



COLUMN 4
'PREVIOUS ZONING IN HECTARES'

Column four, Previous Zoning in Hectares, identifies the amount of zoned land previously available for development for each settlement prior to the Development Plan review.

COLUMN 5
'ZONING IN HECTARES', COLUMN 6 'HOUSING YIELD'
COLUMN 7, 'EXCESS ZONING IN HECTARES'

Column five Zoning in Hectares and column six, Housing Yield, relates to the amount of lands now zoned solely for residential development under the Core Strategy in order to meet the population allocations as set out under the current Regional Planning Guidelines. The difference between the previous zonings and that zoned under the Core Strategy is expressed in column seven Previous Excess Zoning in Hectares.

A limited level of additional lands, over and above the Housing Requirement has been identified for the higher tier settlements of Longford Town, Granard, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Lanesborough as indicated under Column 5 'Zoning in Hectares'.

This additional provision of lands has been designated taking account of DoECLG guidance *Development Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* which stipulates that enough land should be made available to meet residential needs for the next 9 years. Additionally the allocation takes account of the factor of land availability which refers to the likelihood of the land actually being developed in the short-term. Longford has a larger percentage of the labour force employed in the agricultural sector than the state average. This has a direct impact on residentially zoned landholdings within settlement boundaries, which are still used for agriculture and therefore the likelihood of the land being developed is reduced which must be considered in determining residential zoning provision.

The zonings also take account of the nature of residential zonings which also cater for the provision of local service facilities in some instances whilst also recognising that in some settlements lands are required for residential development for the purposes of consolidating the settlement.

COLUMN 8
'SHORTFALL OF RESIDENTIALLY ZONED LAND IN HECTARES'

Column eight indicates the shortfall of residentially zoned land in the County. As is demonstrated this shortfall only applies to Longford Town, which was previously a separate Planning Authority and therefore was not covered by this Plan. Development within Longford Town was restricted by the previously applicable administrative boundary and the fact that there is no immediate availability of necessary infrastructure to service undeveloped lands within the administrative boundary.

2.1.9
Implementation and Monitoring

The purpose of this section is to show clear mechanisms for the implementation of the Core Strategy in order to demonstrate how its provisions will be achieved. This in turn should be monitored to assess whether the policies and objectives are delivering the Core Strategy. In order to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the Core Strategy in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2011 and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, it is considered that in addition to the policy and objectives already indicated as part of this Core Strategy, there is need for additional policy and objectives to ensure the successful realisation of the Core Strategy and provide a more robust implementation framework. In this regard, the following policy shall apply;

IMP-CS 1:

The Planning Authority shall promote and facilitate the development of the County in accordance with the provisions of the Core Strategy, including directing development in line with the settlement hierarchy and promoting development at an appropriate scale that is reflective of the terms of the Core Strategy Table and zoning maps.

Central to the above, is the fact that a proportion of lands zoned throughout the County are currently zoned as part of other statutory land use plans, including the Town Development Plan and Local Area Plans. The Core Strategy complies with the national and regional population targets and emphasises that the Development Plan is the fundamental link with national, regional and local policies. In meeting the requirements of the future population target, the Longford County Development Plan must ensure that the availability and orderly development of suitably zoned lands, housing in the countryside and infrastructure provision are sufficient to accommodate the population targets within the lifetime of the Plan.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that whilst the quantum of development has been defined for tier 6 of the Settlement Hierarchy (Rural Service Settlements and Hinterland), the location has not. In this regard policy is required to give priority to the Core Strategy and to ensure compliance with the Core Strategy and the zoning maps and policies contained as part of the Appendices to this Plan.

Having regard to the above, the following policy and objectives shall be considered;

IMP-CS 2:

- a) In order to ensure that the population targets and future housing land requirements as defined by the zoning maps and policies contained as part of this Core Strategy, can effectively be realised the following Local Area Plans shall be reviewed (subject to resources);
 - Ballymahon
 - Carriglass
 - Lanesboro
 - Newtownforbes
 - Drumlish
 - Kenagh
 - Ardagh
 - Granard
 - Ballinalee
 - Edgeworthstown
- b) The Northern and Southern Environs LAPs shall be reviewed to ensure consistency with the provisions of the Core Strategies.
- c) Having regard to points a) and b) and where any ambiguity arises between the content of any Land Use Plan and this Plan, this Plan will take precedence, including during any transitional period.

IMP-CS 3:

The Planning Authority shall monitor and maintain a record of residential development permitted in settlements designated under the Settlement Hierarchy in order to ensure compliance with the population allocations defined by the Core Strategy Table.

IMP-CS 4:

The Planning Authority shall apply the Settlement Hierarchy to determine the scale, rate and location of proposed developments and apply appropriate development management measures to ensure compliance with the Settlement Hierarchy and Strategy, including the population targets for the County as prescribed in the Core Strategy Table.

In addition to the above, there are other factors that will markedly contribute to the ability of the Core Strategy to be delivered. Central to this is an acknowledgement of the current situation within the County with regard to unfinished housing estates and live planning permissions located on lands now identified as 'Strategic Residential Reserve'. It is considered important that the Council ensure an appropriate standard of housing development by facilitating the completion of estates. In addition, there is need to recognise where previous market choice has led developers with regard to the availability of lands for development. This is of particular importance when considering the level of development and land transfers that took place over the previous ten years compared with the slow-moving nature of the market at present. In this regard the following policy shall apply;

IMP-CS 5:

It is policy of the council that all activated and committed planning permissions, including those located on lands identified as 'Strategic Land Reserve', will be prioritised where it is determined that they support the completion of an unfinished housing estate.

IMP-CS 6:

It is policy of the council that all activated and committed planning permissions, including those located on lands identified as 'Strategic Land Reserve' shall be assessed in accordance with the requirements of Section 42 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2011.

In assessing applications for the extension of duration of planning permissions, in Strategic Land Reserve areas the Planning Authority shall consider the compatibility of the proposal in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy and the role and function of the settlement within same.

IMP-CS 7:

The Planning Authority shall monitor and maintain a record of the quantum of residential development permitted by way of extension of duration on lands zoned 'Strategic Land Reserve' in order to ensure general compliance with the terms of the Core Strategy.

The development of a robust implementation framework allows the Core Strategy to be self monitoring through the incorporation of policy to ensure this. Table 2.1.5 below indicates this through demonstrating how the goals of the Core Strategy are achieved through policy that has been incorporated.



Table 2.1.5: Monitoring Framework

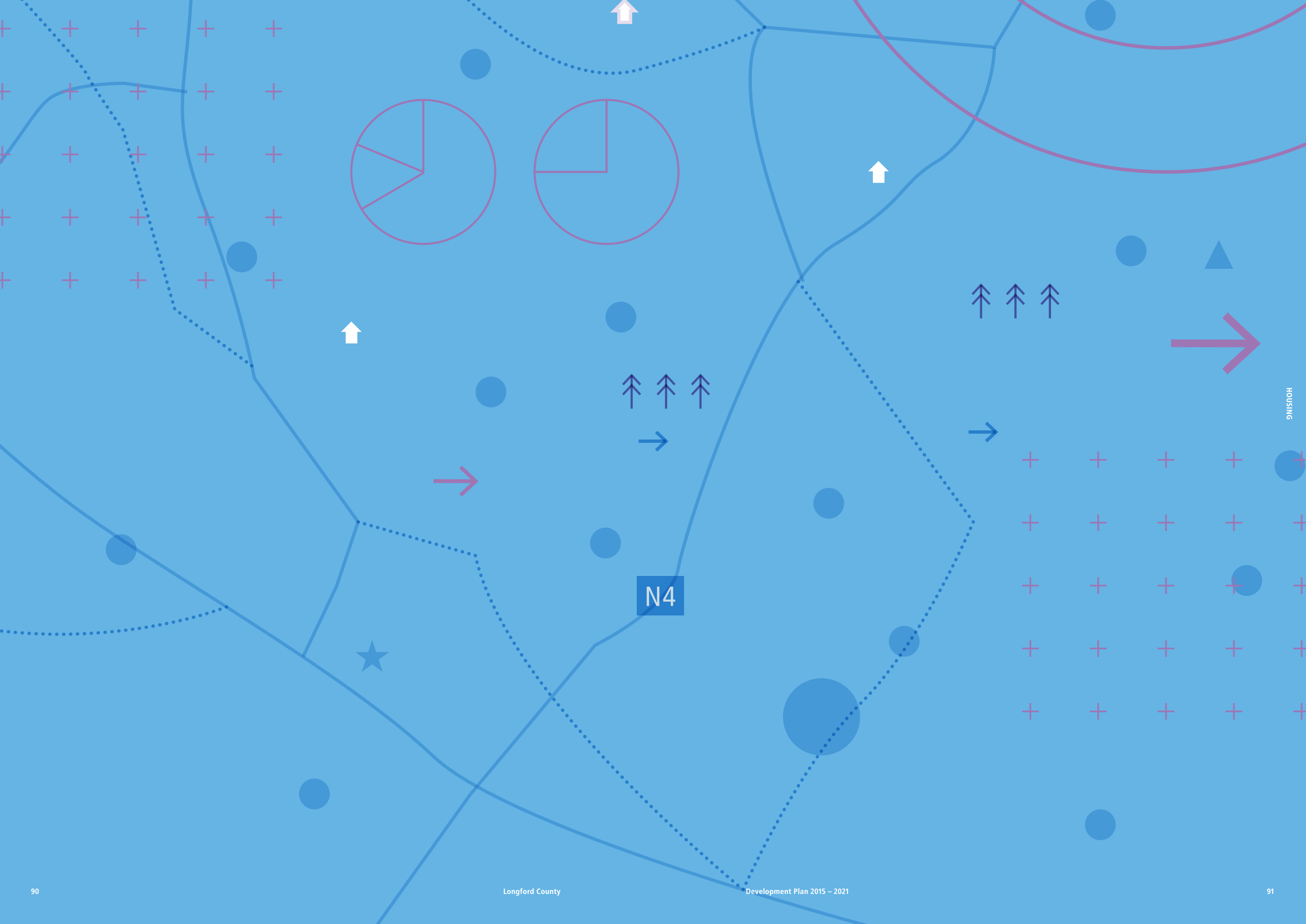
Strategic Aims	Policy/Objective
To demonstrate that the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region and other national guidelines and policies.	CS 1, CS 2, CS 3, CS 4, IMP-CS1, IMP-CS4
To facilitate the closer alliance of County and sub-county level plans with regional policy.	CS 1, CS5, CS6, CS7, IMP-CS 1, IMP-CS 2, IMP-CS3 Also see Appendix 1.
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 the National Spatial Strategy and Midland Regional Planning Guidelines.	CS5, CS6, CS7, CS 10, IMP-CS 1, IMP-CS3, IMP-CS 4, IMP-CS 7 Also see Table 2.1.4- Core Strategy Table and also see Appendix 1.
Develop this quantum of land in a manner that supports public transport and existing services.	CS 1, CS 3, CS 4, CS 5, CS 7 Also see Core Strategy Map
Provide a framework supported by evidence based settlement strategy, for deciding on the scale, phasing and location of new development, having regard to existing services and planned investment over the coming years.	CS 3, CS 4, SET 10, CS 5, CS 6 Core Strategy Map & Section 5 Infrastructure Also see Table 2.1.4- Core Strategy Table and Appendix 1.
To provide a framework within which the provision of sustainable infrastructure, amenities, economic investment and development can take place to maximize the use of resources in the plan area.	CS 3, CS 4, CS 7, CS 5, CS 7 Section 5 Infrastructure Also see Table 2.1.4- Core Strategy Table and Appendix 1.

2.1.10 Future and Longevity of the current Core Strategy

It should be noted that the Department will be engaging with the CSO in developing updated National and Regional Population Forecasts, which will be adopted as an update of the current RPGs. Following this, the population targets and future housing land requirement figures for the County will be revised and the County Development Plan will be updated in due course to reflect these revised figures.

Section B: Policies & Objectives for Development





HOUSING

N4



3. Housing

Summary →

A review of the county's housing strategy was commissioned by Longford local authorities in 2013. The law requires that a housing strategy is prepared for a county development plan. The previous housing strategy (the 2007 – 2016 strategy) was prepared during the property boom when the demand for housing in the county led to a rise in population.

The new strategy for 2015 – 2021 takes into account the changes that have occurred in the meantime. It recognises that the property market has changed and become uncertain. The strategy also considers other economic aspects that influence the demand for housing – such as income, credit conditions, lending and so on.

The strategy also complies with the Midland's Regional Planning Guidelines. By reviewing the previous strategy and examining the changes that have taken place over the years, the new strategy has a solid foundation for assessing the future housing needs in the county.

The housing strategy will be in place for the life of the development plan – that is, 2015 – 2021 – and it covers the entire county area including Longford town.

What does the housing strategy cover?

Under the Planning and Development Acts, the strategy will take into account:

- The existing and likely future need for housing
- The need to ensure that housing is available to people with different income levels
- The need to ensure that different house types and sizes are provided to match the needs of different households
- The need to encourage community growth by bringing people of different social backgrounds together
- The need to allocate a percentage of land zoned residential for social and specialist housing

How much land is needed?

The estimate of land needed is based on the housing demand in all areas of the county. It's important to note that some areas – for example, the bigger towns – will have different needs than more rural areas. Taking this, and other factors such as utility services, transport, community facilities and so on into account, the Council consider that there is enough zoned land to meet the housing needs for the period the plan covers.

What are the Council's settlement policy and standards?

There are standards required for developing houses in towns and villages such as Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown and Drumlish. There are also particular standards for developing houses in rural areas, especially in the open countryside.

The Council's settlement policy aims to improve places where people live. In particular, this policy encourages development that:

- is high quality, simple and efficient in design
- is in line with the existing landscape and character (and provides for public open spaces, and so on)
- enhances the identity of the area through measures such as the rejuvenation of derelict sites and using protected structures
- ensures the sustainability of communities and the surrounding environment and landscape

The policy requires developers to complete work to the satisfaction of the planning authority.

3.1 Housing Strategy

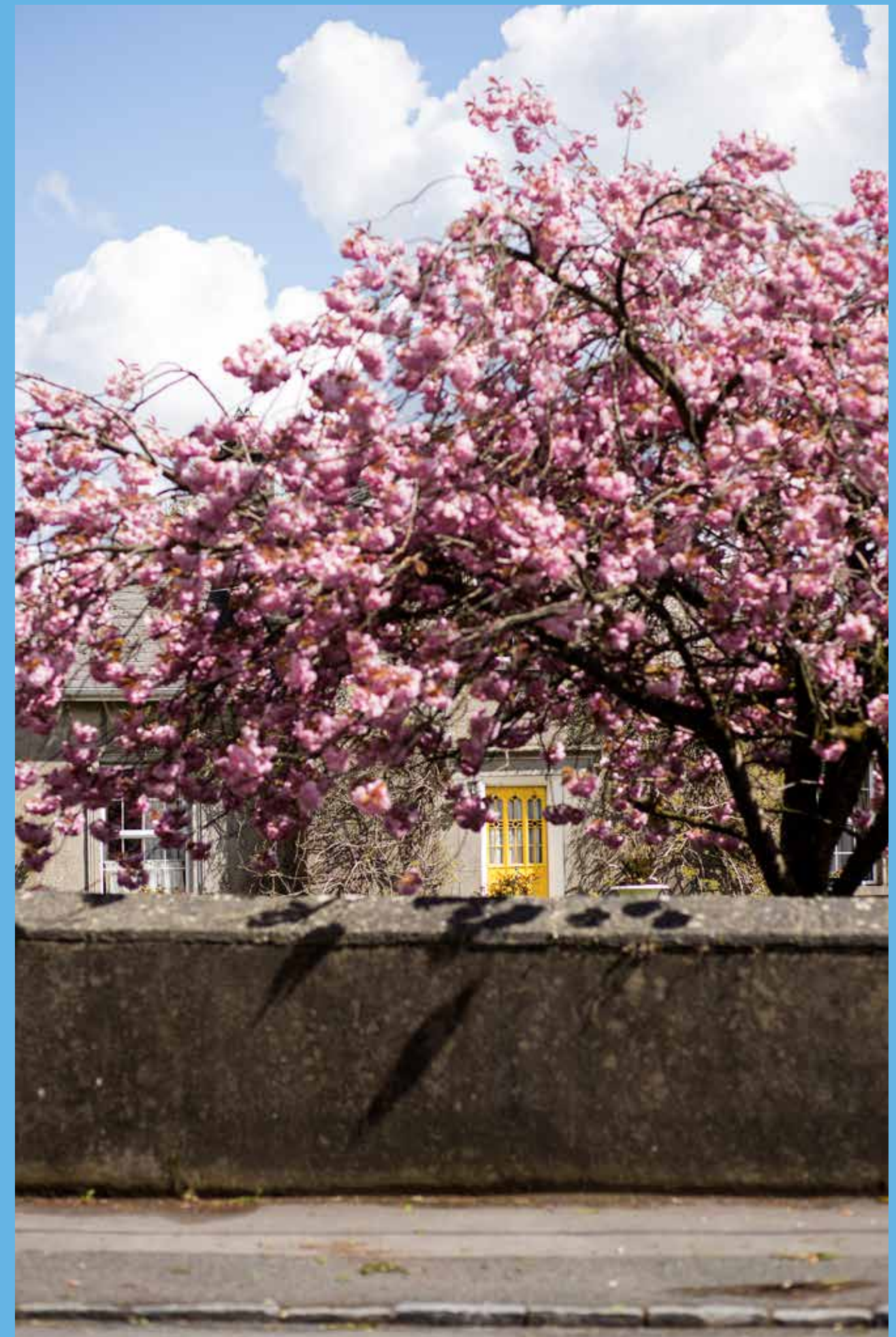
HOUSING →

3.1.1 Housing Strategy Introduction

The previous Longford County Housing Strategy 2007-2016 was prepared during a period of unprecedented growth in the national property market substantially due to the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme which drove demands for housing resulting in a substantial population increase.

A review of the Housing Strategy was commissioned by Longford Local Authorities in February 2013 and carried out in consultation with Future Analytics Consultants to reflect the fundamental changes that have taken place in the economy, and in particular, the housing market in intervening years.

High levels of market uncertainty and the changing nature of housing demand, including mitigating factors such as income, demographics and credit conditions are key aspects which underline the current housing market and the methodology applied in the Housing Strategy considers these aspects in detail, providing a robust and credible basis for the assessment of future housing needs in Longford in line with the population targets as set out under the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010-2022.



HOUSING

3.1.2 Housing Strategy Synopsis and Policy

The Housing Strategy is for the period of 2015-2021, which is the lifetime of this proposed Development Plan. It covers the entire County area including that of Longford Town. Under the remit of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), it specifies that a Housing Strategy will take into account the following;

- The existing and likely future need for housing.
- The need to ensure that housing is available to people with different levels of income.
- The need to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is provided to match the requirements of different categories of households.
- The need to counteract undue segregation between persons of different social backgrounds.
- Provide as a general policy that a percentage (being not more than 20%) of land zoned for residential, or for a mixture of residential and other uses is reserved for the provision of social and specialist housing.

3.1.2.1 Residential Zoning and Settlement Strategy

(To be Read in conjunction with Section 2.1 Core Strategy)

In general, Longford Local Authorities have two specific types of zonings in terms of residential development. These zonings are defined as follows:

RESIDENTIAL

To primarily provide for residential development; to preserve and improve residential amenity, dwellings and compatible uses including social and community facilities, open spaces and local shopping facilities. In certain instances low density and medium density residential zonings have been applied relative to the settlements position in the Settlement Hierarchy.

COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL

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

The Housing demand for County Longford established that a total of 2,335 residential units will be required to the period 2022. Estimates of available zoned land and capacities provided at table 2.1.4 indicate that there is sufficient allocation over the lifetime of the plan to cater for these projections. However, it should be noted that these estimates for the capacity of the zoned land do not take into account factors including lands that may not be released for development during the period of the housing strategy.

Housing units will be provided in line with the County Settlement Hierarchy as set out at Figure 2.1.3. In supporting the settlement strategy for the County, the residential density will generally be higher for the higher tiered settlements while Tier 6 settlements will be significantly less than the larger settlements throughout the County. Although it is recognised that this is not the most efficient use of land, particularly by urban standards, it is considered that in ensuring provision of adequate land for housing to meet the needs of the County's population, it is necessary to recognise the rural and dispersed nature of settlement distribution within Longford and balance sustainable development with the social, community and cultural requirements of the County (Section 10 (2) (d) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000). This approach offers a more secure future for the rural population of Longford where a network of rural settlements is built upon to sustain a range of viable services and community facilities.

Based on the provision of the undeveloped residentially zoned land, it is considered that there is sufficient capacity to cater for the projected housing needs for County Longford for the period to 2021 as set out within the housing strategy. The provision of land has taken account of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, including those factors outlined in the document *Housing Supply, Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG, 2000) such as existing or proposed shopping and community facilities, public transport routes, utility services, adjoining uses including amenities, land demand for other uses and land availability.



An important element of zoning provision within County Longford is the factor of land availability which refers to the likelihood of the land actually being developed in the short-term. Although levels of workers dependent on the agricultural sector has reduced in the County during the previous intercensal periods, Longford still remains to have a larger percentage of the labour force employed in the agricultural sector than the state average (Census 2011, CSO). This has a direct impact on residentially zoned landholdings within settlement boundaries, including Longford Town, which are still used for agriculture and therefore the likelihood of the land being developed is reduced which must be considered in determining residential zoning provision.

In addition, development within an area of Longford Town is currently restricted as there is no immediate availability of services and therefore the short-term likelihood of these lands being developed is compromised.

This is an important factor to consider in ensuring that there is adequate land available for housing provision within the town and to support its role of 'principal town' in the functional hierarchy of the settlement strategy and ensure its sustainability.

Accordingly, in considering the above factors, land availability, immediate availability of services and the need to ensure a choice of location even at the end of the housing strategy period, have become dominant in shaping the pattern of residential zonings within the county.

As the above mentioned issues have come to the forefront in determining the level of zoning provision, it is also necessary to ensure that wasteful over provision of zoned land is avoided. This issue has been faced through ensuring the provision of an appropriate level of residentially zoned land in accordance with the functional hierarchy outlined within the settlement strategy i.e. ensuring that the majority of housing units are provided in the key settlements through the provision of residentially zoned lands accordingly. This has been further strengthened through ensuring that cognisance has also been taken of the short, medium and long term programme of works for infrastructure provision which, in turn, has aided the formation of the functional hierarchy of the settlement strategy, thus limiting the possibility of wasteful over provision of zoned land.

The encouragement of the spatial distribution of future population in accordance with the settlement strategy also promotes the provision of housing units in areas where greater employment opportunities and facilities exist, and in locations that have greater access to public transport links. This reduces the need to travel and increases and improves the sustainability of the settlement distribution within the County, which is still influenced by rural settlement trends and patterns.

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

HS-1:

It is the policy of the Council to plan positively for future housing requirements in the County in accordance with the population targets and distributions set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region. In doing so the Council will provide such housing within existing defined settlements in order to realise the economics of providing infrastructure and services in towns and villages, and to facilitate the expansion of existing settlements in a planned and orderly fashion with the benefit of a broad range of services and infrastructure.

HS-2:

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

HS-3:

The Council will promote and encourage the provision of a broad mix of housing types in towns and villages in order to cater for the changing demographic outline of the County. This will include the provision of housing for the elderly, persons with disability, lone parents and travelling families. To facilitate this, the Council will require larger schemes to include a mix of house types and sizes, having regard to the prevailing nature of household formation and change, demographic change and related considerations in the County.

HS-4:

It is Council policy to expect a 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.

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

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

HS-5:

It is the policy of the Planning Authority to facilitate the provision of housing units to sufficiently cater for social and specialist housing needs over the Plan period as established in the County Housing Strategy.

HS-6:

Provision of social and specialist housing shall be progressed through partnership working with voluntary and co-operative housing organisations, the Health Service Executive, as well as through agreements with private developers as well as the Local Authority's own house building programme.

HS-7:

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

HS-8:

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

HS-9:

It will be necessary for the planning authority to reserve 14%²² of applications for private housing developments to provide an element of social and specialist housing, in order to provide an even spread of housing of all types and encourage social integration, for the purpose of addressing the requirement for social housing under Part V.

HS-10:

Percentage division between social and specialist housing shall be decided on the basis of each individual site. Criteria to be taken into account will include the following:

- *The type and location of the housing units required by the planning authority at a given time, as defined by the priority housing list by the Housing Section;*
- *The existing mix of housing classes in the area - as a general rule, in areas with an existing high level of social housing present, a lower reservation of lands will be required for social housing purposes.*

HS-11:

In the interest of counteracting undue social segregation, the Council will ensure that an appropriate balance between incomes, social, specialist and private (including private rented) housing is provided within communities. Decisions on leasing take up, RAS and on Part V percentage ratios on specific sites will be based on the existing housing profile and needs of the area.

HS-12:

Longford County Council will continue to maximise the potential of the various social housing options, including voluntary housing, affordable housing, shared ownership, improvement of existing housing stock in lieu of Local Authority Housing and extensions to Local Authority Houses.

HS-13:

It is the policy of the Council to promote and support the development of housing for older people and those with disabilities, including the concept of independent living and the development of 'lifecycle housing' i.e. housing that is adaptable for people's needs as they change over their lifetime.

New developments will be required to be in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations Amendment, 2000 (Access for People with Disabilities). Where time constraints permit, in the case of housing provision for the disabled, direct and on-going consultations will be entered into with the prospective tenants in order to assess individual requirements.



HS-14:

Open spaces, entrances, pathways and parking areas in new residential developments shall be designed with reference to "Buildings for Everyone – Inclusion, Access and Use" (National Disability Authority, 2002). The planning authority will have cognisance of the needs of the elderly with regard to accessibility, security and social interaction.

HS-15:

Regard shall be had in the assessment of new developments to the social inclusion of all sectors of society, including the needs of the travelling community and ethnic minorities. Traveller accommodation shall be provided in accordance with the current, and any future, traveller accommodation plan.

HS-16:

It is the policy of the planning authority to continue to assist Voluntary Housing Organisations insofar as is possible in line with government objectives on increasing output from Voluntary Housing Organisations.

HS-17:

Any application for planning permission relating to a residential development under this Strategy which may impact on the integrity and/or setting of any monuments, sites, objects or areas of archaeological, cultural, architectural, historical or heritage importance under the protection of the DoEHLG, shall be referred to the Heritage and Planning Division of the DoECLG for observations/comment prior to a grant of permission/approval being obtained.

²² The basis for this figure is summarised in Table 3.10 of the County's Housing Strategy contained at Annex 1 of this plan. This table demonstrates a summary of anticipated social and specialist housing needs in the County.



3.2 Settlement Policy and Requirements for Residential Development

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

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

For areas which are zoned as part of this Plan or other statutory land use plan –
“Designated Settlements”

For areas which are not covered by an additional plan, but are subject to the policy statements in other sections of the County Development Plan –
“Rural Areas”

3.2.1 Designated Settlements

The Settlement Strategy contained at Section 2.1.6 of this document identifies a hierarchy of settlements within the County. As indicated, these areas and other zoned lands are defined as Designated Settlements.

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

Primarily outlined below are **general policies** (Section 3.2.1.1) for residential development within these areas in order to ensure the maintenance and development of thriving communities, and to provide quality physical development that is attractive and sustainable.

Secondly **standards required for residential developments** within designated settlements or as otherwise zoned as part of this plan, including where appropriate areas within Longford Environs.

3.2.1.1 Designated Settlements – General Policy and Objectives

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

HOU DS 1:

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

HOU DS 2:

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

HOU DS 3:

A principal consideration in the assessment of proposed new development in a particular settlement shall be the enhancement of a unique and distinctive identity through encouraging appropriate design guidance, rejuvenation of derelict sites and the use of protected structure/ Architectural Conservation Area mechanisms.

- a. Existing features that form integral elements of village character shall be protected from inappropriate development. These features include existing recreational spaces, both active and passive, located in many settlements but particularly in the smaller villages (e.g. Newtowncashel and Abbeyshrule). Proposals that aim to remove, develop or otherwise interfere with these spaces will be considered contrary to this Policy and unlikely to be considered favourably.
- b. Developments should reflect existing development patterns in terms of density, scale, layout, design and material finishes. Where appropriate, village/ town houses shall be required to be built up to the footpath in order to maintain existing or establish new building lines in the interest of the settlement structure and character.
- c. High quality designs and finishes will be required in connection with new development which may include the provision of street furniture, lighting and pavement treatment to the satisfaction of the Council.
- d. New residential developments in towns and villages will generally be required to provide open space at a minimum rate of 15% of the total site area. The space provided shall be in a useable form in terms of layout, size and shape and reserved for public open space for the life of the development. Development will not be permitted on lands reserved for public open space save where it can be demonstrated that such development would clearly benefit the users of the space.
- e. Individual sites will generally be required to provide minimum back garden lengths of 11 metres. These standards will apply unless otherwise specified in individual Local Area Plans/Village Policy Statements or where residential density guidelines are applied with alternative requirements particularly in relation to the quality of the completed development and/or specific use criteria (e.g. sheltered housing provision).

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

The Council shall promote and encourage the reuse, refurbishment, rebuilding and stabilisation, as appropriate, in terms of heritage and safety considerations, of derelict sites and dangerous buildings within the County.

HOU DS 4:

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

- Opening up of appropriately zoned previously inaccessible land banks and making this land available to the relevant parties.
- Reduction in development charges in order to promote the re-use and/or refurbishment of derelict or run-down properties.
- The acquisition of derelict property where it can provide infill and/or reduce negative visual impact, particularly in or adjoining areas designated as being of high amenity or of high scenic value.

3.2.1.2 Designated Settlements Requirements & Standards for Development

In order to optimise the efficiency of this plan, the following section outlines the requirements for residential developments within designated settlements. The following section should be read in conjunction with the Rural Design Guide (Annex 3) and Section 5 of the plan which contains Infrastructure objectives and policy.

HOU DS 5: DESIGN STANDARDS

- Generally, house design should be of a high standard, yet simple, with a minimum of different materials, finishes and detailing.
- Houses should be energy efficient in their siting and design, and utilise local materials where present and practicable. The use of renewable resources and alternative energy will be encouraged.
- Design solutions should be employed to minimise overlooking/overshadowing and to preserve and enhance the residential amenity of the entire development.
- A variety of house types, sizes and designs (compatible with the overall scheme) will be encouraged in new developments. Developers should refer to “Social Housing- Design Guidelines” (DoELG, 1999- or subsequent update), Section B2 as a guide to minimum room sizes in proposed residential development.
- Where appropriate, developers will be required to provide a variety of house types, sizes and designs as part of an overall scheme. In this regard proposals for development shall take account of the need/demand for a particular house type and the requirements of the settlement. In this regard applicants are advised to consult the planning authority prior to submitting an application. Developers should refer to the Longford Housing Strategy and the “Social Housing- Design Guidelines” (DoELG, 1999- or subsequent update), Section B2 as a guide to minimum room sizes in proposed residential development.

- Private open space to the rear of dwellings shall be provided at a minimum of 11metres in length, extending for at least the width of the dwelling unit. In the case of detached and semi-detached dwellings, this space should be accessible by pedestrians other than through the house. This private open space requirement may, in exceptional circumstances, be reduced in town and village centres and areas of higher residential densities where a satisfactory public open space/recreational, congregational area is provided.
- All boundary walls shall be capped and plastered, except in the case of fencing or stone walling. Some layouts may be required to omit front boundaries in order to preserve the character of the area. Generally the following standards apply:
 - Front Walls: 0.5-1.2m high
 - Side/Rear Walls: 1.8-2m high
 - Estate boundary/dividing walls between houses: 2m
- Alternatives including fencing with backplanting of shrubs and/or trees may be considered where privacy and/or security is preserved or where the character of the development requires it.
- Substantial developments may require prior consultation with relevant service providers, e.g. ESB

HOU DS 6: LAYOUT AND DENSITY

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

- Layouts should reflect the existing town or village character. In the case of proposed developments that have a street frontage, the developer may be required to build houses in accordance with the existing building line in order to retain the built fabric of the settlement and reinforce its physical structure. Similarly, where the structure of the settlement requires it, courtyard type developments may be appropriate. In addition to this, where appropriate the applicant may be requested to abide by the following set back distances;

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

- * In accordance with national policy, planning permission will not normally be granted to new developments on national routes unless in exceptional circumstances. The following criteria shall be used in determining whether an application constitutes “Exceptional Circumstances”:
- The compatibility of the proposal with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines
 - The relevance and appropriateness of the proposed development in supporting the aims and objectives of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines
 - The nature of the proposed development and its impacts on the national road, including the volume of traffic generated by the proposal, implications for the safe and efficient operation of the national road, its capacity and service life and, where appropriate, the cumulative impacts including the existing level of development in the area and the precedent that could be set by a grant of permission in that particular instance.
 - Compatibility with DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Road Guidelines (2012).
 - Plan led development in consultation with the NRA.

- In the design of proposed developments, consideration shall be given to the provision of access to adjacent lands and the overall traffic layout of the area.

- e) Developers will normally be required to install cycle lanes in conjunction with footpaths throughout the proposed development.
- f) Cul-de-sac layouts are generally preferred in smaller villages and towns, however, consideration shall be given to alternative layouts where access is provided to rear lands and where the layout is favourable towards safe and efficient traffic circulation.
- g) A Traffic Projections Form shall be submitted as part of the application for development, and where the development falls within the defined thresholds, a Transport Impact Assessment, Traffic and Transport Statement and/or a Road Safety Audit shall be submitted (or the required form that forms part of any subsequent update).

HOU DS 7: PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

- a) The developer will normally be required to reserve 15% public open space in association with new developments (this requirement may be relaxed in conjunction with areas of higher density as outlined above) and/or may be required to contribute (either financially or with land) towards the assembly of a larger public park for the benefit of the settlement as a whole.
- b) In exceptional cases in smaller developments (eight houses or less), hard or soft landscaped play lots of a minimum size of 0.1 ha may be provided in lieu of public open space.
- c) On sites that abut important recreational areas such as playing pitches, riverbanks, walking routes etc., the developer may be required to provide pedestrian links and/or wildlife corridors to connect the proposed development with its surroundings and potentially extend/enhance existing recreational facilities within the settlement and pedestrian routes toward the town/village centre. Pedestrian links should be secure, overlooked and well lit, or alternatively, be able to be locked at night.
- d) Areas of public open space should be designed, located and managed to encourage biodiversity and provide wildlife corridors where possible
- e) Incidental open space, such as grass margins, leftover spaces or unusable areas shall not be calculated as part of the open space provision for a development.

- f) Public open space should be provided in an area where it is useable, accessible and secure. It shall be provided as an area of passive recreation and/or children's informal play area. This generally excludes areas to the rear or sides of houses which are not overlooked, poorly lit and encourage anti-social behaviour and the accumulation of litter.
- g) Where open space is provided adjacent to a main public road, this shall be fenced with an appropriate boundary material.
- h) The above requirements may be relaxed in certain instances, for example in developments consisting of Sheltered Housing or OPDs.
- i) The Council shall facilitate and promote the provision of a network of green infrastructure serving the settlement hierarchy and its environs.

HOU DS 8: LANDSCAPING

- a) Landscaping plans will be required in conjunction with all new residential developments and should include hard as well as soft landscaping elements.
- b) Stands of mature trees on sites shall be preserved and protected in developments including their root systems. During construction the trees and their root systems shall be fenced off for protection.
- c) Soft landscaping should be carried out utilising native/semi-native species, and exclude the use of exotic and/or invasive species, particularly in areas adjacent to riverbanks and wildlife areas.
- d) Public open space areas should be suitably landscaped, including mounding, informal play areas/kick about areas, provision of street furniture including benches etc. Landscaping should be provided in a manner which suits potential users e.g. where OPDs are provided, children's play areas may not be appropriate.
- e) Surfacing should be of high quality and designed to support the level of traffic which it is proposed to carry. Where several paving types are to be used, they should be utilised to emphasise congregation areas, crossings and pinch points, or to emphasise and enhance children's play areas or promote sensory experience, or provide access for those with disabilities.



- f) Lighting standards, litter bins, signage, seating, bollards etc. should be provided in accordance with an overall scheme. Public lighting shall be installed above all footways within the development to the following standards or similar suitable alternative;
 - i. *Ornamental type public lighting, such as Urbis lighting, 8m high Chatsworth decorative columns with 1 metre cascade brackets and albany lanterns with 250W SON lamps or similar approved equals.*
 - ii. *Any proposed lighting shall meet the requirements of the Department of Environment publication "Recommendations for site development works for Housing Areas," (1998) and ESB standards.*
 - iii. *For the roads network in and around an immediate housing area or along a public walkway, public lighting shall be provided to the following standards such as, Tubular Columns with Urbis K-lux lanterns with height of columns and wattage requirement to that of ESB standards.*

- g) Generally, developers shall be required to retain hedgerows and mature trees on-site. If this is not possible, the developer will be required in most instances to replace trees removed and/or strengthen existing hedgerows.

HOU DS 9: PHASING AND COMPLETION

- a) The developer will be required to submit a bond ensuring the completion of the development to the satisfaction of the planning authority. This bond shall represent the size and extent of the development and shall be submitted to the planning authority prior to the commencement of the development.
- b) Where applicable, a phasing programme shall be submitted as part of an application for planning permission and shall clearly indicate each phase on the drawings. Roads, footpaths, drainage, public lighting and boundaries shall be completed prior to the first occupation of any houses in each phase of the development and prior to the commencement of subsequent phases.



c) Housing estates shall be named and numbered in accordance with a logical and sequential scheme to be agreed with the planning authority prior to the commencement of the development.

d) Housing estate names shall be in Irish or in Irish and English and shall reflect local personages, landscape, heritage, historical and cultural features. Names shall be submitted in advance to the Planning Authority for approval by an established place names committee of the Heritage Forum or the Planning Authority.

HOU DS 10: INFILL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

a) Infill Residential development will be promoted in order to retain continuity of the built fabric and enhance the vitality and viability of village centres.

b) Design, height and materials should be compatible with adjacent properties.

c) The existing building line should be maintained or, where changed, should be carried out in a manner which enhances the built fabric of the settlement.

d) Design should incorporate measures to reduce or eliminate overlooking of adjacent properties, including additional screening measures if necessary.

e) Private open space should be provided to the extent that storage of bins, fuel and clothes lines may be facilitated out of public view.

f) Car parking should be provided to development plan standards or a contribution may be accepted by the planning authority in lieu of such parking provision.

HOU DS 11: MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY DEVELOPMENTS

a) The sub-division of existing dwellings into multiple dwelling units will not normally be permitted in estates where single unit dwellings predominate.

b) Public open space shall be provided at the rate of 60m² per unit or suitable alternative to be agreed with the planning authority.

c) A high standard of architectural design and material finish will be required in all proposed multiple occupancy developments.

d) Proposals for the on-going management of the development shall be submitted at application stage.

HOU DS 12: EFFLUENT DISPOSAL (not public sewerage)

a) It will be the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of waste water and effluent treatment services by private developers in order to promote development in identified settlements where significant deficiencies exist and where it is not proposed to provide such services within the life of the Development Plan. The preference is for single houses with their own treatment system in the smaller settlements.

b) Proposed treatment plants shall be purpose designed to the required County Council standards, appropriate in capacity and scale, and have a suitable outfall and method of disposal. As part of any application, the applicant should indicate the type and design capacity of the proposed treatment plant.

c) All applications for residential developments in areas where public sewerage mains are not present shall be accompanied by the documentation as required by the relevant EPA Treatment Manual (or subsequent update), certified by a fully indemnified professional, indicating the suitability of the site for the disposal of effluent.

d) These treatment plants shall be subject to legally binding maintenance and management agreements, indicating the day-to-day caretaking and maintenance contract for the plant, and the developer shall lodge a bond with the Planning Authority in order to secure the continuing operation, management and maintenance of the plant in accordance with the relevant guidelines.

e) Where it is proposed to dispose of treated effluent direct to a watercourse, the applicant shall submit an Assimilative Capacity Report on the receiving water, prepared by an experienced hydrologist and containing the following information;

i. *Assessing the chemical, biological (Q rating) and bacterial condition of the receiving water.*

ii. *Assessing the flow data of receiving waters, indicating 95 percentile flow and Dry Weather Flow.*

iii. *Provide an assessment of the associated impacts of the proposed discharge on the chemical, biological and bacteriological quality of the receiving waters with regard to the relevant legislation.*

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

3.2.2 Rural Areas

The Settlement Strategy contained at Section 2.1.6 of this document identifies a hierarchy of settlements within the County. The settlement strategy also acknowledges the rural nature of the County and the following section of this plan details objectives and policy for residential development within these areas.

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

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

3.2.2.1 Rural Areas- General Policy and Objectives

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

HOU RUR 1:

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

HOU RUR 2:

In terms of rural housing, Longford County Council recognises the need of applicants defined within policy CS 12 to locate in their own rural areas. These cases shall be assessed on their merits, with regard being had to ability of the applicant and/or proposed resident to provide, at their own expense, the services required to sustain the proposed development without detrimental impact on road safety, water quality, public health or environmental and landscape integrity.

HOU RUR 3:

Outside designated settlements and development envelopes, there shall be a presumption against extensive urban generated commuter development, ribbon development, development by persons who do not intend to use the dwelling as their primary residence and unsustainable, speculator driven residential units. In this respect, applicants for permission for residential development in non-designated areas shall be required to submit a statement indicating the sustainability of the proposal, which shall form part of the assessment of the application for planning permission and in which shall be outlined :

- a) The reason for the location of the proposed dwelling in a particular locality.
- b) The connection or close relationship between the applicant and/or proposed resident and the locality in which the proposed dwelling is to be situated and the criteria outlined in CS 12.
- c) The place of employment of the applicant and/or proposed resident where relevant.
- d) A demonstration of the ability of the applicant and/or proposed resident to provide, at their own expense, the services required to sustain the proposed development without detrimental impact on road safety, water quality, public health, views and prospects, landscape, environmental integrity and amenity.



HOU RUR 4:

Applicants for planning permission for residential development in rural areas under strong urban influence may be required to agree to an occupancy condition, applied in accordance with ministerial guidelines, restricting the occupancy of the dwelling to the applicant and/or the applicant's immediate family for a specified period, as part of any grant of planning permission.

HOU RUR 5:

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

HOU RUR 6:

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

HOU RUR 7:

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

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

- i. The protection of water quality in the arrangements made for on site waste water disposal facilities;
- ii. The provision of a safe means of access in relation to road and public safety;
- iii. The conservation of sensitive areas such as natural habitats, the environs of protected structures and other aspects of heritage.

In regard to septic tanks, the Planning Authority will be positively disposed towards the use of septic tanks and/or with additional package treatment systems, where necessary, with Irish Agrément Board Certification. In order to protect groundwater, all site suitability tests shall be carried out in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's 'Code of Practice- Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (p.e. <10)', or any subsequent update.

3.2.2.2 Rural Areas- Requirements and Standards for Development

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

HOU RUR 8: EFFLUENT DISPOSAL, DRAINAGE AND WATER SUPPLY

- a) The minimum acceptable site size for a dwelling using an individual treatment system (septic tank and percolation area or equivalent) is 0.2ha. Where there are existing treatment systems adjacent, and/or where percolation tests are borderline (in the upper or lower 20% of permitted limits) this figure shall be increased and/or the applicant may be required to install an additional treatment system.
- b) The applicant shall submit details of the proposed effluent treatment system in accordance with the relevant wastewater treatment manual (or any update) by the EPA.
- c) Where a treatment system is to be installed, the applicant shall submit full site specific details of the proposed system certified by a suitably qualified and indemnified individual, and shall include Irish Agrément Board certification and manufacturer's certification of site suitability. Maintenance agreements for a minimum period of five years shall be in place prior to the first occupancy of the dwelling.
- d) In order to safeguard ground and surface water resources, Longford County Council shall investigate the establishment of a panel of assessors for the submission of site assessments for effluent treatment systems in accordance with the relevant EPA guidelines. The purpose of this panel is to ensure an acceptable and consistent level of quality in the reports submitted. On the establishment of this panel, site assessments will only be accepted from approved assessors.
- e) Details of proposed methods of surface water disposal shall be provided, including location of soakpits and the means of prevention of surface water accessing the public roadway.

- f) Where residential development is proposed within reasonable distance of an appropriate mains water supply, the developer will generally be required to connect to the mains system in favour of using bored wells on-site for domestic water supply purposes.

HOU RUR 9: ACCESS AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

- a) Any site proposed for the development of a dwelling will generally be required to provide a minimum of 30 metres road frontage
- b) Sight lines shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Design Manual for Roads & Bridges (DMRB) or suitable alternative to be agreed with the Roads Department on a site by site basis. The applicant shall demonstrate that adequate sightlines are achievable in each direction along the public road from the proposed access to the new development. Where the achievement of these sightlines requires the maintenance/removal of hedgerows/ditches/boundaries that are not in the ownership of the applicant, a signed letter of agreement allowing such maintenance/removal should be obtained from the relevant landowner and submitted as part of the application for planning permission.
- c) Minimum set back distances shall be adhered to in the case of frontage developments along public roads unless in instances where it is considered that building lines should be maintained. Measured from the nearest edge of road surface to the front wall of the proposed dwelling, the following set back distances should be adhered to:

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

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

- d) Where a new front boundary is constructed, applicants will be required to relocate all existing utility poles from the set back area, to be in line with the new boundary or alternatively placed underground. Set back areas shall be appropriately surfaced in keeping with the adjoining road, with sufficient drainage provision provided in order to prevent surface water entering the public road.
- e) Adequate provision shall be made for drainage to ensure that surface water arising from the proposed development does not enter the public road and that water from the public road does not enter the site.
- f) A Traffic Projections Form shall be submitted as part of the application for development, and where the development falls within the defined thresholds, a Transport Impact Assessment, Traffic and Transport Statement and/or a Road Safety Audit shall be submitted (or the required form that forms part of any subsequent update).

HOU RUR 10: DESIGN AND SITING

Site specific design solutions should be employed for individual one-off dwelling proposals. Dwelling houses should respect their location in terms of siting, design, materials, finishes and landscaping. Designs should be site specific and integrated into the landscape in accordance with the design principles contained in Annex 3 – Rural Design Guide.

Hedgerows bounding the site should be retained where possible. Hedgerows adjoining the road side boundary, should be lowered and maintained at the requisite level in order to allow sightlines and should only be removed when necessary. In instances where hedgerow is required to be removed and replaced, it should be replaced with a stone wall, backplanted with native species and maintained at the required level in order to provide an unobtrusive replacement for the hedgerow, which allows sight lines to be achieved. Plaster walls and post and rail fences, backplanted with native species, may also be considered in appropriate circumstances. Fussy and decorative wall detailing is not considered appropriate and should be avoided. The use of walls along the entire site frontage is not encouraged as it has a substantial detrimental impact on the local character and environment of the area.





4. Economic Development

Summary →

Longford County Council is a driving force behind the economic activity of the county. The County Development Plan helps to ensure that the county is an attractive place to do business.

A strong, vibrant economy is essential to provide job opportunities for the local population. The economic development of the county must be planned and managed in such a way that the needs of a growing population can be met over time.

The economic development approach contained in the development plan is ambitious but realistic. The main goal is:

'...to promote Longford as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism, while encouraging employment growth and economic activity.'

What are the guiding themes of the plan?

Broadly, economic development is structured around five guiding themes:

- Promoting economic development and local enterprise
- Local and community development
- Employment
- Land and infrastructure
- Quality of life

Using these themes as a framework, the plan's policies and strategies aim to target:

- industry, commercial and business development
- retail development
- agriculture
- tourism
- mining and aggregates (examples: sand, gravel and crushed rock)
- rural enterprise
- home-based economic activity

How will the plan work in relation to other policies?

When drawing up its policies and strategies for the economic development of the county, the Council will do so making sure that the overall plan fits in with other local, regional and national policies.

In particular, the plan will dovetail with the work of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). Under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, county councils must put Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) in place to promote and support the economic, local and community development of the Council area. These LECPs and the County Development Plan will complement each other and work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for all areas.

Overall, the plan recognises that the economic profile of the county has changed significantly over the life of the previous plan. New sectors and industries are emerging which offer potential for development.

These new opportunities will be planned for and managed in a way that complements the more established sectors and industries to yield the maximum advantage from all.

Where will new enterprises be located?

Generally, new industries and enterprises will be encouraged to base themselves in towns and villages where there is existing infrastructure and services. However, rural locations might well be more suitable depending on the kind of enterprise in question. For example, if a new enterprise is related to tourism or agriculture, it might be best to site it in a rural location. Or, if a new enterprise requires a large site, then a rural location might be the only option.

In any case, the impact on the environment and the general amenities of the area will be carefully examined before a decision is made.

4.1 Introduction

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT →

Longford County Council is the primary driver of economic activity in County Longford. Its authority in the areas of land provision, planning, infrastructural services and strategising for economic development, make it a primary catalyst for facilitating and generating business activity in the County.

Its relative importance in this regard has grown since the publication of the National Spatial Strategy in 2001 with greater emphasis now on the Council to build its own economic engine that will promote County Longford as a vibrant trade centre and a viable place to locate a business.

The County Development Plan, therefore, is a key platform on which much of the future economic success will be built on and it is critical that its objectives are ambitious yet realisable and achievable. Central to the successful implementation of the County Development Plan is the goal which aims to

‘Promote Longford as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism, while encouraging employment growth and economic activity.’

A vibrant economy is essential to provide employment opportunities to retain and sustain the population of the County, particularly given the 13.4% growth in population that the County experienced over the last census period.



Promoting Economic Development and Local Enterprise

In recognising the significance of the economy of the local authority, the County Development Plan has an important role to play in that it informs the future Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for the County, which is a new requirement as part of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The LECP is an important implementation vehicle for national and regional policy on economic and community development. It contains a spatial planning dimension in that it will complement the County Development Plan and will ensure consistency with the policies of the plan, including locational policies, and not present competing proposals. This will forge a stronger link between spatial planning and economic development, ensuring that the economic development of the County is plan led and facilitating an environment whereby economic activity can pro-actively be supported.

Local and Community Development

The Plan shall support the new Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's) in the implementation of their local and community development programmes and interventions and incorporate the proposed 'Local Economic and Community Plan' when it has been prepared and adopted.

Employment

The Longford business sector has proven itself very resilient during the economic downturn, with relatively few high profile casualties and a determination among the SME sector to persevere and dig in until the economy lifts again. The economic downturn has, however, had a detrimental impact on employment particularly in the building trade in Longford. The creation of employment opportunities, therefore, is the single greatest challenge for the County over the life of this Development Plan. Longford County Council shall take a lead role to work with other state agencies and the private sector to encourage and facilitate a vibrant and dynamic economic environment. The Council shall ensure the availability of the required infrastructure, education, training and the identification of appropriate locations for employment creation.

Changes in the national planning framework, infrastructural provision and increased economic activity have had a positive influence on the economy of Longford. Of particular importance is the recognition of the central location of the County within a national context and the role that Longford plays in the delivery of balanced spatial development. Infrastructural advances, most notably in roads, rail and telecommunications have significantly enhanced accessibility, drawing labour forces and markets ever closer. Providing an educated, trained and skilled workforce is a key element in attracting employment opportunities. The current review of the National Spatial strategy offers an opportunity to reposition Longford Town as the primary economic driver location in the North Midlands.

The economic profile of County Longford has changed significantly over the period of the previous plan. The current economic landscape consists of a diverse range of quality employers operating across a number of sectors, providing high skilled employment. The economic strengths of the County are particularly concentrated in the Engineering, Warehousing, Pharmaceutical, Public Service and Agri/Food sectors. Sectors such as precision engineering, primary and secondary food processing and the emergence of a fledgling ICT sector offer potential to create advantage and synergies if additional enterprises in these sectors can be established in the County.

The successful attraction of high levels of inward investment has stimulated business confidence, a key driver of economic growth. The key challenge for the future is to maintain competitive advantage. Longford County Council has played, and continues to play, a lead role in driving this economic shift. The zoning of lands for economic development in the previous County Development Plan and within this Plan has been, and still remains to be, essential to ensure the availability of appropriate land-banks into the future.

Generally new industry and employment generating enterprises will be encouraged to locate in towns and villages where adequate infrastructure and support services exist. However industries related to agriculture and other land uses or tied to a fixed resource and large scale industries requiring extensive sites will be acceptable in rural locations. Small enterprises in rural areas will also be acceptable where there are no adverse impacts on the environment or on neighbouring amenity and subject to proper planning and development considerations. Effects on the environment, safe access and residential amenities will be considered in all applications for rural enterprises. Some rural enterprises considered suitable include; agriculturally related industry, businesses directly related to farming e.g. servicing and repair of farm machinery, land reclamation, drainage work, agricultural contracting etc. teleworking and telecottages.

Land and Infrastructure

The land management process is crucial in the creation and facilitation of economic development. Longford County Council is continually proactive in the creation of available land appropriate for employment generating uses through acquisition and management of suitable land parcels. The provision of supporting infrastructural services continues to be an essential element in the activation of economic development land and the development of business parks.

Business parks have been provided previously in Longford, Granard, Lanesboro and Ballymahon. The spatial distribution of these business parks is critical in supporting the balanced development of the County and enhancing their respective local economies.

Quality of Life

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. This can be a difficult area to quantify but there is little doubt that quality of education, housing, amenity and ancillary services does influence people's judgment in evaluating alternative locations.

Longford County Council shall continue to protect and enhance the attractive environment of the County and build on this important asset for economic development purposes. The maintenance and protection of natural and cultural heritage has a fundamental role to play in the attractiveness of Longford as a destination and a location in which to live, work and recreate. In this regard, this section should be read in conjunction with the other policies and objectives throughout the plan, particularly in conjunction with the specific infrastructure requirements outlined at Chapter 5.

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





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT →

4.2 Industry, Commercial and Business Development

In facilitating Industrial, commercial or business developments, such development shall reflect the policies contained in this chapter.

This requires a combined approach that takes account of the following key aims;

- To promote County Longford as a viable business location that is attractive and competitive for inward investment.
- To facilitate the continued economic growth of the County in appropriate areas and encourage the generation of employment and increased economic activity in a spatially balanced manner within a sustainable framework.
- To explore opportunities for County Longford to develop competitive advantage in areas that will create employment opportunities for the County's inhabitants.
- To ensure a high quality environment, including the provision of hard and soft²³ infrastructural facilities in order to attract inward investment thus increasing employment opportunities, while at the same time enhancing the attractiveness of the area for the labour force to locate/ remain within the County.
- To continue the training, development and retention of a highly educated workforce that will consolidate an enhanced economic environment within the County.
- To facilitate the development of critical mass in the industrial sector, promoting synergistic relationships between facilities and the establishment of spin-off developments, with a view towards creating an industrial centre of excellence in the north midlands.
- To facilitate the reuse of disused industrial buildings for appropriate, alternative uses.
- To work in partnership with various national bodies to promote and facilitate the location of industry and enterprise, whilst ensuring the provision of necessary infrastructure supports and linkages are developed having regard to the need to ensure conservation and the protection of the natural, recreational and cultural amenities of the County.
- To promote the renewable energy Sector in the County to generate business and employment.
- To promote sustainability and the use of "clean technology" in existing and proposed industrial developments, including the use of alternative and renewable energy sources and the promotion of developments located within walking/cycling proximity of larger residential areas. To establish strong inter-regional partnerships which have the potential to create opportunities for enterprise and employment in the Midland Region through expanding on linkages with the border and west regions.

²³ "Hard Infrastructure" refers to the provision of roads, sewerage etc. "Soft Infrastructure" refers to the provision of enterprises, institutions, market reforms etc.

- To identify key assets of the County and facilitate their appropriate and sympathetic development to create employment opportunities in Longford.
- To build on and promote the development and expansion of the existing engineering industry in Longford and create new enterprises in this area.
- To promote the agricultural food sector with a view to using indigenous resources to create new enterprise and employment opportunities.
- To work with Bord na Mona, ESB and Coillte to identify opportunities for enterprise and job creation.
- To prepare a macro-economic assessment that will identify future potential development trends and job creation opportunities, linking this to the short medium and longer term asset requirements of the County including housing, infrastructure and educational facilities, subject to resources. This assessment shall expand on the existing proposals and actions as set out in the Economic and Tourism Section of this plan.
- To support the Local Enterprise Office and engage with them at critical stages of plan making processes in order to optimise the economic development potential of the County and provide a robust planning framework for sustainable job creation opportunities and economic growth.



4.2.1 Policies and Objectives

ECON 1:

The Planning Authority will encourage the development of industrial, commercial and business developments at appropriate scales and locations having regard to the settlement strategy of the County. Generally, where the proposed development is considered to be a large scale employer or considered intensive in nature, such developments shall preferably locate within Longford Town or Core Strategy settlements²⁴ as defined in the settlement hierarchy or on lands zoned for these purposes, as part of this plan. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for particular industries, businesses (non-retail), tourism and recreational projects and other land uses tied to a fixed resource and/or requiring extensive sites or specific locations to locate in rural locations subject to normal planning criteria and the requirements of environmental legislation including the Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive.



ECON 2:

It is the policy of the Council to assist, insofar as it is empowered, anyone who wishes to establish or expand industrial, commercial or other undertakings providing increased employment opportunities in the county, subject to normal development management requirements and technical criteria.

ECON 3:

The council shall promote the use of appropriate lands within Longford Town for the development of employment generating, industrial and mixed uses in order to enhance and contribute to the economy of Longford and promote the town as the northern driver for the Midland Region. In this regard lands to the north of the town, in proximity to existing IDA lands, are considered appropriate in this regard.

Lands shall be defined in accordance with the review of the Northern Environs Local Area Plan, or other relevant statutory process, and shall be considered for the purposes as outlined in this policy.

Supporting services such as restaurants, small scale convenience, and office shall also be provided in association with any scheme.

ECON 4:

It is the policy of the Council to zone sufficient and appropriate land for the facilitation of business, commercial and industrial purposes that stimulates the economic growth, viability and vibrancy of the county, without compromising the environmental, residential or amenity potential of the area. Zoning will be carried out as part of this Development Plan or any future Local Area Plan.

ECON 5:

It is policy that where a need is established, land may be zoned for industrial and commercial purposes to facilitate appropriate development in the medium to long term. It is further policy that, should the need arise, and where resources permit, the Council will acquire and develop suitable sites and actively encourage industry to locate at such selected centres through the provision of serviced land banks for the development of industrial/business parks.

²⁴ Retail developments in particular shall be of a scale appropriate to their location as defined by relevant retail policy contained in this plan

ECON 6:

Where an area of land is outside a settlement (i.e. an area not identified as part of the Core Strategy, as listed in this document), and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Development Plan or other statutory document, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agricultural. This provides for agricultural and ancillary uses, including residential, recreational and tourism. Other uses may be permitted subject to assessment on a site-by-site basis against relevant development management standards and technical criteria, including the other policies and objectives contained within this plan.

ECON 7:

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

ECON 8:

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

ECON 9:

Sites to be developed for industrial and commercial purposes shall be designed to the highest architectural standards to provide quality environments with adequate provision for landscaping, car and truck parking and circulation and the disposal of foul and surface water following appropriate treatment.

ECON 10:

To ensure the protection of the environment in the installation of new developments through promoting the application of the Best Available Technology (BAT) principle in terms of control of emissions/potential pollutants.



ECON 11:

It is policy of the Council to encourage and assist the provision of education, training and upskilling of the County's workforces as a key element in attracting and retaining employment opportunities.

ECON 12:

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

ECON 13: DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

1. The following information should be submitted as part of any application for industrial/commercial/business development:
 - a. Details of the nature and scale of the proposed operation, to include opening hours and anticipated traffic levels.
 - b. Availability of adequate services to serve the development or the ability of the applicant to provide these services in a manner which does not adversely impact on surrounding properties or the broader environment.
 - c. Proposals for the safe storage and disposal of waste in a manner which is visually and environmentally acceptable.
 - d. Storage should generally be confined to the rear of the premises – height should be such that the materials stored are adequately screened either by the building unit or alternative screening method. Landscaping measures shall be detailed at application stage and should utilise native, non-invasive plant species.
 - e. Compatibility of existing adjacent land uses with the proposed development and mitigation measures to preserve and protect the amenity of the adjacent uses, should this be necessary.



- f. Availability of adequate sight lines (or ability of applicant to provide same) as per the relevant NRA Standards and safe road access for anticipated levels of traffic to be generated by the proposed development. Generally, only one vehicular access point will be permitted.
- g. Adequate parking (as per Section 5.1.2) and circulation areas should be provided by the applicant within the curtilage of the proposed development unless otherwise agreed with the planning authority.
- h. Substantial developments may require prior consultation with relevant service providers, e.g. ESB.

2. Building layout and design

- a. Building design should be compatible with its surroundings. Buildings in existing industrial estates/commercial areas may be required to conform to an overall architectural and landscaping theme. Screening may be required in order to break up a large expanse of façade and additional landscaping required to large expanses of hard surface area such as parking provision.
- b. Building finishes should be of the highest quality and exterior colours should be sedate and unobtrusive.
- c. Building height should be restricted to that required for the normal operation of the premises. Buildings of excessive height will not be permitted.
- d. Detailed landscaping proposals will be required as part of any application, with particular attention to landscaping and screening on greenfield sites proposed for development.

- e. Advertising signage shall be detailed at planning application stage and shall be sympathetic in size, scale, design, materials and colour with the surrounding landscape/streetscape.
- f. Where a development forms part of an industrial estate, the proposal may be required to co-locate signage in association with the remainder of the buildings within the estate, e.g. locational signage restricted to one sign at estate entrance.
- g. Lighting shall be unobtrusive and shall not adversely affect traffic safety on adjacent roads. Specific lighting standards may be required in particular instances.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT →

4.3

Retail Development

A Retail Strategy has been prepared to coincide with the preparation of the County Development Plan. The Retail Strategy was carried out by Future Analytics Consulting Ltd., in consultation with Longford Local Authorities, in accordance with provisions set out in the 'Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities' published by Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) in 2012. The full document is available at Annex 2 of this Plan.

4.3.1 Key Objectives of the Retail Strategy

The Retail Strategy covers the Longford Town and County area. General policies and objectives for other towns and villages are included in the strategy. The key objectives of the retail strategy were heavily informed by the Retail Planning Guidelines. These key objectives are as follows:

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 2015-2021.

4.3.2 Strategic Guidance

Both the quantitative assessment (capacity assessment) of additional retail floorspace requirements for the county and the qualitative review (health checks) of the various retail centres in the county outline how the principal towns within Longford are performing at present.

One of the functions of the strategy update is to review advice on the broad quantum of additional retail floorspace that is required for the county over the period so as to maintain and enhance the positive economic performance of Longford Town and County. This role also entails the provision of broad updated recommendations on where this new floorspace should be located. In this context, the location and extent of new retail development must have regard to the planning framework for the county, particularly the Retail Planning Guidelines, the current County Development Plan and the Longford Town Development Plan. Central to the provision of additional retail floorspace is the need to reinforce the retail hierarchy of the county, in existing town and village centres. Therefore, it is vital that Longford Town, as the county's principal urban centre continues to develop its retail function to meet expanding shopping needs and to ensure a healthy and competitive retail environment.

To achieve the key objectives of the strategy due cognisance must be taken of the strategic policy framework that underpins the updated specific policies and proposals in this document. This framework is set by:

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



4.3.3 Longford Town's Position in the National Retail Hierarchy

Longford Town is the primary settlement and largest population centre within County Longford. Centrally located within the County, and having the advantage of excellent quality local, regional and national linkages, the town has become a settlement of regional importance.

The value of the town and the support function which it provides to its residents as well as those of its hinterland has been recognised within both a national and regional context. The most recent Retail Planning Guidelines, as published in April 2012, have defined the town as a Level 3 settlement, assigning it the role of providing retail support at a sub-regional level²⁵. The importance of the town within a local and regional context has also been recognised by the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, which has defined the town as being a Principal Town, the term also adopted as part of the Core Strategy.

²⁵ Retail Planning Guidelines, Section 2.2.3, page 11.

4.3.4 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. It is the core concept of the retail hierarchy that the principal urban area is supported by key service towns and to a lesser extent local service towns and villages.

As such this retail strategy focuses primarily on the upper levels of the hierarchy. It is important to note that this is not to deter or discourage smaller scale retail development and investment in the smaller villages. Rather, it is important to set a clear hierarchy which identifies where the distribution of new retail floorspace should be delivered and which is appropriate in scale and character to the hierarchical role of the centre.

The Longford County Retail Strategy 2009-2015, which was itself an update of the preceding retail strategy, established a three tier retail hierarchy, and was based on what was then the extant retail policy framework that existed within the County (2004). The adoption in 2012 of the Longford Core Strategy introduced a new and much revised settlement hierarchy. Taking account of the recently revised settlement hierarchy, as defined in the Core Strategy, the revised retail hierarchy consisting of five tiers has been adopted for inclusion in this strategy. This new retail hierarchy has been informed by the latest Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, published in 2010, and the Retail Planning Guidelines, published in 2012. The revised Longford County Retail Hierarchy is set out as follows:

Table 4.2: Longford County Retail Hierarchy

Hierarchy	Settlement Type	County Centre	Appropriate Retail Type
Tier I	Principal Town	Longford	Major convenience and comparison.
Tier II	Key Service Town	Granard	Large to medium scale convenience and medium scale comparison
Tier III	Service Town	Edgeworthstown	Medium scale convenience along with small to medium scale comparison
Tier IV	Local Service Towns	Ballymahon Lanesboro	Medium to small scale convenience, along with some limited comparison, including tourism related comparison
Tier V	Villages, Rural Serviced Settlements and Hinterlands	Villages, small settlements and the open country side of County Longford	Predominantly lower order convenience, but not excluding tourism related comparison

Table 4.1: Longford County Retail Hierarchy

Hierarchy Level	Retail Hierarchy Settlement Designation	Settlements
Tier I	Principal Town	Longford
Tier II	Key Service Town	Granard
Tier III	Service Town	Edgeworthstown
Tier IV	Local Service Towns	Ballymahon, Lanesboro
Tier V	Villages, Rural Serviced Settlements and Hinterlands	Villages, small settlements and the open country side of County Longford

4.3.5 Spatial Distribution of Additional Retail within the County Retail Hierarchy

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



Therefore, this update provides strategic guidance on how the retail strategy defines the distribution of strategic and non-strategic retail floor space within the county's retail hierarchy. Such guidance is provided in Table 4.2.

4.3.6 Core Retail Areas

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 subsequent retail development. This sequential approach prioritises development within city and town centres or 'core areas' at the expense of more peripheral edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations, which traditionally 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.

The assessment of the County's retail centres carried out under the previous Longford Retail Strategy Review made significant changes to the retail morphology of Longford Town by identifying a much larger Core Retail Area than had existed in previous strategies. This had been justified due to the unprecedented growth in the local population, retail offer and economic growth, which was seen as having necessitated a significant expansion of the core shopping area.

However, the economic downturn and rising levels of commercial vacancy in the intervening period, has effectively halted the advance of retail activity outwards from the commercial core and has reversed this trend, with such activity once again becoming predominantly clustered around the historic commercial core which has traditionally centred on Main Street. This trend has necessitated a rethink in policy terms and, as such, in this Retail Strategy the Council has sought to respond by redefining and resetting the Core Retail Area of Longford Town.

This revised Core Retail Area reflects the dense clustering of key commercial activities and is bounded by the primary thoroughfares of Main Street to the West and Dublin Street to the South, and by 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 at Appendix 2 of this plan.

Longford has a vibrant retail core but has a notable deficiency in high-end, modern comparison retail floor plates. The lack of high value comparison anchors in the town core has undoubtedly contributed to the growth of expenditure leakage from the town's catchment area as the retail profiles of competing centres have developed at a faster pace. In order for Longford Town to compete effectively with other urban centres of a similar scale, it is imperative that sufficient high-end comparison shopping is in place in the town core area.

It is essential in terms of the sustainable development of the Town going forward that this high-end comparison shopping provision is retained and substantially enhanced within the Town core area and that leakage to the periphery is prevented.

A proactive approach to urban design will be taken and substantial redevelopment in the core area should utilise opportunities to facilitate attractive and vibrant environments designed at a human scale, with enhanced pedestrian permeability, visually engaging, secure and inviting public realms that promote and encourage passive and active recreation.

4.3.7 The Sequential Approach

The locations of retail developments will be assessed against the principles of the Sequential Approach. In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines, the Sequential Approach for Longford can be defined as follows;

1. The overall preferred location for new retail development is within town centres; and
2. Subject to the requirements below, only where the applicant can demonstrate, and the planning authority is satisfied, that there are no sites or potential sites within a town centre should an edge-of-centre site be considered. In addition, 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 location outside of the core shopping area in the best interest of the vitality and viability of the core area.

4.3.8 Consideration of Need

Developing the retail offer of the county, especially in respect of high end high street comparison shopping, is vital if Longford is to remain competitive and arrest the levels of both convenience and comparison expenditure leakage to centres outside of the county.

This is particularly important for Longford Town if it is to enhance its strategic role as outlined in the Midland's Regional Planning Guidelines, as an integrated link and a principal town in the broader polycentric model for the Region including the linked gateway. It is also critical given the town's position as a crucial urban anchor providing essential services in an otherwise predominantly rural county.

Apart from Longford Town, the other retail centres in the county are small both in terms of population size and quantum of retail floorspace. The improvement of the retail offer of these centres needs to be encouraged and facilitated. Concurrently, in order to reduce expenditure leakage to other areas, the strategic priority must be to focus on enhancing the retailing environment of Longford Town.

Projections for floorspace requirements have been carried out and formulated to include adjustments for existing vacancy levels, as well as a frictional vacancy rate of 10% to ensure vital choice and competition in the market. Having regard to calculated demand, and identified vacancy, including the need to maintain a frictional vacancy rate, there is a requirement to plan for additional retail floorspace over the plan period.

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 this strategy to present figures as some form of cap on retail permissions in the County, but rather to guide the general scale of overall retail provision.

Significant consideration has also been given to the quality of existing vacant retail floorspace, including the prospective suitability of available floorspace to meet the future needs of retailers in the County. To negate prospective barriers to future activity and foster appropriate conditions to promote competition, growth and innovation in the retail sector locally, an additional allowance has been included within the identified range of future floorspace requirements of between 500 and 1000 sqm. A summary of additional floorspace requirements over the period 2015-2021 is set out in the following table.

Additional Floorspace Requirements 2015 – 2021	
Retail Category	Floor Space (m ²)
Additional Convenience	2,000 – 3,000
Additional Comparison	1,500 – 2,500
Additional Bulky	4,500 – 5,500

Future additional retail provision within Longford Town and its environs should address the insufficiency of the centre’s high-end high street comparison retail offer and traffic congestion problems in the centre.

CONSIDERATION OF VACANCY

The preparation of the Longford County Retail Strategy considered retail floorspace vacancy in detail. A survey of existing floorspace in the County was undertaken, which identified a cumulative total of 10,745 square metres of vacancy, across convenience, comparison and bulky retail

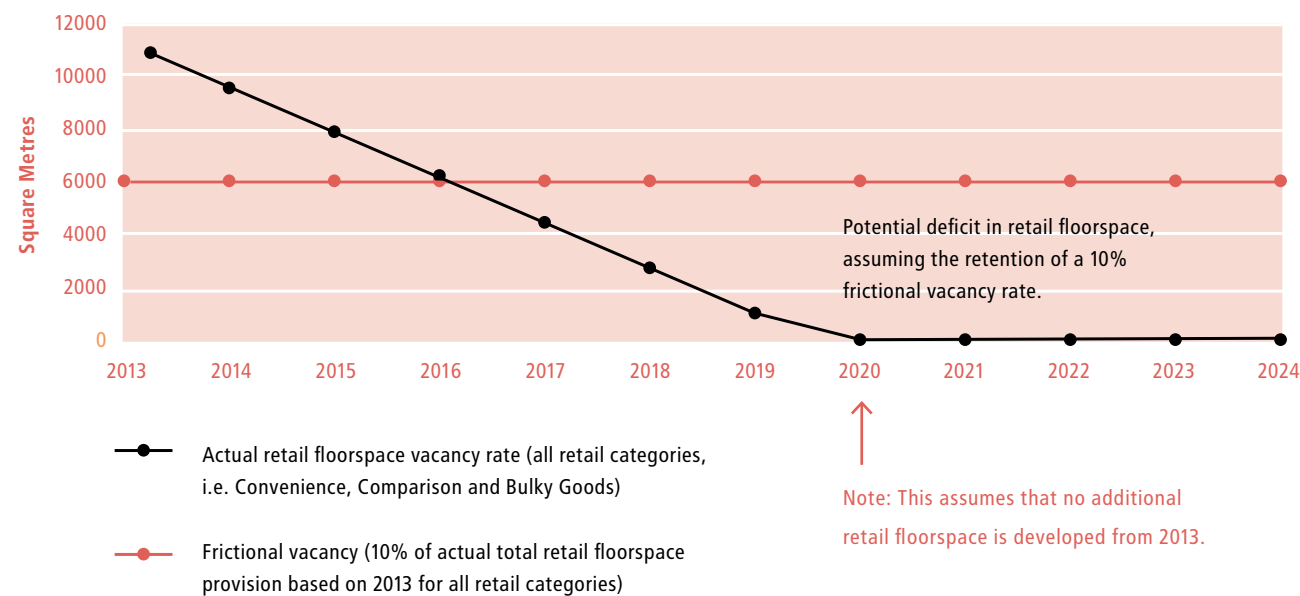
categories. This equates to 17.73% of total retail floorspace in the County. Based on market insights, a frictional vacancy rate of 10% was held across the respective categories to foster competition in the market and the residual total was fed in the calculated demand model. Identified demand over the plan period was subsequently rationalised on the basis of this vacancy to determine adjusted floorspace requirements. The modelled outputs illustrate that there is no identified need for additional comparison or bulky goods floorspace until 2017, taking account of existing levels of vacancy.

In undertaking the review of the Longford County Retail Strategy, Longford County Council has sought to take a proactive approach to addressing the issue of retail floorspace vacancy, while remaining cognisant of their responsibility to facilitate growth in retail and general economic activity within the county. The Retail Strategy has taken a cumulative approach to depleting vacant floorspace, while accommodating additional floorspace where it is required.

The graph below illustrates how the existing vacancy will be absorbed over the lifecycle of the strategy. This graph which is a composite of the three retail categories, illustrates the frictional vacancy level (i.e. 10%) and the cumulative reduction (i.e. for all three retail categories) in vacant retail floorspace, as well as highlighting a potential deficit in retail floorspace which may occur post 2016 period to meet projected demand if there is no additional provision of retail floorspace based on that provided in 2013. This frictional vacancy level is based on market insights and is intended to foster competition, and to enable Longford County Council to accommodate growth and maintain retail functionality and economic activity.

It is projected within the Retail Strategy, and as illustrated in the graph, that there will be no requirement for additional retail floorspace in any of the three retail categories prior to 2016, taking account for the maintenance of a 10% frictional vacancy rate.

Cumulative Annual Reduction in Retail Floorspace Vacancy



4.3.9 Policies and Objectives

The following policies and proposals have been designed to facilitate the realisation of the County Retail Strategy’s key objectives and these objectives will look to inform policies that will:

- Ensure that County Longford possesses a clear policy framework that will inform both the conception and assessment of retail development proposals and help to guarantee that the strategic and local convenience and comparison retailing needs of the County are met;
- 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;
- 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;
- Facilitate the regeneration of areas with scope for improvement or where there may be a high level of vacancy, obsolescence or emerging issues of dereliction, subject to the provisions of the Sequential Test;
- Engage with the relevant stakeholders and incentivise to ensure that the environmental attractiveness of town/local centres is enhanced; and
- 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.

In following this, the goal of the Longford County Retail Strategy 2015-2021 will be to encourage the development of a healthy, vibrant and sustainable retail environment within the urban centres of County Longford. The particulars of the policies and proposals are described under the three following policy categories:

Policy Category	Focus of Policy
Strategic Policies:	Policies related to the spatial distribution of centres, their role in the national and county retail hierarchies and the strategic aims of the County Retail Strategy.
General Policies:	Polices that establish planning principles which should be applied throughout the County Retail Hierarchy.
Specific Policies	Policies which address specific issues relating to the county’s retail profile that need to be resolved.

4.3.9.1 Strategic Policies

The reviewed strategic policy of the County Retail Strategy and the actions required for their successful implementation are outlined below.

STRATEGIC POLICY 1:

Principal Town/County Town (Longford Town)

It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage major enhancement of town centre activities within Longford to enable it to maintain its strategic role as defined in the Midland’s RPGs.

In order to achieve this it will be necessary to build upon the strong services function of the town and encourage an increase in high-end high street comparison retailing in the core shopping area.

STRATEGIC POLICY 2:

Key Service Town and Service Town (Granard and Edgeworthstown)

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

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

STRATEGIC POLICY 3:

Local Service Towns (Ballymahon and Lanesboro)

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

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

STRATEGIC POLICY 4:

(Other Villages)

It is Council policy to assist and encourage small scale retail development throughout the villages of the county in recognition of their important role as defined in the county retail hierarchy. Local level retail development in towns and villages will be supported where this is consistent with their organic growth patterns and subject to the directions of the sequential approach.



4.3.9.2

General Policies

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

GENERAL POLICY 1:

It will be Council policy to ensure that all retail development permitted accords with the relevant requirements and criteria as established within the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 and the Longford County Retail Strategy 2015-2021.

GENERAL POLICY 2:

It will be Council policy to permit retail development of a size and scale which is appropriate to the level of the town/settlement area, including its population, as defined within the County retail hierarchy. This policy will aim to 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.

GENERAL POLICY 3:

Proposals for the creation of new retail floorspace, will require applicants to undertake an assessment of the quality and suitability of existing and available floorspace in the County relative to the circumstances of their proposals.

GENERAL POLICY 4:

It will be Council policy to discourage new retail development if they would either by themselves or cumulatively in conjunction with other developments seriously damage the vitality and viability of existing retail centres within the County.

GENERAL POLICY 5:

When assessing retail planning applications, it will be Council policy to have regard to the findings of the capacity assessment contained in the Longford County Retail Strategy 2015-2021, including the ability to counteract expenditure leakage.

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.

GENERAL POLICY 6:

It will be Council policy to 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 Retail Planning Guidelines 2012. In principle, this will not preclude the consideration of proposals in locations where mitigating and robustly justified special circumstances apply.

GENERAL POLICY 7:

It will be Council policy to 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. This policy will be used to ensure that all proposals for the reuse of existing retail floorspace can be evaluated and the proportion of vacancy can be reduced.

In addition the identification and introduction of alternative uses for vacant retail floorspace will reduce the possibility of such floorspace falling derelict.

GENERAL POLICY 8:

It will be Council policy to look to encourage the consolidation of other non retail based services within the town centres of the County utilising existing vacant retail floorspace where necessary. This policy will aid in enhancing the vitality of town centres, encouraging them to maintain their role as employment locations in addition to reducing the proportion of vacant retail floorspace and recognising the value which non retail uses can contribute to the local economy through the provision of employment and general economic benefit.

GENERAL POLICY 9:

It will be Council policy to continue to improve the public realm of urban centres through the encouragement of high quality civic design, including but not limited to the provision of attractive street furniture, lighting and effective street cleaning. In addition, the introduction of business improvement district type initiatives to the principal settlements of County Longford will be evaluated to establish the contribution that such proposals could make to the viability and vitality of town centres within the County.

To facilitate this Longford Local Authority will;

- Prepare clear design guidelines for retail development in urban centres subject to resources in accordance with the provisions of the Retail Design Manual- A Good Practice Guide (2012).
- Assess the potential of new retail developments with regards to existing traffic congestion problems
- Promote and facilitate improvements in the public realm.
- To promote the targeted funding sourced from the Development Contribution Scheme to the regeneration and renewal of urban centres, in accordance with the 'Development Contributions- Guidelines for Planning Authorities' issued by the DECLG.

GENERAL POLICY 10:

It will be Council policy to 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. A particular focus of this policy will be the development of additional pedestrian crossings, where necessary, within Longford Town centre, as well as other settlements within the County where high volumes of vehicular traffic can be seen to inhibit pedestrian movement.

GENERAL POLICY 11:

It will be Council policy to 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 Retail Planning Guidelines.

In promoting innovation in the county's retail offer and attraction the Council shall seek to;

- Exploit the strategic inter-regional position of Longford Town and its role within the midlands region to encourage a wider range of high-end high street comparison retail functions to regenerate and reinvigorate the town core.
- Monitor emerging trends and innovations in the EU and US retail sectors. Seek the transposition of appropriate new retail operating methods and retailing types into the county.

GENERAL POLICY 12:

It will be Council policy to require a Retail Impact Assessment to be carried out for development proposals in the following general circumstances:

- a) Proposals featuring greater than 1000sqm of net floorspace for both convenience and comparison type developments in the four main towns;
- b) Proposals featuring greater than 500sqm of net retail floorspace for both convenience and comparison type developments in district towns and other settlements;



- c) *Or where the Planning Authority considers the development may impact on the vitality and viability of a town centre.*

The Retail Impact Assessment shall include, at minimum, the criteria set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012.

GENERAL POLICY 13:

It will be Council policy to ensure that all proposed retailing projects and any associated improvement works or associated infrastructure such as parking facilities, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, are subject to Appropriate Assessment to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites²⁶ in the County.

GENERAL POLICY 14:

It is Council policy to build upon, promote and facilitate the expansion of retailing within the tourism and leisure sectors.

The Council will provide guidance and assistance where possible to appropriate tourist retail developments. The location of such developments will be subject to meeting the tests of the sequential approach and all other relevant planning criteria.

GENERAL POLICY 15:

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

In line with the sequential approach, the council will where possible encourage and facilitate the regeneration and re-use of derelict buildings and/or brownfield sites in appropriate areas. Only when suitable, available and viable brownfield land and/or derelict buildings cannot be found should alternative new build options be considered.

4.3.9.3 Specific Policies

The following specific policies required to address important issues identified are outlined below.

SPECIFIC POLICY 1:

Improving comparison offer of Longford Town

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the expansion of high-end high street comparison retailing in Longford Town.

The Council will encourage high-end high street comparison retail operators to locate in Longford Town.

SPECIFIC POLICY 2:

Resolving congestion in Longford Town

It is the policy of the Council to improve the retailing environment of Longford Town by facilitating a resolution to the centre's current traffic congestion problems.

In line with the provisions of the sequential approach, it is recognised that not all core shopping areas possess sites that are suitable in terms of size, parking, traffic generation or servicing arrangements for large-scale developments in the town centre itself. In order to minimise the potential for adverse impact on the public realm, only new retail development which is of an appropriate size, scale and type to a town centre location will be permitted in Longford Town's core shopping area.

²⁷ District centre is defined as providing a range of retail and non-retail service functions (e.g. banks, post office, local offices, restaurants, public houses, community and cultural facilities) for the community at a level consistent with the function of that centre in the core strategy. They can be purpose built as in new or expanding suburbs or traditional district centres in large cities or towns

4.3.10 Framework for the Assessment of Future Retail Developments

Longford Town is the commercial, retail and administrative centre of Longford County, and also acts as an inter-regional centre for Counties Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Westmeath. The town itself is a rapidly growing commercial and residential centre, offering a wide range of jobs, services and facilities. All of these activities require modern, easily accessible and appropriately located retail facilities. The retail strategy indicates the criteria under which proposals for new retail developments will be considered. The aim of the strategy is to provide Longford with modern retail facilities of the highest standards recognising its regional position.

It is intended that all proposed new retail developments are assessed against the criteria that are set out in this chapter.

RET 1: DEVELOPMENT TYPES

This section deals with specific retail and leisure development proposals, which may influence the emphasis that is given to each of the criteria outlined in the assessment of new development.

(a) Regional Shopping Centres

Due to Longford's location at a strategic point on national infrastructure, Longford has traditionally acted as an inter-regional centre for the surrounding counties. In order to maintain the role of Longford Town as a driver of development in the North Midlands and to maintain its position within the national retailing hierarchy, the potential for Regional Shopping Facilities will be considered subject to the relevant planning criteria contained within this plan.

(b) District Shopping Centres

District shopping centres²⁷ will be considered in the context of their location. Applicants will be required to illustrate the compatibility of their proposal with the County Development Plan and provide a comprehensive report outlining and addressing these issues, including a demonstration of a deficiency in the provision of particular floorspace types and an indication of the demand for the proposed additional floorspace. 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) Large Convenience outlets

- The RPG's have set a 3000m² upper floorspace limit on food store development outside of the Greater Dublin area. This retail strategy will uphold this limit on applications for permission for individual developments in Longford Town and its environs, in terms of new development or extensions to existing schemes that will result in an aggregate increase in sales floorspace.

This description covers supermarkets, superstores, discount food stores and hypermarkets. An accepted component of the retail industry throughout the country, large convenience outlets are generally accompanied by substantial car-parking provisions due to the space requirements because of the weekly nature of many of the shopping trips they generate.

Large convenience outlets will be primarily encouraged, where possible, to locate within the town centre where this can be demonstrated as recognisably beneficial to the town core area, in order to provide universal accessibility and alleviate traffic congestion. Vehicular and pedestrian access and circulation provisions shall be dealt with as a matter of priority, in addition to the other criteria contained in the previous section.

(d) Retail Parks and Retail Warehouses

Retail warehouses, due to their large retail floorspace requirements, the bulky nature of their goods and the consequent heavy requirement for 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.

Applications will be subject to the criteria as outlined in this section. 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 700m². This is to prevent potential adverse impact on the vitality of the town centre. Maximum gross floorspace of individual units in such locations will be in the region of 6,000m² (this includes external display area, for example, ancillary garden centres). These minimum and maximum floorspace criteria apply to proposed new developments and extensions to or sub-divisions of existing developments or those previously granted planning permission.

(e) Local Shops

Local shops located in neighbourhood centres are an important element of the retailing industry in the urban area. Primarily convenience outlets, local shops because of their proximity to large residential areas, provide a readily accessible service for basic goods, especially for the less mobile sectors of the community such as the elderly and disabled.

Where appropriate, local shops shall be recognised in the relevant Development Plan and provision made for the establishment of neighbourhood shops and services in the zoning of additional land for residential development.

RET 2: OTHER DEVELOPMENT TYPES

(a) Shops in Rural Areas

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

- Small scale shops attached to a permitted tourist or recreational development.
- Retail outlets associated with other rural activities where the retail aspect is secondary to the operation - shops selling agricultural produce, crafts etc.
- The development of a small shop in association with an existing post office or petrol station will generally be allowed.

(b) Take - Away Food Premises

All applications for take-away premises need planning permission whether it involves a change of use of an existing building or an entirely new building.



The following Planning considerations will apply to any assessment of a planning application for a take-away premises:

- The likely impact of the development upon the amenities of the area, including noise pollution, litter, odour, and general disturbance.
- Car parking is of critical importance and the premises will not be permitted at locations where adequate car-parking is not available.
- Developments will not be permitted where they have the potential to detrimentally impact on traffic circulation and safety in an area.
- Details should be supplied at application stage on opening times and traffic.
- Applications for such development may be more favourably considered in mixed use locations such as town centres.
- Proximity to residential development will be an important planning consideration in assessing applications for take-away premises.

- Litter bins shall be provided inside the premises.
- Where take-away premises are permitted, noise and disturbance levels will be controlled by imposing strict closing times on the premises.
- Facade design will be carefully controlled and, in particular, the amount and type of advertising signage and lighting. The design shall respect and enhance the existing street character. Corporate logos will be permitted, only where they meet Local Authority design criteria.

(c) Petrol Stations

The Council recognises the more intensive role of petrol stations in recent times, the expansion from merely fuel depots to the provision of a wide range of convenience and other goods and service. Applications for planning permission for such development should contain the following elements:

- High quality design and material content. Advertising material should be restricted to a minimum and no lighting shall be installed so as to cause glare or interference to any user of an adjacent public road.
- 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
- Detailed proposals for the service station including method of disposal of waste water from car-wash areas, surface water outlet and oil interceptors etc. The development shall be designed and operated in such a manner that it does not adversely affect existing road drainage in the area.
- 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
- Retail uses not associated with the motor industry shall be considered in the context of the existing retail outlets in the vicinity. Only uses which contribute to the vibrancy and service level of the settlement shall be considered



- vi. Proposed developments which have the potential to restrict traffic flow and/or create traffic hazard will not be permitted. Generally two access points with a minimum width of 7.3 metres and a maximum width of 9.1 metres will be required with appropriate turning curve based on road design speed and the relevant standards.
- vii. The frontage of the site shall be defined by a boundary wall, not exceeding 0.5 metres in height. Footpaths and lighting to ESB standards shall be provided to the roadside boundary
- viii. No pumps shall be located within 7metres of the roadside boundary and no other structures other than pumps shall be located within 15 metres of the roadside boundary. In any case, no structure shall be erected, either on a permanent or a temporary basis that interferes with the sightlines of any road user, whether pedestrian or vehicular.

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



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT →

4.4 Agriculture

★ 16

The agricultural industry continues to change at a rapid pace nationally, however the most recent census demonstrates a significant dependence on agriculture in Longford, above the national average.

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

Accordingly the approach to agricultural development within the County aims to achieve the following;

- To facilitate the modernisation of the agricultural Industry in the County in accordance with statutory responsibilities and national guidance.
- To encourage best practice in the design and construction of agricultural installations to protect visual amenity and prevent pollution, particularly in sensitive areas.
- To encourage and promote appropriate initiatives which will secure the development and viability of existing rural communities

Some agricultural developments are exempt from planning control. However, no new building or structure on a farm is exempt from planning permission if effluent storage facilities are insufficient, if the proposal interferes with road safety or if it would contravene an objective of the County Development Plan.

4.4.1 Policies and Objectives

4.4.1.1 General Policies

AGR 1:

Where an area of land is outside a settlement (i.e. an area not indicated as part of the Core Strategy, as listed in this document), and is not otherwise zoned as part of this Development Plan or The Longford Town Plan, the use of such land shall be deemed to be primarily agricultural. Primarily agricultural zoning provides for the agricultural use of the land and any ancillary uses, including residential. Other uses may be permitted, subject to assessment on a site-by-site basis and compliance with the development control standards and other policies and objectives contained within this plan.

The establishment of suitably small-scale industrial/commercial developments in rural areas on family owned land and developments which would promote rural diversification, subject to relevant planning criteria, will also be encouraged.

AGR 2:

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

AGR 3:

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

AGR 4:

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

The Council shall support the preparation of a holistic plan for the development of industrial peatlands at a regional scale that promotes economic development, tourism, rural diversification, environmental protection and natural and cultural heritage awareness.

AGR 5:

It is the policy of the Council, through its veterinary section, to inspect abattoirs, dairy producers and other industrial installations dealing in animal foodstuffs at regular intervals in order to assess and maintain animal health, environmental quality and food safety in such installations.

AGR 6:

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

AGR 7:

The Planning Authority will require adequate provision for the collection, storage and disposal of effluent produced from agricultural developments. Developers are required to comply with relevant Department of Agriculture Guidelines²⁸ and the Nitrates Regulations in this regard.

AGR 8:

Sites to be developed for agriculture purposes shall be designed to the highest standards to provide quality environments with adequate provision where necessary for landscaping, car and truck parking and circulation and the appropriate disposal of foul and surface water.

²⁸ "Explanatory Handbook for Good Agricultural Practice Regulations", DAF 2006 or subsequent update

4.4.1.2 Specialised and Intensive Developments

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

AGR 9: DESIGN

- The Planning Authority accepts the need for agricultural buildings and associated works (walls, fences, gates, entrances, yards etc.) to be functional, but they will be required to be sympathetic to their surroundings - in scale, materials and finishes. Buildings should relate to the landscape and not the sky-scape. Traditionally this was achieved by having the roof darker than the walls. Appropriate roof colours are dark grey, dark reddish brown or a very dark green.

The grouping of agricultural buildings will be encouraged in order to reduce their overall impact in the interests of visual amenity.
- A landscaping plan is required as part of applications for agricultural developments. In general, the removal of hedges to accommodate agricultural developments will only be considered as a last resort.





AGR 10: INTENSIVE PIG AND POULTRY UNITS

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

- a) Depending on the size of the unit, an E.I.S. and/or Appropriate Assessment may be required. In addition an Integrated Pollution Control licence may be required from the Environmental Protection Agency.
- b) It will be Council policy to ensure that all proposed agricultural projects and any associated improvement works or associated infrastructure, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, are subject to Appropriate Assessment to ensure that there are no likely significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites in the County.
- c) The Council will 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 planning applications would need to be supported by an Appropriate Assessment where relevant.
- d) The character of farm settlements should be retained and enhanced where possible. In this regard, landscaping plans will be required as part of applications for new developments and extensions to existing farmyards and structures. The removal of hedgerows to accommodate agricultural developments will only be considered as a last resort and provision shall be made for the maintenance and enhancement of existing hedgerows in accordance with best practice.
- e) Scale and intensity of operations including the cumulative impact of similar type developments within close proximity.
- f) Waste management including frequency and location of disposal relative to pig and poultry units. The control of odour is another important consideration.



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



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT →

4.5 Tourism



▲ 16



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

In developing the tourism sector within the County, it is critical to promote a sustainable approach that supports the provisions of the Regional Planning Guidelines, including the Gateway and Principal Towns, and the Settlement Strategy for the County as detailed in the Core Strategy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

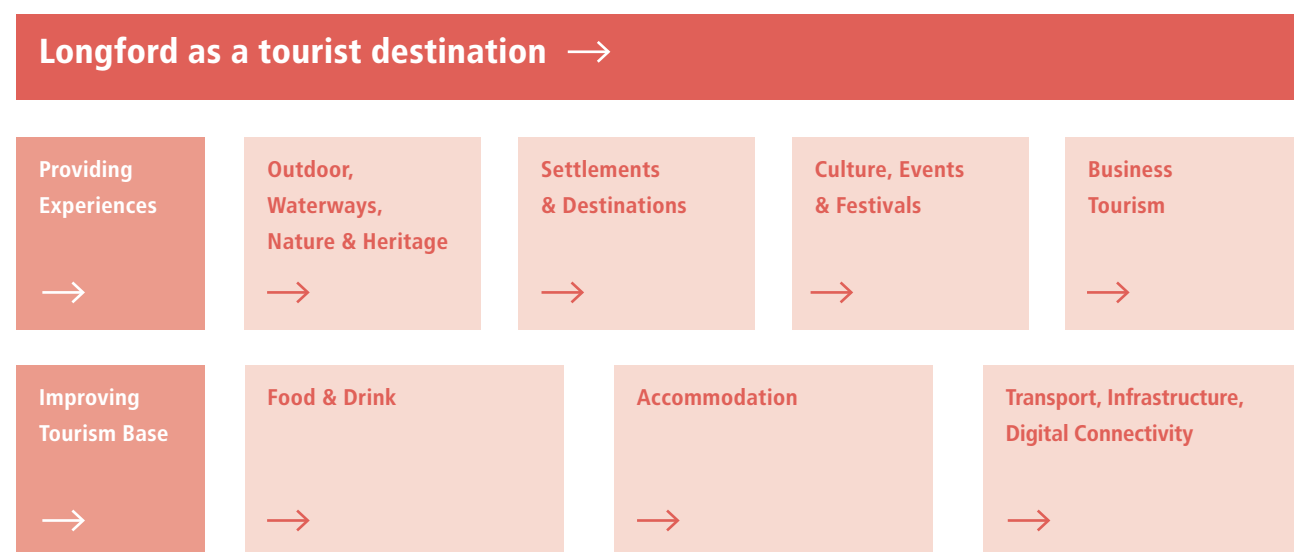
Key to this is creating a tourism product that provides increased linkages and targeted integration of key tourism potential opportunities with the settlement structure and its hinterland, creating alignment with tourism infrastructure provision and optimising economic benefits for the County and Region.

Longford has a vast array of natural, historical, cultural and landscape attractions that, if sensitively managed, have the potential to raise the profile of Longford County as a significant tourist destination. Longford County Council is committed to working with other relevant statutory agencies, private sector groups, community associations and individuals to develop a coherent and sustainable approach necessary to successfully market Longford County on a national and global stage.

The Regional Planning Guidelines emphasise the need to promote and market “the natural, heritage and cultural resources of the area and its high quality of life” identifying this as vital for the development of the County and a valuable contribution to the identity of the region as a whole.

Centrally located within the Country, Longford has yet to fully exploit this position in terms of tourism potential. The lack of properly developed tourism product and appropriate tourist accommodation base is a severe limiting factor, not only in terms of the development of Longford County as a tourist location, but also in terms of its cultural and economic survival.

Diagram 4.1:
Illustrative graphic of Longford’s Tourism Strategy for the purposes of the Development Plan.



At present, Longford County lacks any substantial hotel or conference facilities. The development of such facilities would be an important step forward for the business and leisure industry in the County. The Council now proposes to encourage and promote the development of various tourist facilities, locations and accommodation in order to promote the tourism industry in Longford.

The following sections should be read in conjunction with Appendix 3, Annex 5 and Annex 6.

FLAGSHIP ATTRACTIONS AND TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

It is essential to recognise what exactly the key flagship attractions are for County Longford. This allows tourism attractions to be promoted and expanded upon in a sustainable manner. A central focus has emerged that aims to deliver growth in the visitor economy. It is envisaged that this section of the Development Plan encourages partnership, focuses activities and defines priorities for the Tourism sector thus creating a sustainable approach for growth over the plan period.

The following diagram illustrates the tourism strategy within the context of the Development Plan and all objectives and policies are supportive of achieving this;

Following from the diagrammatic representation of the Tourism Strategy for the Plan, the flagship attractions for County Longford are as follows;

- a) **Outdoor Longford;** Developing the activity and adventure tourism market and building upon and developing opportunities to create ‘Outdoor Longford’. Given that the activity and adventure tourism market is considered to be one of the most significant for the County, this includes opportunities that promote and facilitate development of this type and in particular cycling, walking and water sports.
- b) **Longford’s Inland Waterways** including Lough Ree, the Shannon and Royal Canal. This embraces cruising, heritage, nature & cultural experiences, walking and cycling including the Royal Canal Greenway and the development of a Shannon Way to link the Royal Canal and the Grand Canal along the Shannon bank where possible in accordance with the National Cycling Strategy. This route would link to Roosky in the north to allow its continuance into Leitrim and Roscommon.
- c) **Corlea Archaeological and Biodiversity Centre (Annex 5)**
- d) **Mid Shannon Wilderness Park (Annex 6)**
- e) **Settlements and Destinations;** Developing opportunities to strengthen the value of Longford as a destination, including enhancing the attractiveness of built settlements (through the creation of improved public realm and provision of attractions) and providing niche destination opportunities. The development of a unique niche destination project of national significance is particularly required.
- f) **Culture, Events and Festival** including the development of a European project to promote Longford’s cultural assets.

MARKET SEGMENTS

In order to ensure that the development of flagship attractions are relevant, it is essential to acknowledge the expected or most likely segments of the market which provide the best prospects for growth. In accordance with Fáilte Ireland recommendations these are;

- Social Energisers (young fun loving adventurers)
- Culturally Curious (over 45s who want to broaden their mind)
- Great Escapers (younger couples who want to get away from it all)

Accordingly proposals to facilitate the development of flagship attractions should cater for the relevant market segments, including acknowledging any updated trends in the market over the period of the plan.

INLAND WATERWAYS

The inland waterways of the County, discussed at Section 6.2.2.7 of this Plan, remain a vast untapped tourism resource. Developments on the Royal Canal have improved navigability, with the inland waterway route now open from Dublin to the Shannon. Longford County Council will continue to engage and consult with Waterways Ireland, particularly with reference to the potential opening of the Royal Canal Spur into Longford Town and in relation to other developments in proximity to the Canal. The Council shall also have regard to the Heritage Council Waterways Corridor studies in terms of the promotion of active and passive tourism and the assessment of new development in the Canal corridor.

The River Inny, the Shannon and Lough Ree also offer great potential to develop water based tourism and recreational activities and facilities in particular at Ballymahon, Lanesboro, Newtowncashel and Clondra. Ballymahon could be developed as the Kayaking Centre for Ireland. Lanesboro needs to substantially develop its water and lake based activities more. Barley Harbour, Inchcleraun, Saint’s Island and the Red Bridge need to be investigated for the provision of boating facilities.

ROYAL CANAL WALKING/CYCLING ROUTE

There are current proposals to link Dublin to Mullingar and Longford Town to the Shannon via the Royal Canal as walking/cycling routes. It is envisaged during this plan period (2015-2021) that the Royal Canal link will be extended from Mullingar through Longford to the Shannon. This would provide a major and important off road National walking/cycling route across the County which will have major tourism benefits for Longford. In addition, plans are well advanced to upgrade the Canal spur to Longford Town as a walking/cycling route. This will have important implications for Longford Town as the main population hub for the County, making the Town more accessible to tourists using the canal and creating a natural corridor that will link the population hub to the various water channels and tourism facilities around the County.

BOGS, WOODS AND RURAL LANDSCAPE

The rural landscape of Longford also offers opportunities to develop Tourism and Recreational facilities. The bogs offer a wonderful and unique experience to experience nature, heritage and a cultural way of life. The various larger woods in the County also offer great opportunities to develop tourism products such as are available elsewhere in Europe. Holiday villages and facilities sensitively located in woods can provide wonderful visitor attractions and create substantial local employment opportunities. The attractive rural and un-spoilt landscape of Longford also has excellent potential to develop tourism products especially around Corlea Visitor Centre, Lough Gowna, Derrycassin and Newcastle Woods, Corn Hill and Ardagh Mountain. Longford has great potential to develop tourism and recreation products to attract substantial visitors, create local employment and increase economic activity in the County.

CORLEA ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND BIODIVERSITY CENTRE

Longford County Council in association with Keenagh Community Group and Corlea Visitor Centre now propose to develop approximately 12 acres of cutaway bog near Corlea Centre for a recreated Iron Age type settlement and to present the archaeology and biodiversity of the area as a visitor attraction. A more detailed report on this project is attached as an annex to this plan. As part of this proposal it is intended to provide walking trails across the bog to the Corlea Centre. These walking trails have the potential to be linked with the adjoining Royal Canal. This will facilitate boating, walking and cycling visitors coming from Dublin and travelling to the West via Longford and the Shannon to visit Corlea Centre.

MID SHANNON WILDERNESS PARK

The Corlea Project represents a first step in the development of a potential 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 bogs, all of which are in very close proximity to each other in Longford, can be combined to create the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park.

The Council also now proposes to work with Bord na Móna to consider a future use of the bogs as they are worked out and re-habilitated over the next 10/20 years. It is envisaged that portions of the bogs will be re-habilitated as natural biodiversity locations thus providing Longford with potentially large areas of natural amenity with tourism potential. This could also allow for the existing bog rail banks to be utilized as additional walking/cycling tracks through the area thus increasing the walking/cycling network through the County. The bog rail network could provide links with many of the South Longford villages and existing facilities such as the ISPCA Animal Refuge at Derryglogher, Lough Ree at Lanesboro and the Royal Canal Harbour at Clondra. Indeed it may also be possible to link a walking/cycling route from Dublin through Longford and across the Shannon to Strokestown, Roosky via the bog rail network and bridge. This in turn would open up the potential of linking Dublin through Longford and on to the Greenway at Westport and Sligo.

As Bord na Móna completes its rehabilitation work on the bogs it may be possible for existing local communities, and Longford County Council to take responsibility for portions of the cutaway bogs. This will not conflict with any future intention of Bord na Móna and its potential future use of the bogs. The amenity use of the rehabilitated bogs can be compatible with any future use for the bogs such as renewable energy projects.

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

ECOTOURISM

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

It is intended to encourage the use of Ecotourism principles in the development of Tourism products in Longford. 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 would like to promote the use of the above ecotourism principles in the County and to encourage tourism projects to educate the visitor and tourist about the native natural world, heritage and local culture. These environmentally innovative and socially responsible principles will have a very positive impact on the environment and local communities.

CULTURAL TOURISM

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

- The Granard Harp Festival held in March, originally started in 1781 and revived 200 years later.
- Natural heritage is celebrated in the Bord na Móna Water Festival and Lough Ree Environmental Summer School and Arts Festival, both held in Lanesboro each summer.
- The Ballymahon Festival is a four day event with music, drama and children's theatre.
- The Maria Edgeworth Literary Festival is held each year in Edgeworthstown.
- The Longford Engage Arts Exhibition which presents the visual arts in an innovative way by direct contact and presentation by the artist to the public.

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

The refurbishment of St. Mel's Cathedral will result in Longford having one of the most recently restored cathedrals in Ireland which will offer significant potential as a tourism facility in its own right. It will also offer scope to develop trails around our early Christian Heritage, to include the likes of Saints Island on Lough Ree, the Motte in Granard and stretching as far as Clonmacnoise in Offaly.

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

The Battlefield site in Ballinamuck is an important element of national history and identity, attracting visitors to its interpretative centre. Another centre is located at Corlea and interprets the recently discovered prehistoric Toher road through the bog near Keenagh village.

REBEL LONGFORD

The 1798 Battlefield sites in Ballinamuck and Granard are important elements of national history and identity, attracting visitors to the interpretative centre at Ballinamuck. General MacEoin, the Blacksmith of Ballinallee was a very important leader in the War of Independence 1919 to 1921. Connolly Barracks in Longford Town also had an important role in both conflicts. The Black Pigs Dyke and the Norman Motte in Granard have great historical significance. All of these locations lend themselves to a Historical and Cultural theme trail such as 'Rebel Longford' for the North County. The trail shall be developed during the life of this plan (see Appendix 15).



ARTS IN LONGFORD

It is an objective of Longford County Council to promote the Arts in Longford. There are many varied artists and artist groups active in the County. There are also certain existing facilities such as Shawbrook Ballet School, the Bog Lane and Backstage theatres. There is also a need for a more open and accessible exhibition facility where the arts and artists can present their work directly to the public.

A recent art initiative 'Engage Longford' is an artists' led, not-for-profit initiative that provides a platform to promote Longford as a hub for contemporary visual art. They have opened a temporary facility in the heart of Longford Town. The fundamental objective of the group is to procure a permanent space, in order to provide exhibition opportunities for graduate and emerging artists within the county.

The Council supports the intention of this and similar groups to provide a more permanent facility. Such spaces could provide an opportunity to showcase a diverse range of arts practices from local, national and international artists and establish a dynamic programme of exhibitions and events to engage audiences and open up a critical dialogue with the wider visual arts community.

TOURISM PRODUCT

In line with the recently published "Longford Tourism Strategy 2012-2015" (Longford County Tourism Committee), the Council recognises the need to strengthen tourism infrastructure in Longford, including promoting the distribution of tourism products and improving the readiness of the County for the tourism market. Accordingly, encouraging the development of tourism products that are consumer- focused, having the potential to attract visitors, while at the same time are environmentally sustainable, is a key objective of this plan.

To this end, the Planning Authority will encourage the establishment of appropriate tourism facilities, including Longford Trails, looped walks, attractive rural villages, hotel and conference facilities, in suitable locations throughout the County and advance the development of tourism through the provision and extension, where appropriate, of existing amenities, particularly water based activities and walking routes. The development of Newcastle House Hotel with additional accommodation and educational and tourism facilities shall be encouraged by Longford County Council.

The development and/or restoration of Carriglass Manor with revised objectives around accommodation, industry and tourism facilities will also receive prominent local authority support as this is one of the finest classical estates of its type in the Country which includes buildings of international repute designed by James Gandon in the 18th Century.

Facilities that encourage visitors to remain in the County shall be encouraged. In this regard, a holistic and integrated countywide approach to the provision, improvement and/or enhancement of tourist attractions and ancillary facilities will be promoted. The Council shall actively engage with the relevant stakeholders in the preparation of a visual spatial directory. This will consist of signage and a map, potentially web-based and interactive, illustrating the existing and potential tourist attractions throughout the County in order to encourage this holistic approach to the exploitation of these largely untapped resources.

This visual representation will include, but shall not be limited to:

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

TOURISM OBJECTIVES

The following are the tourism objectives of the plan:

1. To encourage the development of more opportunities for visitors to enjoy and learn more about the natural beauty, biodiversity, culture and heritage of the area.
2. To maximise the potential of tourism as a pillar of economic growth that will contribute to the balanced economic development of the County and the tourism industry in the region.
3. To facilitate the delivery of the Tourism Strategy as illustrated by *Diagram 4.1: Illustrative graphic of Longford's Tourism Strategy for the purposes of the Development Plan*, prioritising the development of flagship attractions and tourism product within the County.
4. To encourage and support tourism developments that have the ability to extend the tourist season including through enhancing visitor interest and developing growth in the visitor economy.
5. To encourage and support tourism development that has capacity to draw tourists to County Longford, including those which have potential to do this over a wider area for instance through sharing a common brand, and encouraging the development of recognised and successful tourism concepts such as resort development including the forest tourism resort model.

6. To maximise benefits for the Tourism sector and improve the visitor experience and tourism product, the Council promotes the need to seek inter-authority and inter-agency co-operation and collaboration, providing an integrated approach involving local authorities, the private sector and Government agencies, exploring a wider regional and national perspective and identifying and prioritising key initiatives.
7. To build on existing activities and services and develop new businesses and services to produce and bring a comprehensive set of active locations and holiday products.
8. Improve the function of settlements throughout Longford as tourism destinations from land or water.
9. To develop master plans to improve the function, capacity and sustainability of Longford's settlements to service tourism including accommodation facilities such as Newcastle House Hotel.
10. To develop a comprehensive and integrated system of Longford visitor trails for walking, cycling, riding and canoeing including the provision of supporting infrastructure.
11. To develop and promote products featuring the natural beauty, culture and heritage of the area.
12. To enhance the areas reputation and visibility and capacity to provide active holiday packages and increase the number of visitor bed spaces in Longford including at Newcastle House Hotel.
13. To increase the opportunities for visitors to engage in activities on land or water.
14. To promote the utilisation of the cultural, historical, natural, aesthetic and economic assets presented by Lough Ree, its islands and environs, through the designation of the area as a National Park and identification of Lanesboro as a base for a Visitors' Centre for the park subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.
15. To develop themed opportunities to access, enjoy and understand the area's significant archaeological, early Christian Heritage, natural and historical locations.
16. To attract more visitors touring Ireland to spend time in Longford.
17. To consider and bring forward programmes both to protect and raise the profile nationally and internationally of the Lough Ree, Lough Gowna, Royal Canal and the proposed Mid Shannon Wilderness Park areas.

Accordingly the policy of the Council is as follows;

STRATEGIC TOURISM POLICIES

TOU 1:

Applications for tourism development will be considered in line with usual planning criteria and will be subject to high standards of design and materials particularly given their sensitive locations.

TOU 2:

The Council recognises the potential of all peatland bogs in the County, including industrial peatlands, in terms of providing opportunities for recreation and tourism thus creating new features of local distinction. Where appropriate the Council will cooperate with adjoining local authorities including Roscommon and Westmeath County Council to facilitate, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive, this potential in areas where bogs straddle the County boundary.

The development of the bogs for amenity purposes will not exclude them for other purposes such as the generation of renewable energy including wind generation. It is envisaged that these types of activities can be mutually inclusive and developed in an integrated way.

TOU 3:

The Council will seek to facilitate and promote, where appropriate the development of the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park and Corlea Archaeological and Biodiversity Project.

TOU 4:

The Council will promote the growth of the County's indoor and outdoor tourism sector and the necessary supportive facilities, providing an array of activities in order to diversify the range of tourist experiences available in Longford and extend the tourist season.

TOU 5:

The Council will promote the development and strengthening of the overall value of Longford as a destination, through mirroring the quality of the natural environment with improving the appeal of the built environment of settlements and providing opportunities to establish niche destination facilities throughout the County.

TOU 6:

The Council will promote and facilitate the sustainable utilisation of the County's existing natural, historical, cultural, geographic and aesthetic assets for tourism purposes that will act as key economic drivers capable of stimulating further growth and development opportunities.

It is envisaged that this will benefit the tourism assets themselves through increasing knowledge and potential financial assistance for conservation and enhancement initiatives. In settlements this can positively contribute to urban regeneration and in rural areas can provide avenues of broader rural diversification, creating employment opportunities and enhancing social inclusion and wellbeing, thus reducing isolation and poverty.

TOU 7:

The Council shall protect the natural resources upon which tourism is based through the application of proper planning and sustainable development standards as promoted by this plan.

In particular, tourism projects shall be developed in a sympathetic manner with regard to the environment, heritage and amenities of Longford.

TOU 8:

The Council will support the development of angling tourism initiatives throughout the County, building on the amenity and recreational potential of the angling sector. In this regard the Council shall facilitate the development and upgrading of angler access, stands, car parks and their associated facilities, in accordance and consultation with relevant management strategies, key stakeholders and bodies including Inland Fisheries Ireland. Where appropriate the Council shall promote an inter-regional approach in this regard, in association with Leitrim, Roscommon, Westmeath and Offaly in order to enhance the mid and north Shannon tourism area.

TOU 9:

The Council will promote and facilitate the delivery of key accommodation facilities in both urban and rural locations. In order to attract new visitors and to improve occupancy levels, the Council will encourage;

- a) *Improving the quality of existing accommodation and,*
- b) *The development of new accommodation facilities from quality hostels and budget hotels to high end luxury hotels and resorts. Rental cottages also need to be encouraged.*

As part of this the Council will;

- support and prioritise the development of key accommodation facilities in the Longford Town area which will support the leisure and business tourism sectors, maximising on Longford's central location nationally,
- support and prioritise the development of accommodation facilities in other settlement centres and rural areas including Country House Hotels and niche developments,
- support accommodation facilities that will bridge the gap in rural areas which currently acts as a constraint in realising the potential of outdoor experiences and other niche markets which rely on the rural product.

The Council will also encourage the development of accommodation facilities that have capacity to draw tourists to County Longford, including those which have potential to do this over a wider area for instance through sharing a common brand, and encouraging the development of recognised and successful tourism concepts such as resort development including the European forest tourism resort model.

TOU 10:

The Council will seek to facilitate, where appropriate, the provision of high quality tourism products and services within the County in order to increase the level of activity and the sustainability of the tourism market. In particular the provision of quality hotels and visitor accommodation facilities, and the development of tourism projects, facilities, activities, and attractions shall be a priority. The promotion of events, festivals and the development of linked tourist trails that showcase the wealth of natural, historical and cultural heritage of the County and contribute towards its unique identity and quality of life shall be encouraged. In particular the development and expansion of Newcastle House Hotel and Woods for tourism, accommodation and recreational purposes shall be promoted.

TOU 11:

The Council shall promote appropriate innovation and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, subject to other policies of this plan, including those relating to Settlement, Amenities, Environment, Heritage and technical design standards.

In particular, the Council shall support the development and enhancement of linked tourism trails throughout the County in accordance with the Strategic Spatial Tourism Plan.

TOU 12:

The Council will promote the local food, drinks and artisans market, through encouraging the development of key establishments and premises, promoting festivals and events such as farmers markets and ensuring the creation of an attractive environment, public realm and provision of the right setting to enhance the quality of the food and drink experience, thus improving overall experiences and contributing to the social and economic wellbeing for locals also. As part of this Longford County Council will promote the development of 'cultural quarters', recognising the opportunity that Connolly Barracks in Longford Town presents.

TOU 13:

The Council will promote growth in the events (including sports, music, agriculture, arts and cultural events) and festivals sector to facilitate the development of Longford as an events destination. Developments of this nature, including the necessary supporting infrastructure, will be encouraged in order to improve tourism and local businesses, to enhance the profile, image and identity of the County, offer environmental, social and cultural benefits, extend the tourist season and promote interest in particular locations.

TOU 14:

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



TOU 15:

The Council shall encourage and support increased coordination, cohesion and linkages between its own departments and agencies such as Fáilte Ireland (East and Midlands), Waterways Ireland, the Regional Fisheries Board, National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Midland Regional Authority in the promotion and assessment of tourism related developments.

TOU 16:

In accordance with specific policies outlined below, the Council shall encourage clustering of tourism related developments in order to:

- maximise benefit to the local economy through the establishment of synergistic operational links, e.g. links between accommodation providers and outdoor activity pursuits.
- Ensure maximum return from infrastructural investment.
- Support and promote the development of a medium to large scale visitor and tourism facility with associated accommodation in the County.

SPECIFIC TOURISM POLICIES**TOU 17:**

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

- The establishment of a signage committee to develop an integrated signage theme for tourist attractions, which shall include strict specifications in terms of appearance, materials and location.
- Public transport and potential alternatives to the use of private cars to access visitor attractions.
- Development of best-practice guidelines on energy efficiency, waste management, and recycling in tourism facilities and enterprises.
- Support of rural diversification and eco-tourism.
- The use of the Principles of Ecotourism.
- Support and promote the development of a medium to large scale visitor and tourism facility with associated accommodation in the County.

TOU 18:

The Council shall promote and develop opportunities to enable the designation of Lough Ree as a National Park, recognising the untapped wealth of cultural, historical, natural, aesthetic and economic values that Lough Ree, its Islands and environs presents.

As part of this, the Council will facilitate the establishment of a supporting Visitor's Centre at Lanesboro and promote and require a coordinated and targeted approach to the provision of mooring facilities, harbours and supportive onshore facilities, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive, at key locations including Lanesboro, Inchcleraun, Barley Harbour, Saints Island, Derry and the Red Bridge (see Appendix 18). The Council will seek to optimise the delivery of this through greater collaboration with key stakeholders and funding organisations. An inter-regional approach shall also be taken in association with Leitrim, Roscommon, Westmeath and Offaly to develop the North Shannon Tourism area.

TOU 19:

The Council supports the restoration and development of Connolly Barracks and encourages the potential of locating the County Museum within the Barracks, enhancing the destination pulling power of Longford Town. As part of this, it is policy of the Council to;

- Provide for the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and grounds.
- Encourage existing and develop further uses including community facilities.
- Encourage the establishment of a County Museum and traditional music archive at Connolly Barracks, to collect, conserve and interpret the County's history and heritage.
- Encourage multifunctional uses and develop a focal square as part of the cultural quarter of Longford Town.

TOU 20:

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

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

Mid Shannon Wilderness Park Villages

- Abbeyshrule – River Inny, Abbey, Airfield, Royal Canal
- Ballymahon – River Inny, Red bridge, Barnacor, Derrynagallia, Lough Ree, Royal Canal, Newcastle, Lough Drum, Ballymahon Festival
- Newtowncashel – Sculpture Park, Lough Ree and Barley Harbour.
- Lanesboro – River Shannon, Lough Ree, Commons North. In particular with a view to developing the amenity area to the south of the town adjoining Lough Ree for visitor and tourism development and a lake side walking/cycling route to Newtowncashel and Ballymahon. Also the possible bridging point for a walking cycling route to Roscommon and the west.
- Keenagh – Royal Canal, harbour, Corlea Trackway Centre
- Killashee – Royal Canal Village
- Clondra – Royal Canal, River Camlin, River Shannon
- Development of Mid Shannon Tourist Trail (See Appendix 16)

Mid and South County

- Ardagh – Heritage Village
- Legan – Summer Schools, fishing
- Development of Longford Literary Theme and Tourist Trail (see Appendix 17)

North County

- Aughnacliffe – Lough Gowna
- Ballinamuck – 1798 associations, Lough Sallagh, coarse fishing
- Granard – Granardkille, Lough Kinale, Derragh Lough, Lough Gowna, Black Pigs Dyke, Ballywillin Rail Station.



- Ballinalee – General MacEoin and War of Independence.
- Drumlish – Rural North County Town.
- Development of a 'Rebel Longford' theme and tourist trail for the north of the County.

- b) Specific opportunities for tourism projects will be particularly encouraged at Longford Town, Carriglass, Newcastle House, Corlea, Lanesboro, Clondra and Ballybranigan Harbour as indicated in Appendix 3. This section should be read in conjunction with the zoning explanations contained as part of this appendix.

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

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

- i) *Clondra; Clondra is the terminus on the entire stretch of the Royal Canal. Facilitating the development of tourism within this settlement would create a strategic tourism asset within the County. Clondra provides a link from the Royal Canal via the Camlin River and/or the Clondara Canal to the Shannon River. The Shannon from this point is navigable until Athlone and also provides a potential link into the Erne waterway. Given the strategic nature of Clondra on these stretches of water infrastructure, it is considered that this provides an excellent opportunity to develop tourism within the County.*

ii) *Ballybranigan Harbour, Ballymahon; Ballybranigan Harbour on the Royal Canal provides an excellent opportunity to build on an existing tourism asset and develop this in a manner that improves the attractiveness of the area for tourism development. As identified in the 'Waterways Corridor Study 2004- Shannon River and Royal Canal' (The Heritage Council), Ballybranigan Harbour previously functioned as the Harbour for the nearby town of Ballymahon. It is identified within the aforementioned study that the settlement of Ballymahon currently has little integration with the Royal Canal and that improvements to Ballybranigan Harbour, including the refurbishment of old canal related structures will potentially generate increased use of the Canal as an amenity.*

It is considered that such development could be linked into the fabric of the existing settlement of Ballymahon, providing potential tourism revenue for the settlement and supporting the local and wider economy. This will in turn support the status of Ballymahon in the County and Region's settlement hierarchy as defined in Section 2.1.6.3 of this plan. The development of existing tourism infrastructure on the Royal Canal is an essential component in improving inland cruising which is vital to the Midlands Economy.

iii) *Newcastle Woods provides a unique opportunity to develop part of the woodland for a medium to large scale tourism and visitor facility with related accommodation. Proposals for development of this nature shall give consideration to the provision of a walkway along the Inny River and possibly to bridge the River on the eastern end of the wood to provide a looped walk, where feasible. The northern section of Newcastle Wood should be improved to facilitate public access and a better visitor experience. The selective replanting with a larger percentage of hardwood on appropriate land shall be encouraged.*

TOU 21:

The Council will support and facilitate the development of Blueways throughout the County, in order to enhance the recreational and tourism potential of the County's Inland Waterways as illustrated at Appendix 19. This includes;

- Proposals that facilitate the development of the existing Shannon Blueway [Carrick on Shannon- Drumshanbo open/Carrick on Shannon- Rooskey (concept stage)/ Camlin Loop]
- The Camlin Blueway
- The Royal Canal Blueway
- The Inny Blueway
- The Lough Gowna/Erne Blueway
- Shannon/ Lough Ree Canoe Blueway (from River Inny to Lanesborough)

TOU 22: HOLIDAY/SECOND HOMES

- a) Holiday and second home development shall be predominantly directed towards designated settlements to prevent over development of areas of sensitive natural resources and to protect affordability of housing for permanent rural communities.
- b) Redevelopment of brownfield sites and/or appropriate renovation of traditional buildings (including protected structures where appropriate) will be considered for the provision of such accommodation.
- c) The renovation of existing ancillary structures associated with a permanent residence may also be considered subject to normal planning criteria.
- d) In smaller towns and villages, particularly those identified as honeypot locations in the plan, care shall be taken to ensure that holiday home development is not of a nature or scale that threatens the viability or undermines the unique identity of the settlement.

TOU 23:

The Council shall continue to engage with the following agencies:

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





4.6 Mining & Aggregates

Aggregates are a significant natural resource and make an important contribution to the economy. In this regard, it is important that such natural resources are safeguarded for future use whilst also ensuring that impacts on the environment and communities are acceptable.



Mineral extraction including rock, sand and gravel can adversely impact on its surroundings in terms of noise, dust, vibration, visual intrusion, loss of groundwater supplies, water pollution, traffic generation and adverse impact on road network.

Applications for mineral extraction will therefore be considered on their merits in terms of environmental capacity.

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

Accordingly the Councils' policy is as follows;

MA 1:

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

MA 2:

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

- a) Nature and quantity of material to be extracted
- b) Location of where materials are to be transported to and used.
- c) Location - relative to residential areas, areas of geological interest, aquifers and groundwater, environmentally sensitive areas, special amenity areas and areas of archaeological potential in particular.
- d) Proposed working life of quarry and the nature and extent of operations including ancillary operations.
- e) The nature of the full development works such as buildings, site offices, stockpiles, service roads, storage of soil and waste materials and settling ponds.
- f) Working methods and hours of operation - frequency of blasting etc.
- g) Noise and dust generation and control.
- h) Waste disposal - waste rock, contaminated soil etc.
- i) Water supply and discharge requirements and impact on water table.

j) Transportation and potential impact on the road network in the area.

k) Effects on amenity of the area and in particular residential and visual amenity.

l) Reinstatement proposals - a financial bond is also required by the Planning Authority to safeguard against non-reinstatement; It should be noted that the record of past restoration by the developer will be taken into account.

m) Retention of existing screening and installation of additional screening of site, either by natural or alternative means.

MA 3:

Any proposed development which may impact on areas identified for potential mineral extraction shall be referred to the relevant section of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources for observations/comment prior to a grant of permission/approval being obtained. In particular, the zinc/lead deposit at Keel is recognised.





4.7 Rural Enterprise

Given the nature of the changing economic climate and the significance and importance that rural areas contribute to the County and the County's population, it is imperative that the economic development of rural areas is promoted. This includes encouraging the regeneration of rural areas and communities, and, the retention and promotion of rural services and enterprises.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

RUE 1:

Consideration shall be given to the establishment, or suitable expansion, of small scale enterprise in rural areas subject to compliance with normal development management requirements and technical criteria.

RUE 2:

Proposals for the development or expansion of small scale rural enterprises will be determined in accordance with the policies and requirements of this plan, including the Core Strategy, and where it is demonstrated that the proposed location is suitable and that the proposal would not be viable at an alternative location.

RUE 3:

In assessing an application for the establishment or expansion of small scale rural enterprises, the following shall be taken into consideration and where necessary the required information submitted as part of any application:-

- a) The contribution that the proposed development will make to the rural economy.
- b) The nature and scale of the proposal.
- c) That the locational requirements of the proposal can be more readily accommodated at the proposed location than an urban setting.
- d) Potential impact on public health, environment and amenity considerations.
- e) Transportation and potential impact on the road network in the area.





The development of e-working and home based economic activity also facilitates the promotion of the environment through the creation of more sustainable work patterns and the reduction of commuting. In addition it also contributes to improving the quality of life of the County's inhabitants and helping to achieve an improved work life balance.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

HE 1:

Consideration shall be given to the establishment, or suitable expansion, of small scale home based economic activity where the main use of the dwelling remains as residential and subject to compliance with normal development management requirements and technical criteria. Potential applicants are advised to consult the Planning Authority regarding any proposed home based economic activity at pre-planning stage.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT →

4.8
Home Based
Economic Activity

Given the advances in technology, increased opportunities have developed for home working.

2,000m



5. Infrastructure

Summary →

Transportation, water supply, surface water, environmental services, energy and communications

A strong infrastructure is crucial to the economic, social and cultural development of Longford County. Infrastructure refers to the network of roads, railways, air services, electricity services, gas services, broadband services, and so on. The county's infrastructure needs to be well linked with the rest of the Midlands and beyond.

This Chapter outlines the Council's main policy for infrastructure for 2015 – 2021 within the county. It focuses on six priorities summarised below. Any development in each of these areas must be in line with legal requirements, guidelines and standards.

What are the priorities in terms of infrastructure?

1. Transportation

The goal is to provide an efficient public transport system that is safe, of a high quality, that improves the attractiveness of Longford as a destination and location and that minimises the impact on the environment. The focus will be on roads, rail, bus and air services. This goal will be achieved through a range of actions such as:

- upgrading and maintaining roads (including the N4, N5, N55 and N63)
- managing development, advertising and parking
- improving pathways and cycleways for pedestrians.
- developing rail, bus and air services (Abbeyshrule Airfield)

2. Water supply and waste water services

A range of water services, previously operated by the Council, are now controlled by Irish Water. The Council aims to help to expand existing water supply and waste water services. It will also support the establishment of new supplies and sewerage mains. This will improve the quality of water – especially drinking water.

Any take-over of group schemes will be done in line with strict criteria. The Council will promote the preparation of a Water Services Strategic Plan in line with the legal requirements of the Water Services Act. In order to deliver this, the Council will focus on:

- Improving the provision of water supply and waste water services in settlements to support development.
- Ensuring a high quality drinking water supply.

- Managing development, protecting water supplies and minimising impact on the environment.

3. Surface water, drainage and flooding

The Council aims to ensure that adequate surface water and rain water drainage measures are in place. This will help to prevent flooding and the flow of surface water and rainwater into sewage systems. As part of this, the Council will ensure that flooding in the County is considered. Development will be appropriately managed and limited in areas of known flooding. In relation to damage due to climate change, the Council will try to ensure that it can adapt and minimise this damage.

Summary →

4. Environmental services

In the long term, the Council aims to promote more recycling, energy recovery and landfill disposal. It will do this through a range of initiatives such as providing more facilities like the bring-bottle bank network, waste recycling centres, a green waste composting facilities, and programmes to reduce litter and to control animals.

The Council will also highlight environmental and public health risks of domestic septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems that are not working.

5. Energy and Communications

The Council will support the work of the ESB to improve electricity networks. In addition, it will favour applications related to renewable and or alternative energy resources (examples: wind and solar energy). However, applications must comply with relevant legislation and be environmentally sustainable.

The Council will encourage the provision of telecommunications and broadband equipment to achieve the best possible communications infrastructure. This will help the industrial, economic and social growth of the county.

6. Major Accidents Directive (Seveso II Directive (96/082/EEC))

The Council will assess applications for new developments taking account of The Major Accidents Directive and the possible impact on public health and safety. The Council will link in with the Health and Safety Authority, where necessary.



This summary has been written using NALA's Plain English Guidelines.



5.1 Transportation

INFRASTRUCTURE →

Central to the achievement of the Development Plan Strategy is the Development Plan Goal which aims to

“Facilitate the provision of the county’s infrastructure in a sustainable and efficient manner that promotes the social, economic and physical development of the County and the people that live within it”.

Key to this is the objective to integrate transport and land use in promoting sustainable development within the County. Accordingly this section of the plan is complemented by zoning objectives and policy contained in Section ‘2.1 Core Strategy’ of this plan.

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



INFRASTRUCTURE

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

- Promote an integrated and sustainable approach to transport and landuse within the County, by encouraging development within a hierarchy of settlements as identified within the Settlement Strategy.
- Facilitate the provision, where appropriate, of rural transport initiatives and services in order to promote the socio-economic and cultural development of the entire County.
- Encourage the provision of alternative forms of transport that reduce dependence on the private car, such as public transport initiatives and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Engage with the Midland Regional Authority in the creation of a co-ordinated sustainable transport plan for the Midland Region to guide and inform local policy in the progression of sustainable transport.

5.1.1 Roads

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

The continued upgrading of these roads is of central importance so as to develop a safe and comprehensive road system within the County. During the previous plan period, the N5 Longford Bypass was completed and opened. The N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Road Scheme has been progressed and the preferred route corridor selected as illustrated at Appendix 20. Further development of this scheme is currently dependent on central government funding.

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

5.1.1.1 General Road Policy and Objectives

ROADS 1:

To provide the highest quality road access and capacity on routes of economic importance to the County, thereby capitalising on the central location of Longford in a national context, increasing its attractiveness as a destination in itself and a location for settlement and industrial, commercial and business development.

ROADS 2:

To provide a road network which is safe and efficient for all road users, cognisant of the requirements of all traffic, including motorised vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

ROADS 3:

Promote sustainability in road use and the reduction of negative impacts on the natural environment including carbon emissions where possible through good design practice.

ROADS 4:

To maintain and improve the capacity of existing arterial routes of national importance within the County in the context of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines, including the relief of bottlenecks at strategic locations.

ROADS 5:

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

ROADS 6:

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

ROADS 7:

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

ROADS 8:

It is the policy of the Council to require a licence prior to each proposed instance of road opening. Works shall only be carried out in accordance with the terms of the licence granted.

ROADS 9:

It is the policy of the Council to request the provision of specific information on the potential impact of proposed developments on the roads network of the County. All applications will be required to submit the required roads form as outlined within the Longford County Council Planning Pack, or any subsequent update. For specific roads requirements in relation to individual development types, please refer to the design standards section associated with that type.

5.1.1.2 Specific Road Policy

ROADS 10:

It is the policy of the Council to reserve lands in appropriate areas for the improvement, maintenance and management of road traffic systems throughout the County.

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

- N5 Longford – Scramogue Scheme
- N4 – N63 – N5 By-Pass to the South of Longford.
- N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky)
- N55 Granard By-Pass
- N63 Killashee By-Pass
- N55 Edgeworthstown By-Pass
- N55 Ballymahon By-Pass
- N55 Tonywardan-Ardagullion Improvement
- N63 Barnacor Road Re-alignment
- N55 Ballymahon to Kilcurry Re-alignment

Where these corridors have been identified they will be protected from further development prior to the establishment of a final route. Where corridors have not yet been developed the Council shall pursue the development of these corridors and shall protect corridors from development once established. Where route selection corridors exist, it is the policy of Longford County Council, in consultation with the NRA, to ensure that the final route is identified within a reasonable timeframe.

ROADS 11:

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

- N4 to Dublin and Sligo & N5 to Castlebar
- N55 to Cavan and Athlone & N63 to Galway
- R194 Longford to Virginia
- R198 Longford/Arvagh
- R392 Lanesboro/Mullingar
- R393 Longford to Ballynacarrigy/Mullingar
- R395 Edgeworthstown to Castlepollard/Delvin
- R396 Granard to Castlepollard
- R397 Longford/Ballymahon
- R398 Derraghan to Brickeens
- R399 Ratharney to Kilcurry

Works to accesses along these routes shall be assessed according to the relevant technical criteria, including the NRA Design Manual for Roads & Bridges (DMRB).

ROADS 12:

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

ROADS 13:

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

ROADS 14:

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

ROADS 15:

Proposals for development in the vicinity of interchanges and junctions on national road infrastructure shall, where appropriate, submit a transport study clearly assessing the implications of the proposal on the operation and performance of the relevant junctions/interchanges.

ROADS 16:

It is an objective of the Council to 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 Appendix 1.

ROADS 17:

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

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

- LP – 1016 From Monaduff 3 roads to Derawley 4 roads
- LP – 1019 From Kiltycreevagh 3 roads (East) to Kiltycreevagh 4 roads
- LP – 1020 From Kiltycreevagh 3 roads (East) to Cloonelly 3 roads
- LP – 1022 From Gaigue Bridge to Monaduff 3 roads
- LP – 1024 From Cloonelly 3 roads to Legga 4 roads (North, Main Road)
- LP – 1025 From Gaigue 4 roads to Gaigue Bridge (at School)
- R398 Derraghan to Brickeens

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.

ROADS 18:

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate essential safety improvements on regional and local roads in order to enhance the efficiency and capacity of the regional and local road network.

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

- R198 - Gaigue to Camagh
- R392 - Forgney
- R397 - Terlicken to Kenagh via Corryena
- L-1040 - Esker to Killeenatruan via Ennybegs
- L1023 & L1024 - Leggagh
- L-1077 & L-1085 - Killasonna

This policy shall not preclude the creation of new accesses or the widening or intensification of existing accesses along these roads but such developments shall be subject to assessment in accordance with the relevant technical criteria. Carriageway improvements will be carried out in accordance with a phased programme of works as outlined below:

Table 5.1
Programme of Carriageway Improvement 2013 – 2021

National Roads Road Improvement Schemes			
Project	Completion of Design	Contract Award	Completion of Construction
N5 Longford Town By-Pass	Complete 2012		
N4 Mullingar to Longford (Rooskey)	Ongoing	NRA Dependent	NRA Dependent
N55 Granard By-Pass	NRA Dependent		
N55 Restoration/Improvement	Mid to long term objectives		
N55 Edgeworthstown By-Pass			
N63 Restoration/Improvement			
N63 Killashee By-Pass			
Longford Streets Restoration/Improvement			
Ballymahon Streets Restoration /Improvement			
Granard Streets Restoration/Improvement			

* All National Road Schemes are subject to identification and funding by the NRA



Non-National Roads			
Project	Completion of Design	Contract Award	Completion of Construction
R392 Ballymahon/Lanesboro improvement	Mid to long term objectives.		
R392 Ballymahon to Westmeath Co. Boundary realignment via Forgney			
R198 Road Improvement – Longford to Arvagh via Drumlish.			
R194 Road Improvement – Longford to Ballywillan via Ballinalee, Granard			
R393 Road Improvement – Longford to Ballinacarrow Bridge (Agharra) via Carrickboy			
R395 Road Improvement – Edgeworthstown to Balloo			
R396 Road Improvement – Rathcronan to Camagh			
R397 Road Improvement – Cartrongeeragh to Tirlickeen			
R398 Road Improvement – Derraghan to Brickeens			
R399 Road Improvement – Ratharney to Kilcurry			
Development of Granard Parking Access Road			
Aughnacliffe to Ballinalee restoration/improvement			
Lisdreenagh to Clontymullen (L5187/L1099/L1096) restoration/improvement			
Kilnacarrow Road (L52652) improvement			
Various Industrial Estate Developments			
Bridge north of Ballinamuck on L1017 restoration/improvement			
Various Bridge Restoration Projects			

* All regional and local road schemes are subject to identification and prioritisation by Longford County Council and state funding.

This shall include, where appropriate, the implementation of works necessary for the improvement of safety, efficiency and capacity on the road network and the upgrading, strengthening and surfacing of carriageways.

5.1.1.3 Roadside Sale of Goods, Products and/or Services

Unauthorised parking of vehicles, trailers on National, Regional and Local roads for the purpose of commercial activity is considered to constitute a hazard to road users and is not considered to comply with Health, Safety & Welfare at work regulations. Accordingly the Council adopt the following approach to such development.

ROADS 19:

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

ROADS 20:

The Council shall consider the provision of a suitably designed and privately developed commercial vehicle rest stop/park outside of the urban area, subject to the provision of safe access and circulation, suitable public facilities, adequate screening and the compatibility of adjacent land uses.

5.1.1.4 Advertising on Roads

ROADS 21:

It is the policy of the council to restrict the use of National, Regional and Local roads for advertising purposes in line with the Planning and Development Act and to implement the provisions of the NRA policy document “Policy on the provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads” and the document “Longford County Council Policy on Advertising Signs.”

5.1.2 Parking

Parking facilities continue to be provided to County Development Plan standards as part of new development (including facilities for the disabled). The Council’s approach to parking is therefore framed by the following aims;

- To improve and enhance parking facilities in the major towns and villages of the County, in order to relieve and prevent traffic congestion and generally enhance the amenity of its major settlements.
- To pursue a policy of access for those with limited mobility in terms of parking provision.
- This section should be read in conjunction with Policy AM 1 which deals with the provision of parking at specific amenity sites.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

In 2008, the Government launched an Electric Transport Programme with a target that 10 percent of the national road transport fleet be electrically powered by 2020. Shifting the emphasis away from fossil fuel towards electrically powered vehicles would require changes to the grid system, with the installation of charging points across the country, plus chargers at parking meters and in homes. Developing the infrastructure for alternatively fuelled vehicles will be a vital step in encouraging consumers to make more environmentally friendly transport choices.

POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

PKG 1:

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

PKG 2:

The provision of adequate parking facilities shall form part of the assessment of any application for development. Where it is not possible to provide parking for the proposed development within the site, charges will be levied for parking provided on street or by the Local Authority in accordance with an approved schedule of charges.

PKG 3:

In the cases of certain activities where it can be demonstrated to the Planning Authority that there is a clear time demarcation between uses, dual use of parking spaces may be permitted. Such assessments shall be determined on a site by site basis and according to their merits.



PKG 4:

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

PKG 5:

Adequate space shall be made for the servicing of the facility, including loading and unloading of vehicles, which should be provided for within the site curtilage and should not interfere with the operation of adjacent public thoroughfares.

PKG 6:

Parking for people with disabilities shall normally be required at the following rates in conjunction with proposed new developments:

- Buildings not normally visited by the public: Minimum of one space of appropriate dimensions in every 25 standard spaces, up to the first 100 spaces, thereafter, one space per 100 standard spaces or part thereof.

- Shops and buildings with public access: Minimum one space of appropriate dimensions in the first 25 standard spaces, minimum 3 in 25-50 standard spaces, five in 50-100 standard spaces and additional three per every 100 standard spaces in excess thereof.
- Spaces shall be a minimum of 3m wide and clearly marked with a highly visible symbol. Spaces should be located at the nearest point possible to the entrance to the facility served.

PKG 7:

Cycle Parking will normally be required in development schemes and the Council shall promote and encourage the provision of cycle spaces in public car-parks and appropriate locations in towns and villages throughout the County. Where appropriate, cycle spaces shall be provided in prominent and secure locations convenient to building entrances.

PKG 8:

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

PKG 9:

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

PKG 10:

Parking provision shall normally be provided in accordance with the standards outlined in the table entitled 'Parking Standards'.

PKG 11:

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

Car Parking Bay:	5mx2.5m (end on) 6mx2.5m (parallel to kerb)
Loading Bays:	15mx3m (HGV) 6mx3m (Small Van)
Circulation Aisle:	6m in width

PKG 12:

It is the policy of the council to support the Government's Electric Transport Programme by facilitating the roll-out of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.

PARKING STANDARDS

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



Table 5.3:
Parking Standards

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

* Note: Bars and lounges, Dancing areas, accommodation and function rooms to be calculated separately. Any development type not listed above shall be determined by the Planning Authority.

In certain circumstances, where the need arises there will be a requirement to provide EV charging points in accordance with IEC 61851 Standard for Electric Vehicle Conductive Charging Systems. This should be capable of supplying 32A 230V single phase AC electricity and be equipped with Mode 3 protection. It should be fitted with a Type 2 socket as defined by IEC 62196. It should be possible to expand the charging system at a future date (e.g. by installing appropriate ducting now) so that up to 10% of all spaces can be fitted with a similar charging point.

For Public Accessible Developments the Charge Point Parking space(s) should be clearly marked as being designated for EV charging. Appropriate signage indicating the presence of a charge point or points should also be erected. All charge points fitted in publicly accessible areas should be capable of communicating usage data with the national charge point management system and use the latest version of the Open Charge Point Protocol (OCPP). They should also support a user identification system such as RFID.

5.1.3 Pedestrians and Cyclists

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

As part of the development management process, developments adjacent to rivers and lakes are usually required to facilitate public access. Walkways and cycle ways may also be a feature of any Local Area Plans produced, which will aim to create pedestrian and cyclist permeability throughout the individual settlement, particularly between outlying residential areas, backlands and the town/village commercial centre or core. This is also required in larger apartment/courtyard type blocks where archways may be installed for added permeability. Secure, communal storage areas are usually required to facilitate cyclists in these developments.

In Longford Town, the 'Longford Town Cycling Strategy' identifies potential on road and off road cycle lanes/tracks. The focus of this strategy is to encourage modal shift towards sustainable transport in Longford Town and to create a realistic and attractive alternative to car travel for short commuter trips for work, educational and recreational purposes.

PED 1:

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

PED 2:

The Council shall promote the use of alternative transport to the private car through encouraging enhanced pedestrian and cycling facilities in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

PED 3:

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

PED 4:

The Council shall promote the organisation of traffic in towns and villages in order to separate motor vehicular, bicycles and pedestrian traffic. This is to be carried out in accordance with the 'National Manual for the provision of Cycle Facilities in Urban Areas', 'The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' and 'The National Cycle Manual'.

PED 5:

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

PED 6:

The Council shall support the appropriate provision of cycle strategies for settlements throughout the County 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.

PED 7:

The Council shall support the appropriate provision of cycle strategies for settlements throughout the County 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.

PED 8:

It is policy of the Council to pursue the redevelopment of the towpath of the Royal Canal for pedestrian/cycle use, providing linkages with Longford Town to the River Shannon in Clondra and to the towns of Kenagh, Ballymahon and Abbeyshrule and to link with the National Cycle Network at Mullingar via established cycle routes in Westmeath.

5.1.4 Public Transport

The Council is committed to achieving a sustainable Public transport system and working towards the integration of spatial planning and transport, in line with recommendations contained in the document *“Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020”* (DoT).

The facilitation of an Urban and Rural Transport Network, that is respectful and integral to landuse throughout the County, is central to the achievement of sustainable development and promoting social inclusion for rural communities. It is also essential that future development patterns promote sustainable settlement and transportation links. Accordingly, the Council’s policy is as follows:

PT 1:

The Council shall promote the facilitation of a public transport system and development patterns that works towards the integration of spatial planning and transport.

PT 2:

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

5.1.4.1 Rail

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

An investigation on how the potential of the rail system in Longford may be maximised, both in terms of passengers and freight, may prove beneficial. The role of the rail network as set out in a regional context in the Midland Guidelines also requires investigation.

The Council’s policy is as follows;

RL 1:

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

RL 2:

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

RL 3:

To support the development of intra-regional rail linkages in accordance with Regional policy.

RL 4:

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

RL 5:

To concentrate development which may be aimed at those commuting to and from Dublin within close proximity of existing rail links and to facilitate, where practical, improved access for pedestrians and cyclists.

RL 6:

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

RL 7:

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

RL 8:

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

RL 9:

The amenity value of the disused rail network is acknowledged and, as such, the development of these networks, as appropriate, to support walking and cycling in the County is encouraged.

5.1.4.2 Bus

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

- The Longford/Athlone service has three services per day and also serves Ballymahon and Kenagh.
- The Dublin-Sligo Service, covering Edgeworthstown, Longford and Newtownforbes, with links to Carrick on Shannon and Sligo (Sligo IT) has six services per day.
- The Dublin-Ballina service covers Edgeworthstown and Longford and has five services per day.
- The Longford-Galway service covers Killashee and Lanesborough and has one service per day.
- There is also one service per day with links to Tullamore, Portlaoise, Kilkenny and Waterford via Athlone.

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

Accordingly, the Council’s policy is as follows;

BUS 1:

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

BUS 2:

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



BUS 3:

To facilitate the provision of an integrated transport system for the Town and its environs and the County as a whole, with specific investigation into the potential provision of a dedicated bus terminus at Longford and an Urban shuttle service.

BUS 4:

To provide, subject to consultation with Bus Eireann and local groups, bus stop facilities in towns and villages. This may include, where feasible and appropriate, bus parking facilities in suitable locations, particularly in town centres and areas of high amenity.

BUS 5:

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

5.1.4.3

Air

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

AIR 1:

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

AIR 2:

The potential expansion of Air Facilities at Abbeyshrule shall be considered in the context of the surrounding heritage features including the architectural and amenity value of the village and the Royal Canal.



INFRASTRUCTURE →

5.2 Water Supply & Waste Water Services

Rapid and unprecedented growth during previous plan periods saw increased demand and pressure being placed on the water and waste water services throughout the County.

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 waste water facilities.

R198

INFRASTRUCTURE

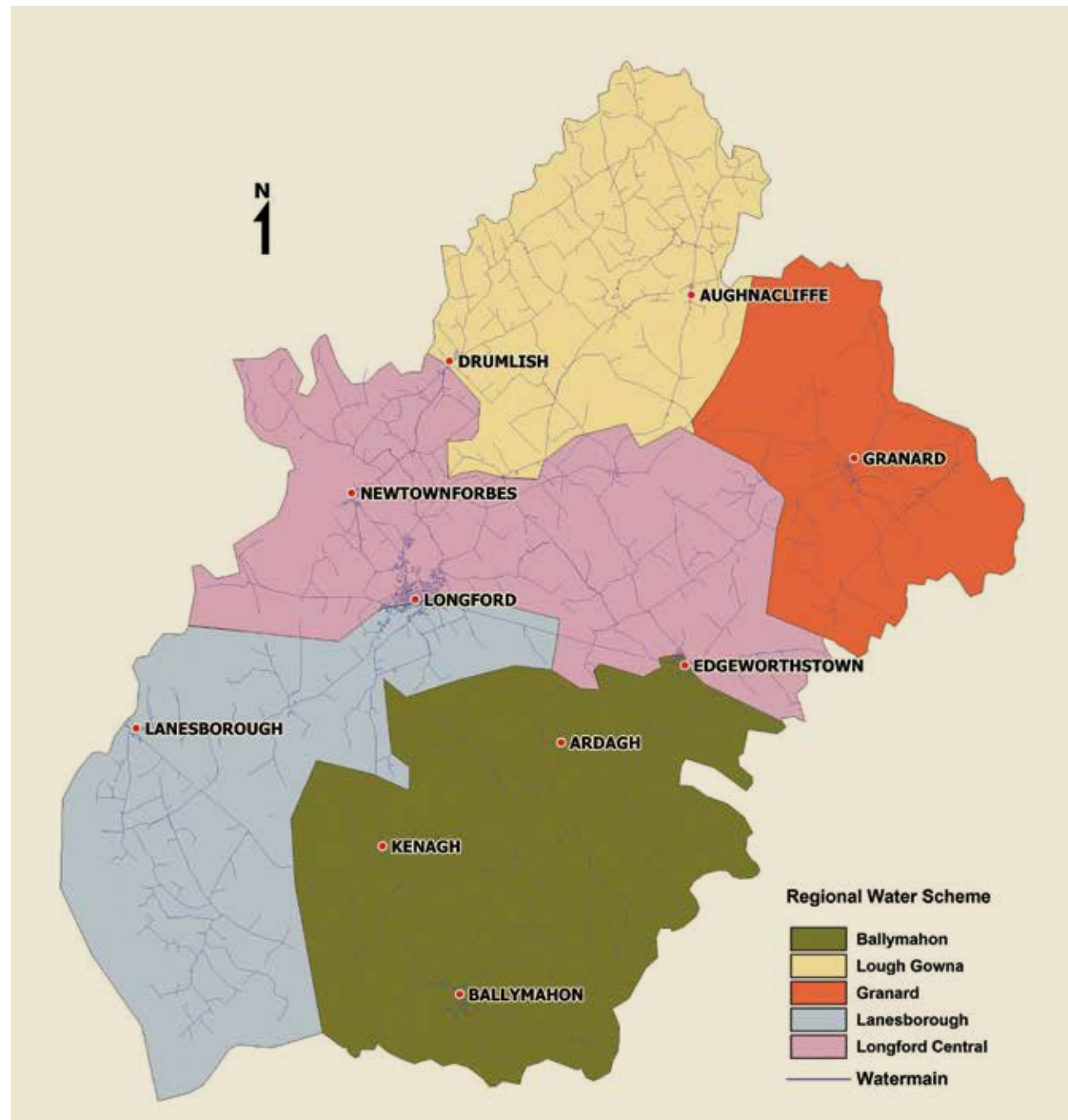
In accordance with the Water Services (No.2) Act 2013, a range of statutory water services functions transferred from Local Authorities to Irish Water from 1st January 2014. As part of this Irish Water will prepare a Water Services Strategic Plan that will subsequently be linked to capital investment plans, which will direct investment in water infrastructure based on wider spatial planning policy such as the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines and the County Development Plan.

5.2.1 Water Supply

There are five regional water schemes throughout the County, at the following locations (see map Figure 5.1). These schemes also facilitate 181 public sourced group water schemes;

- Ballymahon
- Lanesborough
- Longford Central
- Gowna
- Granard

Figure 5.1: Map of County Longford indicating Water Scheme Areas



A comprehensive Water Conservation and Network rehabilitation scheme is currently being implemented throughout the County. The aims of this scheme include the identification and repair of defective pipelines and leaks in the supply system. This work will prioritise watermains which are susceptible to burst and are in poor condition. The Water Conservation Project and maintenance of Water Services project was brought into mainstream operation with Phase 1 of the Watermains Rehabilitation Program completed in 2012 and is now at Phase 2.

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

5.2.2 Existing Sewerage Schemes

There are fifteen public sewerage schemes in the County as illustrated by the map shown in Figure 5.2. The existing schemes are located at the following locations;

- Abbeyshrule
- Ballymahon
- Keenagh

Figure 5.2: Sewerage Schemes in County Longford



- Lanesboro
(The sewage system which serves Lanesboro is actually located in Ballyleague, which falls within the bounds of Roscommon County Council. Currently sewage is dealt with by means of shared services whereby the sewage from Lanesboro is pumped to the sewage system in Ballyleague to be dealt with.)
- Longford
- Newtownforbes
- Drumlish
- Granard
- Edgeworthstown
- Clondra
- Legan
- Ballinalee
- Ballinamuck
- Ardagh
- Aghnaclyffe

5.2.3 Procedures of the Water Supply and Waste Water Services Department

Irish Water has prepared a Capital Investment Plan (CIP) outlining the indicative investment priorities in water services infrastructure for the three year period 2014-2016. The CIP represents the transition between the capital programmes previously overseen and largely funded by the DECLG and Irish Water's full price control period investment plans to be regulated by the Commission for Energy Regulation.

The CIP is dominated by contractual commitments entered into previously by Local Authorities, and which have now transitioned to Irish Water. In the 2014-2016 period, Irish Water will fund these contracts to completion and bring forward programmes and prioritised projects to commence. At the same time, it will progress a large portfolio of projects that are at the planning and design stage, reviewing their scope, budgets and, where appropriate, timing to favour maximising the performance of the existing assets through intensified capital maintenance that might allow deferral of major capital

investment. Throughout the duration of the CIP, Irish Water have given an undertaking that they will continuously review the programmes, adjusting priorities to take account of emerging information and needs in order to optimise the investments being made.

The following projects are identified as priorities for Longford;

- Lanesboro (Longford) Regional Water Supply Scheme
- Longford Sewerage Scheme
- Longford Water Conservation Stage 3 Works
(These works are funded differently from the CIP)

In addition to the above, the Council is seeking to advance the following projects that are considered to outline the additional water and wastewater infrastructure needs over the plan period and beyond;

- Granard, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon Sewerage Scheme Upgrades.

Storm Water management including collection and disposal, will still be dealt with by the Local Authority.

The following works were successfully completed over the period of the previous County Development Plan:

Granard/Ballymahon Regional Water Supply Scheme

- Contract 3 - (Water Treatment Plants Upgrades)
- Contract 4 - (Pipelines)

Longford Central Regional Water Supply Scheme

- Contract 2 (Network & Reservoir) (Stage 6)
- Contract 3 - (Network & Reservoir)
- Contract 4 - (Water Treatment Plant Upgrade - Lough Forbes)

5 Villages Sewerage Scheme

- Contract 1 (Networks - Ardagh, Aghnaclyffe & Ballinalee)
- Contract 2 (Wastewater Treatment Plant - DBO)
- Contract 3 Drumlish & Newtownforbes Networks

Water Conservation Stage 3 Works- Watermains Rehabilitation Project Phase 1

The Council recognises the importance of the provision of water services in the development of the County, particularly in relation to the delivery of the settlement strategy as outlined at Section 2.1.6. As such, it is an objective of the Council to support the expansion of existing services in a planned and prioritised fashion and facilitate development of additional services where economically feasible and where resources permit, providing for the development of the County in an orderly and sustainable manner.

Accordingly, the Council's policy is as follows;

WS 1:

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

WS 2:

Development shall only be permitted once adequate and appropriate waste water infrastructure is provided. Where required, public wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure - which fully complies with requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) including the need to provide secondary treatment and other treatment as required - shall be operational and with adequate capacity to accommodate waste water arising from development, prior to developments being occupied. Discharges arising from this collection and treatment shall also comply with the requirements of the Directive.

WS 2(a)

It is the policy of Longford County Council to investigate and promote the preparation of a Water Services Strategic Plan - in compliance with the Water Services Act - for the functional area of the Council. Such a Plan may be prepared jointly with other Water Services Authorities.

WS 3:

It is the policy of Longford County Council to support the establishment of additional projects in terms of improving existing water supply, establishing new supplies, sewerage mains provision (including the connection of unsewered areas, including individual properties/premises, serviced by septic tanks to the existing and planned sewer network) and improvement of existing treatment plants in the medium and long-term and for their extension to include adjoining residential dwellings.



WS 4:

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

WS 5:

Longford County Council shall promote the extension of existing water supply and wastewater services where required and where resources permit.

WS 6:

The Council shall support the preparation, establishment and implementation of the following documents insofar as they relate to the Water Services Section:

- The Sludge Management Strategy
- The Water Conservation Plan, including the promotion of water conservation measures in new and existing developments
- The Rural Water Plan

WS 7:

It is the policy of the Council to support the designation and mapping of wayleaves for the installation and maintenance of water services infrastructure. These wayleaves, once identified, shall be protected from inappropriate development.

WS 8:

It is the policy of the Council to restrict or prohibit the large-scale development of unserved land where existing served land of an appropriate size and nature, to meet the reasonable needs of the proposed development, exists in the vicinity.

WS 9:

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

WS 10:

To protect existing sources of municipal water supplies through restricting potentially pollutant development within a specified distance from the proposed source. In this regard, buffer areas are identified in Appendix 4. In these areas it must be demonstrated that development proposals will not have an adverse impact on the proposed water source.

WS 11:

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

WS 12:

Where potential municipal water supplies are identified, it shall be the policy of the Council to restrict potentially pollutant development within a specified distance from the proposed source.

WS 13:

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

WS 14:

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

5.2.4 Group Water Schemes

Currently there are 181 publicly sourced group water schemes within the County. Ten of these are in the process of being taken over, 90 have applied to be taken over by the Council and a further 51 are in the process of submitting an application to be taken over. Funding is available from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government through Longford County Council for the taking in charge of group schemes. Second grants are also available to Group Schemes for upgrade work. Where a group scheme is to be taken in charge approval will be required from Longford County Council and the group should engage an engineer to draw up plans and employ a contractor to carry out the works.

WS 15:

The Council shall consult the European Drinking Water Framework Directive and the following EPA publications;

- Handbook on the Implementation of the European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 278 of 2007) (the Regulations for Water Services Authorities for Public Water Supplies”.
- Handbook on the Implementation of the European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 278 of 2007) (the Regulations for Water Services Authorities for Private Water Supplies”.

The Council shall also consult in parallel with the corresponding and referenced EPA Guidance and Advice Notes in the establishment and maintenance of water sources in the County.

WS 16:

The Council shall consult the relevant European Directives relating to wastewater collection, treatment and discharge along with EPA Guidance and Advice Notes in the provision, maintenance and expansion of water treatment systems in the County.

WS 17:

The following conditions apply to the takeover of any group water scheme:

1. Permission from group scheme members must be obtained, (i.e. application form to be fully completed and signed by at least two-thirds of the members of the Group Scheme).
2. Wayleave agreements and Right of Ways and as built maps for every location that the watermains traverse private lands must be obtained by the group scheme and registered on the property folios.
3. Ownership of pumphouses, reservoirs etc. must be established in the Group’s name.
4. All outstanding liabilities of the Group Water Scheme shall be cleared in full.

WS 18:

The Council shall implement the relevant recommendations set out in the EPA publication (and any subsequent update) Focus on Urban Waste Water Discharges in Ireland (EPA Office of Environment Enforcement, 2012).

WS 19:

The Council shall consult the EPA publication “The Provision and Quality of Drinking Water in Ireland” (and any subsequent update) in the establishment and maintenance of water sources in the County.



INFRASTRUCTURE →

5.3 Surface Water, Drainage and Flooding

5.3.1 Surface Water and Drainage

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

It is essential that adequate surface water measures are put in place in order to prevent flooding and to recognise that the alteration in natural flow patterns can lead to problems elsewhere within the catchment.

Accordingly the Council's Policy is as follows;

SW 1:

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

SW 2:

Surface water storage measures shall be provided where it is considered that the surface water run-off levels exceed permissible discharge rates. Storm water run-off design should be carried out in accordance with Sustainable Urban Drainage Standards (SUDS), "Dublin Corporation Stormwater Management Policy Technical Guidelines" and "Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works" incorporating "Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study, Volume 2, New Developments" or any future updates.

SW 3:

Surface water and drainage measures shall be provided in a manner that is appropriate to the site and cognisant of potential effects on public health, safety, the environment and the amenity of the area.



5.3.2 Flooding

It is essential that flooding issues are properly addressed particularly given the swell in developed lands leading to increased run-off and climatic change that has occurred over the last plan period. Accordingly development should be restricted and limited in areas of known flooding without clear demonstration that the proposed development has appropriately addressed any flooding concerns. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which forms part of this plan, should also be consulted.

The Council's Strategic Policy in respect of Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is as follows;

SFRA 1:

It is the policy of the Council to 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 Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 (and any updated/ superseding legislation or policy guidance). The Council will also take account of the North Western and Shannon International Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Studies.

SFRA 2:

The Council will actively work with the CFRAM Programme and catchment based Flood Planning Groups, especially in the east of the County 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. Such strategies would be most important in areas where significant changes in the levels of development are likely to occur and may be informed by monitoring changes in upstream hydrology including those relating to land cover.

SFRA 3:

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. Promote the sustainable management and uses of water bodies and avoid, where possible, culverting or realignment of these features.

SFRA 4:

Where resources are available, the Council will contribute towards the improvement and/or restoration of the natural flood risk management functions of flood plains. Where possible these functions should be aligned with other functions including those relating to recreation and amenity, habitat protection and management of water quality.

SFRA 5:

Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system in the County, ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in all new developments. Surface water runoff from development sites will be limited to pre-development levels and planning applications for new developments will be required to provide details of surface water drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems proposals.

SFRA 6:

The Council shall implement the key principles of flood risk management set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines as follow:

- 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.

Development will not be permitted in flood risk areas, particularly floodplains, except where there are no alternative and appropriate sites available in lower risk areas that are consistent with the objectives of proper planning and sustainable development.

Development in areas which have the highest flood risk should be avoided and/or only considered in exceptional circumstances (through a prescribed Justification Test) if adequate land or sites are not available in areas which have lower flood risk. Most types of development would be considered inappropriate in areas which have the highest flood risk.

Only water-compatible development such as docks and marinas, dockside activities that require a waterside location, amenity open space, outdoor sports and recreation and essential transport infrastructure that cannot be located elsewhere would be considered appropriate in these areas.

SFRA 7:

Lower tier plans shall undertake SFRA in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and in consultation with the OPW. As part of a Stage 1 SFRA (flood risk identification), the flood risk indicators identified in the SFRA for the County Development Plan as well as any newly available information should be examined in order to determine whether further investigation and Stage 2 SFRA (initial flood risk assessment) is required. This examination should use the Council's GIS database of flood risk indicators which will be kept up to date and will add, as appropriate, new information made available through the CFRAM Programme.

Stage 2 SFRA for lower tier plans will, at a minimum, undertake:

- A confirmation of the sources of flooding;
- An appraisal of the adequacy of the available flood risk indicator information for the settlement;
- Consultation with area engineer/local foreman and local knowledge, where available;
- Ground truthing of flood risk indicators and site walkovers facilitating the identification of, inter alia, vegetation associated with frequent inundation and micro-topography;
- The identification of flood risk zones.

The Council shall take into account the findings of the assessments undertaken (including that which may be provided as part of any Stage 3 SFRA, detailed flood risk assessment) during the preparation of the lower tier plans, including those provisions relating to land use zoning.

SFRA 8:

Site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required for all planning applications in areas at risk of flooding, 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. Further details with regard to the requirements for site-specific FRAs are provided in the Technical Appendices of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines.

SFRA 9:

SFRAs and site-specific FRAs shall provide information on the implications of climate change with regard to flood risk in relevant locations. The 2009 OPW Draft Guidance on 'Assessment of Potential Future Scenarios for Flood Risk Management' (or any superseding document) shall be consulted with to this effect.

SFRA 10:

A detailed site-specific FRA may be requested for projects specified in the County Development Plan. Such projects could include waste water treatment plants, collection networks, drinking water treatment plants, transport infrastructure and water-compatible developments that have the potential to affect the movement of flood waters.

SFRA 11:

Flood risk may constitute a significant environmental effect of a development proposal that in certain circumstances may trigger a sub-threshold EIS. FRA should therefore be an integral part of any EIA undertaken for projects within the County.

Further to the strategic policy as set out above, the following project level policy in relation to flooding is as follows;

FLO 1:

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

FLO 2:

It is the policy of the Council to protect Flood Zone A and Flood Zone B from inappropriate development and direct developments/ land uses into the appropriate Flood Zone in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 (or any superseding document). 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 FRA in accordance with the criteria set out under the Flood Risk Management Guidelines.

FLO 3:

The Council shall implement the recommendations and provisions of the DEHLG/OPW publication Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 (or any updated/superseding document) in relation to flood risk management within the County. This will include the following:

- a) Avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines, the risk of flooding within the flood risk areas indicated on Flood Zones A and B, including fluvial, pluvial and groundwater flooding, and any other flood risk areas that may be identified during the period of the Plan or in relation to a planning application.
- b) Development proposals in areas where there is an identified or potential risk of flooding (including pluvial and/or groundwater flooding) or that could give rise to a risk of flooding elsewhere may be required to carry out a site-specific FRA, and Justification Test where appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines. Any FRA 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.
- c) 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.

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 Habitats Directive Assessment, as appropriate.

FLO 4:

The Council, in tandem with the OPW, will support the preparation, establishment and implementation of any future Flood Risk Assessment and Management Studies prepared for catchments within the County area.

FLO 5:

Where the probability of flooding from rivers is low (less than 0.1% flood zone C) the developer should satisfy him or herself that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. Among other things, mapping including the OPW's Pluvial and Groundwater Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment mapping should be considered for this purpose.

FLO 6:

Planning applications on lands identified within groundwater and pluvial PFRA areas shall be accompanied by a site-specific FRA that corresponds with that outlined under Chapter 5 'Flooding and Development Management' of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. Such assessments shall be prepared by suitably qualified experts with hydrological experience and shall quantify the risks and the effects of any necessary mitigation, together with the measures needed or proposed to manage residual risks.

FLO 7:

In the case of lands transected by the outer boundary of Flood Zone A or B, where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority (by more detailed local topographic survey information) that the outer boundary does not reflect local topographical and /or flood path conditions, the Planning Authority may consider the extension of uses allowed in an adjacent land use zone into the Flood Zone area. The proposal will also be subject to the submission of a site-specific FRA and Justification Test as appropriate and the developer satisfying the Planning Authority and him/herself that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed and will not increase flood risk elsewhere

FLO 8:

Where Flood Zones have been zoned according to the information contained in a site-specific FRA provided by the land owner this should be noted on the relevant zoning map.

5.3.3 Climate Change

The *National Climate Change Adaptation Framework* provides a strategic policy focus to ensure adaptation measures are taken across different sectors and levels of government to reduce Ireland's vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change. The aim of this Framework is to ensure that an effective role is played by all stakeholders in putting in place an active and enduring adaptation policy regime. The governance structure provides for climate change adaptation to be addressed at national and local level.

The Council is committed to the implementation of this strategy and accordingly the Councils policy in this regard is as follows;

CLI 1:

The Council recognises European and national objectives for climate adaptation and will work with the EPA, the Midland Regional Authority and neighbouring planning authorities in implementing future Guidance for climate change proofing of land use plan provisions as is flagged in the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (DECLG, 2012). The Council will integrate as appropriate, the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework and any related Guidelines which may arise during its implementation.



INFRASTRUCTURE →

5.4 Environmental Services

5.4.1 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 Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region (2005-2010 extended to 2014).

This set out to replace a system over reliant on landfill disposal with a new integrated approach to waste management. The plan is based on the EU waste management hierarchy which prioritises prevention, reuse, recycling and energy recovery ahead of landfill. The long term targets for the region remain as follows:

Recycling	46%
Energy Recovery	37%
Landfill Disposal	17%

At present, there are a number of private companies providing a waste collection service to both householders and businesses within the County. There are no active landfill sites in the County.



5.4.1.1 Aims for Waste Recovery and Disposal

The Council seek to achieve the following aims over the period of this plan, including:

- Land acquisition, planning and design of new facilities, including the maintenance of the bring-bank network, waste recycling centres, and green waste composting facilities. Regional responsibilities include a materials recovery facility, a biological treatment plant and the provision of a new residual landfill.

5.4.1.2 Construction and Demolition Waste

At present there are no large scale Construction and Demolition recycling facilities in the region. There are however five sites with permits to accept top soil of which three may also accept non-hazardous Construction and Demolition waste. It is hoped that contractors within the construction industry will establish more facilities within the midlands region. The National Construction and Demolition Waste Council have been established and tasked with achieving the national recycling targets. It launched a voluntary initiative in October 2004 which included best practice guidelines prepared by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for the preparation of Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plans for developments above certain stated thresholds.

5.4.1.3 Bring Facilities and Civic Amenity Facilities

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

Accordingly, the Council’s policy is as follows;

WAS 1:

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate and promote the implementation of the Midlands Waste Management Plan within its functional area.

WAS 2:

It is the policy of the Council to continue to facilitate and promote the provision of civic amenity sites, including “bring centres” for the purposes of providing a collection point for the recycling of domestic waste, subject to siting, location, compatibility with adjacent land uses and other relevant development control criteria.

WAS 3:

The Council shall have regard to the Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region in the implementation, operation and management of schemes and services for the disposal of waste within the County.

WAS 4:

To control development within its powers through the planning process in order to prevent and/or limit the impact of potential air, water and soil pollution.

WAS 5:

Where considered necessary, the Planning Authority will require Project Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plans as part of applications for development in accordance with “Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects” (DoEHLG, 2006). Such plans should be submitted for developments above the stated thresholds within these guidelines and as required by the Planning Authority.

5.4.2 Litter and Animal Control

Longford County Council’s Strategy on litter, is to increase public awareness by increased education, and to promote a litter free environment through the implementation of enforcement action through the relevant legislation.

Accordingly the Council’s Policy and Objectives are as follows;

LIT 1:

The Council shall continue its education and awareness programmes in local schools and shall promote schemes and initiatives which aim to reduce litter pollution in the County.

LIT 2:

The Council shall enforce the provisions of the 1997 Litter Pollution Act where appropriate and necessary. This states that “no person shall deposit any substance or object so as to create litter in a public place or in any place that is visible to any extent from a public place”.

LIT 3:

It is the policy of the Council to promote and encourage the preparation, establishment and implementation of a litter management plan for Longford County.

LIT 4:

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



5.4.3 Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems

The National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems 2013, published by the EPA, outlines how septic tanks and waste water treatment systems will be inspected in the coming years. It also highlights the environmental and public health risks posed if the treatment systems are not working appropriately.



5.5 Energy & Communications

5.5.1 Electricity

The work of ESB networks in enhancing the capacity, reliability and efficiency of supply to the County is acknowledged. Longford County Council will support and encourage further measures in this regard in line with the Government Policy Statement on Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure (July 2012).

N5

Longford County

Lanesboro Generating Station, located on the banks of the River Shannon, operated as a peat burning power station from the late 1950s until its closure in 2005. A new peat fired power station, Lough Ree Power, of 100 MV capacity received planning permission in 2003. Lough Ree Power station is the third largest peat fired power station in the Country. Commissioned in 2004, the Station has a 15 year contract to burn peat supplied by Bord Na Mona.

Adequate electricity supply is essential to ensuring the socio-economic growth of the County and ensuring adequate opportunity for investment that may be dependent on bulk energy use. Fortunately, Longford is currently served by 110kv lines from Lanesboro to Mullingar and a 220kv line which runs to the North of the County from Carrick-on-Shannon to Dundalk. There are also existing 110kv lines from Lanesboro to Richmond substations and 110kv line from Carrick on Shannon to Arva substation traversing the north of the county.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

EC 1:

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

- The development is required in order to facilitate the provision or retention of significant economic or social infrastructure.
- The route proposed has been identified with due consideration for the social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts.
- Where impacts are inevitable mitigation features have been included subject to Appropriate Assessment.
- Where it can be shown that the proposed development is consistent with international best practice.

5.5.2 Renewable Energy Sources

All methods of energy production have impacts on the environment, however, the need to adopt a more sustainable approach to energy production is acknowledged by the Planning Authority. A favourable approach will be taken towards applications for renewable energy developments provided they are environmentally sustainable and are in accordance with general planning criteria. The cumulative effect of such developments on the landscape will be taken into consideration. The key aim is to;

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

Accordingly, the Council's general policy on renewable energy is as follows;

RE 1:

The Council shall prepare, where resources permit, a Renewable Energy Strategy for the County which will support the development of renewable energy production and ancillary facilities in order to enhance the sustainability of the County, promoting a low carbon economy and lifestyle. The Strategy shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment as relevant.

RE 2:

The following criteria shall be used in the assessment of potential sites for the development of alternative energy sources:

- Significant wind energy potential
- Accessibility to the national grid
- Suitability of the site having regard to land uses
- Measures to minimise impact on other development

RE 3:

The Council will consider the promotion of renewable energy and low energy/passive houses to be a high priority to help reduce global warming. The Council will support initiatives that encourage energy conservation and reduce reliance upon non-renewable sources of energy, including schemes for wind energy, biomass, photovoltaics, solar thermal installations, heat exchange, geothermal etc.

RE 4:

The Council shall investigate the potential use of biomass as an alternative to peat.

RE 5:

The following documents and guidelines shall form part of the assessment process for potential alternative energy developments:

- National Climate Change Strategy, 2007-2012 (DoEHLG)
- Strategy for Intensifying Wind Energy Deployment (DCMNR)
- Wind Energy – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG)
- Renewable Energy Strategy
- National Development Plan
- BMW Region Development Strategy
- Sustainable Development - a Strategy for Ireland

RE 6:

It will be Council policy to ensure that all proposed renewable energy projects, such as those related to wind or hydroelectric energy, and any associated improvement works or associated infrastructure, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, are subject to Appropriate Assessment to ensure that there are no likely significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

RE 7:

Upon adoption, the Council shall implement the relevant recommendations contained within the National Peatland Strategy, Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Areas, National Raised Bog cSAC Management Plan and Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

5.5.2.1 Wind Energy

Longford, like many other counties, provides good opportunities for the harnessing of wind energy. The wind energy potential available within the County is 3120 MW²⁹ of power per annum. This accounts for 2.3% of the state's wind energy potential and is quite substantial given the geographical size of the County. In attempting to achieve a more sustainable way of living in the County, acknowledging the need to respond to climate concerns and recognising the growing difficulties associated with continued use of fossil fuels, it is accepted that the demand for wind energy will increase over the plan period.

In determining applications for wind farm developments, consideration shall be given to "Wind Energy- Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoEHLG) or any relevant updates. In general the Council will look favourably on the development of wind farms and the harnessing of wind energy in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the County. The impact of a wind farm will vary depending on the location of the individual site together with the number of turbines, layout, size, design, and colour.

The Council has identified as illustrated in Appendix 5 areas of wind potential where wind farms will be encouraged. These areas have been selected in line with the areas of wind potential identified in the Wind Atlas for Ireland produced by Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI).

In addition to the above, it is noted that the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines identify that the worked out peatland areas offer potential for renewable energy installations including wind energy.

Accordingly, Council policy is as follows;

WD 1:

Developments for wind farms will be encouraged to locate in those areas identified as having wind potential within the County, as defined on the Map contained in Appendix 5.

WD 2:

Proposals for large scale industrial wind farm developments shall be directed to areas of cutaway bogs subject to the following;

²⁹ Irish Energy Centre, Renewable Energy Information Office, 2000, Planning Update- An Update on Renewable Energy for Local Authorities, [Online], August 2000, No. 3. Available at: <http://www.sei.ie/uploadedfiles/RenewableEnergy/PlanningUpdate20001.pdf> [Accessed 8 October 2013].

- Dependent on the completion of an investigation demonstrating suitability of the areas,
- The preparation of revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines and the Renewable Energy Export Policy and Development Framework
- Compliance with the necessary environmental assessments

WD 3:

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

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

WD 4:

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

- a) Visual impact - both on site and over extensive areas. Applications may be required to include photo or video montages - taken from a variety of locations after discussion with the Planning Authority. Site cross sections showing existing and proposed ground levels in relation to all structures on site are required. Ideally they should be sited against a backdrop of a hill or elevated area. Non linear type layouts are favourable. Windfarms should not be intervisible from one another.
- b) Predicted Noise Levels - developments must ensure that noise levels will not be intrusive in relation to background noise at the nearest dwelling. Blades, of single speed must rotate in the same direction. Monitoring noise levels at selected locations generally for the first year of operation of the wind farm will be a condition of planning permission. Manufacturer's certification of noise emissions will be required at application stage.
- c) Design - Solid towers should be used throughout the windfarm, which should be of the same height and colour. Advertising material including the manufacturer's name or logo will not be permitted on the wind turbine.





- d) Impact of associated site works - including access roads, substations, grid connections, fencing etc. Details of proposed grid connections are required at application stage. Consideration should be given to the potential landscape impacts in the context of grid connections taking into account technical feasibility and economic viability, particularly in environmentally sensitive locations. Access roads shall be un-surfaced and follow natural contours of the site. Fencing will not be permitted on any part of the site except normal livestock fencing when the land is part of an operating agricultural holding.
- e) Construction - a detailed phased programme for the construction together with estimates of traffic generation is required at application stage. Consideration will be given to the potential damage to roads during the construction phase. In some cases access routes may be restricted by planning condition.
- f) Proximity to Dwellings - Wind turbines should generally not be located within 500m of any dwelling but this may vary from site to site.
- g) Interference with navigation, television and communication signals - A communications booster may also be required or some other technical solution. Air and sea navigation authorities may be consulted for their comments on proposed wind farm developments.
- h) Impact on environmental designations - Amenity areas, Sensitive landscapes, views and prospects, Designated Tourist Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Archaeological site, biodiversity, protected structures, national monuments etc. Wind farm developments should not be located within 100 metres of ancient monuments.

The impact on migratory birds, in particular, will be assessed in consultation with the Irish Wildbird Conservancy (BirdWatch Ireland).

- i) Decommissioning - proposals for restoration of the site after removal of the turbines should be included with an application. Adequate financial security will be required by planning condition.
- j) Sensitivity of locations of folklore, mythology and religious significance to these developments. Evidence of consultation with local community groups is an important element of planning for such a project. Developers will also be required to assess their proposals for the impact of shadow flicker on dwellings and this information should accompany the planning application.
- k) Location relative to water bodies. Wind farm developments should not be located within 150m of lakes or rivers.
- l) Applicants are advised to outline future extension proposals if known. It should be noted that temporary permissions for an anemometer is without prejudice to any subsequent application for a wind farm.

Where appropriate, the Planning Authority may request additional information in determining an application for a wind farm development, including detailed information similar to that required as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

5.5.2.2 Hydro Schemes

Hydro schemes use the kinetic energy of moving water to produce electricity. Longford previously granted permission for one hydro scheme on the River Shannon just beyond the settlement of Clondra. There will be a presumption in favour of applications for hydro schemes provided certain planning and environmental criteria are satisfied. Cognisance should be taken of the document "Guidelines for Construction and Operation of Small-Scale Hydroelectric Schemes and Fisheries" (DCENR).

Accordingly the policy of Longford County Council is as follows;

HS 1:

In assessing an application for a hydro scheme the following shall be taken into consideration:-

- a) Impact on environmental designations - Amenity Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Special Protection Areas, Archaeological sites, areas with significant amenity use etc.
- b) Visual impact arising from turbine houses, embankments, structures, roads, power lines, poles etc.
- c) Projects should incorporate a fish pass to ensure the free and safe passage of fish. The views of the local Regional Fisheries Board may be sought.
- d) Likely erosion arising from the development and potential negative impacts on protected flora and fauna.
- e) Turbines should be sited at sufficient distance from dwelling houses to ensure that noise emissions are not a nuisance.
- f) Impact of construction stage and associated site works including water retaining structures, access routes, turbine housing, and grid connections etc. The timing of construction should avoid the breeding season of susceptible wildlife.
- g) Consultation between the developer and local interest groups such as fishermen, water sport enthusiasts etc. prior to submitting planning application.
- h) Water monitoring - the developer may by condition be required to submit water monitoring data to the Planning Authority.
- i) It should be noted that in the event of permission being granted for a water level recorder, this is not an indicator that permission will be granted for a hydro energy development.

³⁰ Forfas, 2006, Overview of Ireland's Broadband Performance, Nov 2006, [Online] Available at: <http://www.forfas.ie/publications/2006/title,737,en.php> [Accessed 21st October 2013]

5.5.2.3 Alternative Energy Developments

Projects involving other indigenous sources of energy such as solar, landfill gas, biomass, energy crops, forestry waste, biogas from sewage sludge and farm slurry, will be assessed in a similar manner with the prime policy of the Planning Authority of permitting developments which are environmentally sustainable and in accordance with the proper planning of the area. In relation to natural gas, Longford County Council will pursue the provision of Natural Gas as an energy resource for the major settlements of the County with the appropriate authority.



5.5.3 Telecommunications Structures and Broadband

The development of telecommunications infrastructure is essential to attracting investment and facilitating economic development within Longford. In order to promote industrial and commercial development, and enhance social inclusion, a quality telecommunications infrastructure is required in order for Longford to capitalise on investment opportunities.

The inability of many areas to access broadband in particular, seriously affects the efficiency and competitiveness of many businesses within the County. According to Forfas, Broadband access not only facilitates enterprise development, but also creates societal benefits including acting as an enabler for economic and social inclusion in small, rural and remote communities.³⁰

Longford County Council's approach to telecommunications infrastructure is underpinned by the following aims;

- To secure the best possible communications infrastructure for County Longford in line with the requirements of the National Development Plan and in the interests of social and economic progress, while having regard to the protection of the County's residential, recreational and visual amenities, and areas of cultural, artistic, historical, architectural and archaeological character.
- Longford County Council shall support and encourage the provision of an improved communications network in the County, in order to facilitate the industrial, economic and social growth of Longford in a national context.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

TEL 1:

Applications for Telecommunications and antennae support structures and associated equipment will be considered having regard to the guidelines for "Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures" and any updated documents issued by the DoECLG or relevant authority.

TEL 2:

Applications for Telecommunications structures shall be considered having regard to location, proximity of existing dwellings, childcare and educational facilities in the area, landscape characteristics, including existing screening available and the ability of the landscape to support additional screening measures and the density of existing, similar structures in the area.

TEL 3:

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

TEL 4:

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

TEL 5:

Developers may be required to provide telecommunications structures with environmentally acceptable designs, including camouflaging/disguising techniques to integrate the structure into the surrounding landscape.

TEL 6:

Proposals for telecommunication masts and antennae support structures shall be accompanied by supporting evidence demonstrating compliance with the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) Guidelines or the equivalent European pre-standard 500166-2 conditioned in licensing agreements with the DCENR.

TEL 7:

Longford County Council shall seek the establishment of an appropriate body at a regional or national level to monitor the installation of mobile communications infrastructure with regard to proliferation, co-location, emissions, and the use of best available technology to prevent negative health and environmental impacts.

TEL 8:

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

TEL 9:

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

TEL 10:

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



INFRASTRUCTURE →

5.6 Major Accidents Directive

The Seveso II Directive (96/082/EEC) is an EU Directive that seeks to prevent major industrial accidents involving dangerous substances and to limit the consequences of accidents on people and the environment.

There are no major accident hazard sites notified under the EC (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2006 (S174 of 2006) within County Longford. Accordingly any new developments of this nature, and subsequent developments within the vicinity of this, shall abide by standards prescribed by the Health and Safety Authority.

Accordingly the Council's Policy is as follows;

MA 1:

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

- The Major Accidents Directive (Seveso II- 96/082/EEC).
- The potential effects on public health and safety.
- The need to ensure adequate distances between such developments and residential areas, areas of public use and any areas of sensitivity.

MA 2:

Any proposals for developments within the vicinity of major accident hazard sites shall have cognisance of the required minimum separation distances as required by the Major Accidents Directive. In this regard all future proposals of this nature shall be forwarded to the Health and Safety Authority.





2,000m

1,000m

500m

N5

▲ 2



▲ 16

ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE & AMENITIES



6. Environment, Heritage and Amenities

Summary →

The priorities of this chapter are listed below under the three headings of: Environment, Heritage and Amenities.

Environment

The Council is committed to developing a 'green infrastructure vision' for the county. This vision that aims to provide a network of green spaces that conserves the natural ecosystem – a community of plants and animals that depend on each other to live and grow. It is also committed to identifying, protecting and enhancing the county's landscape: gardens, parks, listed views, scenic areas and routes, places and features of natural beauty and cultural interest, and so on. This will also involve the prevention of pollution (water, air and soil) to maintain and enhance the environment.

Heritage

The Council is committed to protecting and enhancing heritage* through the appropriate management of development.

* Heritage refers to existing and emerging archaeological sites, structures, objects such as monuments, wildlife, landscapes, folk tradition and practices, and so on.

Under European and Irish law, the Council must enhance and carefully manage any development that may impact on protected sites in the county. By law, the Council must work to promote the conservation of biodiversity – biodiversity refers to the plants, animals and micro-organisms on land and in water.

As such, the Council will:

- help to raise public awareness of biodiversity
- promote investigation into the setting up of wildlife areas and lands for educational, recreational and amenity facilities
- manage development to ensure the protection of biodiversity

The Council will protect sites from inappropriate developments that might damage potential designated geological sites in Longford. It will also promote improved management, protection and access to the inland waterways such as the Royal Canal and the Shannon river.

The Council supports the statutory protection of important heritage features:

- listed protected structures
- Architectural Conservation Areas such as Ardagh
- historic gardens and landscapes

They will do this by managing development which would change the character of the structures, areas or landscapes. The Council will set high design standards in all new developments and the development of vacant, derelict and under-used land in urban areas.

Amenities

The Council will prepare a Biodiversity Action Plan which will identify the main biodiversity features of the county and take action to enhance natural heritage. It will also improve amenities in line with their protected status.

It will also support the provision and improvement of public open spaces and parks by, for example, promoting planting schemes and controlling or eliminating invasive species.

Summary →

The Council is also committed to promoting the expansion and improvement of:

- sports services,
- community services, and
- social and community facilities including educational facilities (such as third level and adult education facilities), health services (though the HSE is mainly responsible), burial grounds, childcare and fire services.

It is important to note that all the priorities listed need funding and collaboration to make them workable.



6.1 Conservation and Preservation of the Environment

ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE & AMENITIES →

The Council is committed to the conservation and preservation of the environment and will seek to continue to protect the natural resources of the county through the enforcement of policies and relevant legislation in relation to protection of the environment through the continued work of its Enforcement Team.

Any proposed development affecting areas of natural and/or manmade environment must be carried out in an acceptable and sympathetic manner and be in compliance with other policies of the plan.



The environment that makes up Longford, both natural and man-made, is one of the key factors that determines the physical character of the County and creates a sense of place. Promoting growth and development within the County and maximising socio-economic potential is central to fulfilling the Development Strategy of this plan. However, this must be carried out in a manner that affords protection to the environment of the County. Accordingly this section is underpinned by the following aims;

- To conserve and protect the natural and man-made environment of the County.
- To promote and encourage the conservation and preservation of the environment through the application of the concepts and principles of sustainability.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Planning Authority will develop a Green Infrastructure vision for the County which shall be defined with consideration of its potential to contribute positively to providing an interconnected network of green spaces that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to human populations. Green infrastructure can assist in halting the loss of biodiversity and decline, biodiversity protection and enhancement, recreational open space provision, landscape character and amenity, sustainable transport, flood risk management, climate change adaptation, and primary production in the landscape (agriculture, forestry, etc.). In the course of defining the vision all potentially related legislation, policy and initiatives for the study area e.g. Water Framework Directive, Flood Risk Management Guidelines, Habitats Directive, European Landscape Convention, should be identified so that all possibilities for spatial and functional synergies are considered. When this Green infrastructure vision is developed appropriate policies shall then be incorporated in to the County Development Plan. The Bord na Mona bogs and the corridors between are ideally laid out to fit neatly within this concept. The term Green Infrastructure is widely used in the EU and would position Longford for future funding to develop this important area.

6.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment

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

Through the Landscape Assessment, it is the policy of the Council to identify, protect and enhance landscapes and landscape features of special environmental, historic or cultural interest. This includes gardens, parks, demesnes, historic designed landscapes, views and prospects, places and features of natural beauty and/or cultural value. Consideration will also be given to the making of Tree Preservation Orders in respect of trees or groups of trees of particular landscape value.

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

LCA 1:

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

LCA 2:

Longford County Council recognises the diverse and unique landscape character of the County, and as such, landscape conservation areas may be designated in order to achieve its objective of protecting and enhancing the County’s landscape. Physical development shall not adversely impact on areas designated as visually important/ sensitive under this section.

LCA 3:

It is the policy of the Council to preserve views and prospects as illustrated on the accompanying map as part of Appendix 6 and as listed in the following tables. Views are divided into full and intermittent in order to differentiate areas where scenic views may be partial or absent along a particular route. The following table lists the routes (as numbered on the map) and lists the townlands through which they pass for identification purposes.

Table 6.1:
Views and Prospects – To be read in conjunction with Appendix 6 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), Corrool (Kenny), Corrool (Fox).	Full
F.S-22	Drumnee, Saints Island.	Full

Table 6.2:
Intermittent Scenic Routes

Route No.	Townlands	Classification
I.S-1	Gaigue, Tawnagh, Camagh (Longfod By), Corrinagh, Annagh (Longford By), Aghamore Lower, Leggagh, Moyne, Aghagah, Fihoragh.	Intermittent
I.S-2	Enaghan, Lisraherty.	Intermittent
I.S-3	Drumard.	Intermittent
I.S-4	Ballyduffy, Moyne, Birrinagh, Crott, Smear.	Intermittent
I.S-5	Smear, Carrickmaguirk, Aghamore Lower.	Intermittent
I.S-6	Leggagh, Aghamore Lower, Annaghdaniel, Cloonback, Cuingareen, Rathmore (Granard By), Donegal (Granary By).	Intermittent
I.S-7	Edenmore, Fostragh.	Intermittent
I.S-8	Aghadowry, Carrickateane, Drumderg.	Intermittent
I.S-9	Lettergonnell, Carrowlinan, Kiltyclogh.	Intermittent
I.S-10	Cartrongolan, Dooroc, Derrynacross, Derryheelan.	Intermittent
I.S-11	Cartrongolan, Oghil, Clontumper, Esker South.	Intermittent
I.S-12	Feraghfad, Ballymakeegan, Farnagh, Glebe (Ed. Longford Rural), Townparks (Ardagh By), Farranyoogan, Aghafad, 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, Cloonallow, Cloonkeen (Rathcline By).	Intermittent

6.1.2 Prevention of Pollution

In sustaining the environment of the County, it is essential to promote measures that prevent the pollution of water, air and soils. The Council seeks to encourage and promote the conservation and protection of all elements of the environment and consider the environmental implications of all new development, in terms of pollution potential and prevention measures, energy efficiency, transport implications and visual considerations. This assessment shall incorporate the principles of sustainable development.

ENV 1:

To encourage and promote environmental awareness and environmentally friendly practices, particularly in industry, agriculture and all other activities.

ENV 2:

Any application for planning permission for new development, extension to existing development or intensification or change of use shall be assessed in terms of its potential impact on existing adjacent developments, existing land uses and/or the surrounding

landscape. Where such development would have a significant adverse effect on the amenities of the area through pollution by noise, fumes, dust, grit or vibration, or cause pollution of air, water and/or soil, planning permission will not be forthcoming, prior to the proposal and introduction of mitigation measures agreed with the planning authority to eliminate negative environmental impacts or reduce them to an acceptable operating level.

ENV 3:

The Council will seek to reduce the impacts of existing pollutant activities through the following measures:

- Negotiation of a reduction in the pollutant activity to a non-polluting level or a revision of operating times to reduce the impact of the activity on adjacent land uses
- Relocation to a more appropriate location where adjacent land uses are more compatible
- Imposition of conditions restricting emissions/activity
- Use of enforcement action against unauthorised developments/uses

ENV 4:

The Council shall pursue the preparation, establishment and implementation of/ compliance with the following documents/ regulations, and any future updates, through its Infrastructure Section:

- The Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region
- The National Hazardous Waste Plan
- EU and National legislation on the prevention of Air and Noise Pollution

ENV 5:

The Council shall encourage energy efficient design solutions, such as optimising solar gain, in order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and increase environmental quality.

6.1.2.1 Water Quality

WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

The main provision of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) is the protection and/or enhancement of water quality across the EU. Specifically, it provides that all water systems (lakes, rivers, ground and coastal waters) should achieve and/or be maintained at least good status by 2015.

The implementation of the WFD will have significant impacts on the management of the County's water resources, which, in future will be managed on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBD), which are, in turn, based on the drainage regime of the major rivers of the Country. Longford County is primarily located within the Shannon (International) RBD, while a small portion of the County to the North drains to the North Western IRBD.

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

ENV 6:

The Council shall seek to protect ground and surface water resources from pollution. To this end, any identified major catchment areas of surface water bodies, capable of use as a potable water resource or other beneficial use and areas of aquifer vulnerability shall be protected. Development of a potentially pollutant nature in these areas and any future areas identified shall be prohibited.

ENV 7:

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

ENV 8:

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

ENV 9:

The Council shall implement the relevant recommendations contained within the River Basin Management Plans for the Shannon International River Basin District and the North Western International River Basin District, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

ENV 10:

The Council, where appropriate, shall seek to control and manage any potential point and/or diffuse sources of pollution with a view towards improving and maintaining good water quality. Such activities include, but are not restricted to, wastewater and industrial discharges, landfills, quarries, mines, contaminated land, agricultural activities, wastewater from unsewered properties, forestry activities and the use and discharge of dangerous substances.

ENV 11:

Development proposals that involve the physical modification of water bodies, including abstraction of water, shall be considered having regard to the potential effect on habitats and plant and animal species, with particular consideration given to Natura 2000 sites and specific actions proposed where negative impacts are anticipated. Where appropriate, proposals shall be screened for Appropriate Assessment in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other appropriate interest groups.

For the purpose of implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD), County Longford falls within the North Western and Shannon International River Basin Districts. The WFD requires that all Member States implement the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters - surface, ground, estuarine and coastal - and protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving good status by 2015. All public bodies are required to coordinate their policies and operations so as to maintain the good status of water bodies which are currently unpolluted and improve polluted water bodies to good status by 2015.

RIVER WATER QUALITY

The WFD Surface Water Status for the County, as currently available from the EPA indicates that rivers in the south of the County are of moderate status while in the centre of the County, they are generally of moderate or good status. WFD status for rivers is good in the North West, moderate in the north and poor in the north east. The status of some rivers is identified as 'not monitored' as they were not included in this round of monitoring but may be included in the next round.

River water quality within the County is monitored by the EPA at a number of locations along rivers in the county. Good status as defined by the WFD equates to approximately Q4 in the national biological classification scheme of rivers as set out by the EPA. The most recent Q values for testing locations are provided as part of the accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The sampling date of the most recent values differs across locations (from 2011 to 1987) and the Plan period does not mirror the sampling and publication periods. Of the 28 locations which have data available for 2010/2011, 18 (64%) are identified as being of either high or good status, 8 (29%) are identified as being of moderate status, and 2 (7%) are identified as being of poor status.

LAKE WATER QUALITY

There are 4 main lakes in the County, positioned along the County boundary, and all are identified as being of moderate status. The EPA also monitors the quality of these lakes. Good status as defined by the WFD equates to approximately Mesotrophic in the national biological classification scheme of lakes as set out by the EPA. Mesotrophic lakes are lakes with an intermediate level of productivity, greater than oligotrophic lakes, but less than eutrophic lakes. Mesotrophic lakes are commonly clear water lakes and ponds with beds of submerged aquatic plants and medium levels of nutrients.

Table 6.3:
Lake Water Quality

Lake	Overall Status 2001-2003	Overall Status 2004-2006	Overall Status 2007-2009
Forbes	Oligotrophic	Oligotrophic	Oligotrophic
Gowna	unknown	unknown	Moderately Eutrophic
Kinale	Moderately Mesotrophic	Mesotrophic	Mesotrophic
Ree	Mesotrophic	Mesotrophic	Oligotrophic

GROUNDWATER QUALITY

Groundwater quality and quantity is protected in its own right under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). The status of the County's groundwater is indicated as part of the SEA. Most of the County's groundwater is of good status. An area in the west of the County is of poor status.

Groundwater is an important natural resource with only a proportion of the available source being used (*Towards Setting Guideline Values for the Protection of Groundwater in Ireland*, EPA). Given limited surface the demand for groundwater will increase, particularly in meeting the demands for drinking water. Accordingly it is essential that known sources of groundwater used for drinking supply are protected from pollution.

Policy WS 9 aims to secure this in Co. Longford and in addition aquifer protection zones for the known water sources in the County are shown in Appendix 4.



6.1.2.2 Air Quality

County Longford fortunately enjoys quite a high standard of air quality as there are no major or significant contributors that would greatly affect the air quality. However, increased use in the private car may add to the risk of damaging the quality of the environment. The Council actively encourages any future transport initiatives and the provision of walking and cycling facilities in an attempt to reduce the number of private car trips and promote better air quality.

Accordingly the policy of the County Council is as follows;

ENV 12:

The Council, in tandem with the EPA, will seek to ensure that all developments are operated in a manner that does not contribute to deterioration in air quality.

ENV 13:

The Council will promote the retention of trees, hedgerows and other vegetation where possible, and encourage afforestation and tree planting as a means of air purification and filtering.

ENV 14:

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

6.1.3 Soils

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

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

- To recognise and protect fertile agricultural soils in the County, an important non-renewable natural resource.
- To identify areas of poorer soil in the County and respect their limitations, particularly in terms of their assimilative properties to prevent pollution.

The Council's policy is as follows;

ENV 15:

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

ENV 16:

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

ENV 17:

The Council shall investigate the potential uses of cutaway bogs in the County and shall particularly consider the development of sustainable and renewable energy projects.



6.2 Heritage

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

Our Heritage includes many aspects of the world around us. For example, the landscape, the hedgerows and field systems, lakes & rivers, plants and animals are all part of our natural heritage. Castles, historic sites, ringforts, houses and other buildings are part of our archaeological and built heritage. These aspects of our heritage have been defined in the Heritage Act, 1995 and include the following:

- Monuments
- Archaeological, Architectural and Heritage objects
- Architectural heritage
- Flora, fauna and wildlife habitats
- Landscapes, seascapes, inland waterways and wrecks
- Geology
- Heritage gardens and parks.

Another important part of our heritage is our history, folklore, language and customs; in other words our cultural heritage. Heritage provides a link with the past and helps us to understand where we, and the landscape around us, have come from. In addition, aspects of our local heritage are regionally, nationally or even internationally important and are therefore protected by national or international legislation. All these elements of heritage add up to give each local area its identity and sense of place, its character and distinctiveness. It also allows us to take pride in our local area.

Heritage is also recognised as an important aspect of the environment, fundamentally intertwined with all aspects of living, working and recreation within the County. Protection and conservation of our heritage protects and conserves our quality of life, education, culture, amenity, economy and identity. The Council therefore has outlined the following general aims;

- The Council shall aspire towards the integrated and sustainable development of the County, bearing in mind the basic needs and requirements of its population, the social, economic and cultural growth of the County and the recognition of the limited capability of the rural landscape to absorb new physical development without compromising its unique character and heritage
- The Council recognises that Longford County has a unique heritage and it is an aim of the County Development Plan to conserve and protect this heritage, through the process of Development Control and by affording identified monuments, artefacts and areas the relevant statutory protection.

- The following principles guide the Council’s heritage objectives and policies set out in the County Development Plan:
 - *Avoid harm to heritage*
 - *Mitigate the effects of harm where it cannot be avoided*
 - *Compensate, where feasible and appropriate, for residual effects on the environment that cannot be further reduced*
 - *Identify and seek to provide positive benefits for heritage*

GENERAL HERITAGE POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

HER 1:

The Planning Authority shall promote the protection and conservation of heritage sites, artifacts and monuments and the integrity of their setting, as listed and illustrated in the Record of Monuments and Places (see Appendix 7)

HER 2:

It is the policy of the Council to update the Heritage Plan over the lifetime of the Development Plan. The Landscape Character Assessment shall be reviewed on an on-going basis and updated where necessary.

HER 3:

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

HER 4:

The Planning Authority shall endeavour to identify important landscapes and habitats and the importance of local character, identity and distinctiveness, in both the natural and built heritage of the County. This shall include an investigation of the Heritage Plan for the County into locally important and small scale heritage sites. Where these have been identified as important under the Heritage Plan, they shall be afforded the relevant protection.

HER 5:

Any proposed development which may impact on the integrity and/or setting of any monuments, sites, objects or areas of archaeological, cultural, architectural, historical or heritage importance under the protection of this Development Plan and/or the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht shall be referred to the relevant section of the DoAHG for observations/comment prior to a grant of permission/approval being obtained. In particular, the unique historical, mythological and cultural significance of Ardagh Mountain shall be recognised. Developments which materially impinge on the character of the mountain will not be permitted.

Each site and monument, however, has a unique character and contribution to make to the landscape of the County and adds meaning to our understanding of the environment.

Appropriate management of archaeological remains is essential to ensure the survival of these non-renewable features. These features also provide an important educational and tourism tool and contribute to creating a sense of place. Over 1700 archaeological sites and monuments are recorded in County Longford under the Record of Monuments and Places, protected under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. These are illustrated on the Map included as part of Appendix 7. There are also almost certainly a number of unknown sites that have not yet been discovered within the County.

Accordingly, the Council’s policy and objectives for the protection of Longford’s Archaeological Heritage is as follows;

ARC 1:

It is an objective of the Council to protect known and unknown archaeological areas, sites, structures, monuments and objects in the County. In this regard, development in the vicinity of recorded monuments shall be referred to the Department of the Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht for comment and these considered in the assessment of any application for development. In general, development within a 20m radius of a recorded monument will not be permitted and proposed development within 75 metres discouraged (subject to other policies contained within this Plan).

ARC 2:

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

ARC 3:

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

ARC 4:

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

ARC 5:

It is the policy of the Council to presume in favour of the physical preservation in-situ of archaeological remains and their settings, where appropriate, feasible and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the County. The approach will be favoured in these circumstances as the most appropriate means of protecting the heritage of the County, in accordance with government policy.

ARC 6:

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

ARC 7:

It is the policy of the Council to seek to increase awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of the archaeological heritage for all, through the provision of information to landowners and the community generally, in co-operation with statutory and other partners.

ARC 8:

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

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

ARC 9:

In securing the preservation of the archaeological heritage, the Planning Authority will have regard to the recommendations of the DoAHG, both in respect of whether or not to grant Planning Permission and in respect of the condition to which permission would, if granted, be subject.

ARC 10:

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

ARC 11:

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

ARC 12:

It is policy of the Council to protect the monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest as outlined in the table of the same name (see table), and illustrated on the Map included as part of Appendix 7.



Table 6.4:
Monuments Protected Under Preservation Orders

No. of Order	Monument	Townland	O.S. Map	Date of Order
10	Dolmen and associated standing stones	Aughnacliffe	6	05/01/33
1/64	Ringfort	Dring	6	13/02/64
6/73	Deserted Town Site	Granardkill 10:12 11/	05/73	
2/78	Ringfort	Bawn, Killoe	9:5	22/06/78
3/79	Monastic enclosure	Aghafad	13:12	08/03/79
5/81	Monastic cashel	Inchcleraun	21:14	30/10/81
4/83	Stone circle	Cloughchurnel	11	27/04/83
4/85	Ringfort	Feraghfad	14:9:5	02/04/85
5/85	Ringfort	Feraghfad	14:9:5	02/04/85
6/85	Ringfort	Feraghfad	14:8:6	02/04/85

Table 6.5:
Monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest

(Map refers to the location of the site on the map included as Appendix 7 and grade, where applicable, refers to the archaeological interest and condition of the site.)

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
17	Granardkille	Old Town of Granard	Site of Medieval Town	A
18	Glen	Moat		B

Map	Townland	Site	Description	Grade
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	Ballinakil	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		
51	Gurteen	Old School Building		
52	Rathcline	Building Feature		
53	Forgney	Hill of Forgney, Forgney Church		
54	Castlerea	Castle	In Ruins	
55	Mornin	Castle	In Ruins	
56	Rathcline	Castle		
57	Ballinamuck	Battlefield site	1798	

6.2.2 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

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

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

In line with midland regional policy and in accordance with policies outlined throughout this document, the protection and enhancement of the Quality of Life of County Longford is an underlying theme of the County Development Plan. A difficult concept to define, one of the primary indicators of a high quality of life is a high quality environment, and an essential indicator of environmental quality is biodiversity. The maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity is a fundamental tenet in the achievement of sustainable development, a principle to which all policy contained in this document is bound by legislation.

The interconnectedness of concepts throughout the plan creates complex issues for the developer, yet these are essential to strengthen the policy response to broad areas such as the natural environment and biodiversity. In this regard, this section should not be consulted in isolation but in conjunction with the other sections of the plan and in association with other documents such as the National Biodiversity plan.

European and national legislation protects the important and valuable heritage areas within the County. This is achieved through the designation of sites as Natural Heritage Areas [(p) NHAs], Special Areas of Conservation [(c) SACs] and Special Protection Areas [(c) SPAs]. The responsibility for designating sites lies with the 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 8.

NHB 1:

It is an objective of the Council to protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity and natural heritage. This includes wildlife (flora and fauna), habitats, landscapes and/or landscape features of importance to wildlife or which play a key role in the conservation and management of natural resources such as water.

NHB 2:

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

NHB 3:

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

NHB 4:

It is the policy of the Council to protect important geological or geomorphological sites in the County, including any sites proposed to be designated or designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).

NHB 5:

The Council, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, shall pursue the preparation, establishment and implementation of Habitat mapping and a Wetland Survey for the County

- 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
(area specifically indicated as part of Appendix 14)
- pNHA 002103 - Royal Canal

6.2.2.2 (Candidate) Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are designated European Sites under the Habitats Directive and transposed into Irish Law through the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 as amended in 1998 and 2005 and consolidated into the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. They are also termed Natura 2000 sites. The directive lists certain habitats and species that must be protected within SACs. Candidate SACs are those which are currently under consideration by the European Commission, but are still afforded full protection. The SACs in County Longford are as follows;

- SAC 000440 - Lough Ree
- SAC 000448 - Fortwilliam Turlough
- SAC 001818 - Lough Forbes Complex
- SAC 002341 - Ardagullion Bog
- SAC 002346 - Brown Bog
- SAC 002348 - Clooneen Bag

6.2.2.1 (Proposed) Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)

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

- NHA 000422 - Aghnamona Bog
- NHA 000691 - Rinn River
- NHA 000985 - Lough Kinale & Derragh Lough
- NHA 001423 - Cloonageeher Bog
- NHA 001448 - Forthill Bog
- NHA 001450 - Mount Jessop Bog

In addition to the above mentioned NHAs, there a number of proposed NHAs within the County. These areas although protected with lesser statutory protection than NHAs are still considered important areas within the County. The Council shall specifically ensure the protection of areas of trees, forestry and bogs identified as part of these sites.



6.2.2.3 (Candidate) Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are European sites designated under the Birds Directive. The Directive requires the designation of important sites as SPAs that support populations of bird species including migratory birds. These sites are also Natura 2000 sites and are afforded protection in Irish law under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. The SPAs found in County Longford are as follows;

SPA 004061 - Lough Kinale & Derragh Lough

SPA 004064 - Lough Ree

SPA 004101 - Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog

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

NHB 6:

It is the policy of the Council to protect sites designated in National and European legislation, and in other relevant International Conventions, Agreements and Processes. This includes sites proposed to be designated or designated as:

- Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora)
- Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds)

Both the Birds and Habitats Directives have been transposed in Irish law by Ministerial Regulation. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 are the most important of these because they provide for the protection measures and management regime that apply to SPAs and SACs.

No projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 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 or projects (Except as provided for in Section 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

- a) no alternative solution available,
- b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and
- c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.))
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Nature Reserves, and Refuges for Flora or Fauna under the the Wildlife Act, 1976 as amended by Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000.

NHB 7:

The Council shall seek to identify, protect and conserve, in co-operation with the relevant statutory authorities, vulnerable, rare and threatened species of wild fauna and flora and their habitats with particular reference to those species identified in National and European legislation, and in other International Conventions, Agreements and Processes.

6.2.2.4 Recognising the Importance of Non-Designated Sites

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

NHB 8:

The Council shall seek to co-operate with statutory and other relevant agencies to identify and protect a representative sample of the County's wildlife habitats, of local or regional importance, not otherwise protected by legislation. In addition, it is Council policy to protect;

- Ramsar sites under the The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (especially as Waterfowl Habitat).

NHB 9:

The Council will enhance and sustain landscapes and features within the County in order to;

- Safeguard, sustain and improve the quality and character of landscapes which are important and valued or,
- Promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of local landscapes or,
- Promote important settings for outdoor recreation and tourism development.

NHB 10:

Protect and enhance important landscape features and their setting including rivers, streams, canals, lakes and associated wetlands such as reedbeds and swamps; ponds; springs; bogs; fens; trees; woodlands and scrub; hedgerows and other field boundary types such as stone walls and ditches. These are important because;

- a) they form part of a network of habitats, corridors and 'stepping stones' essential for wildlife to flourish, thus providing a high quality natural environment for all, and/or
- b) they protect and enhance surface water and groundwater resources and are essential as part of the integrated approach to the management of water resources, necessary to ensure the highest water quality into the future, as set out in the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy).

NHB 11:

It is the policy of the Council to protect the following important stands of trees identified in Appendix 9 from inappropriate development and unmanaged tree felling not part of an overall plan to ensure their sustainability;

1. Avenue at Smithfield, Legan
2. Woods at Carriglass, Castleforbes and Cashel. The perimeter deciduous woodland of Newcastle Woods but not the interior areas of commercial forestry.
3. Portanure Pine Woods
4. Derrycassan Woods
5. Culnagore Wood
6. Rathcline Wood

7. Trees along Regional Road R393 at Knockahaw
8. Woodlands at Erne Head, Woodville and Golaroe
9. Lime trees at Mosstown, Keenagh
10. Trees at Rathsallagh
11. Wood at Farragh, Killoe

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

NHB 12:

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

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.

NHB 13:

The Council will promote a careful, deliberate and methodical approach for sustaining forested areas throughout the County, particularly given that a lot of these areas are living man-made landscapes that have evolved over time and need to continue evolving to sustain their future.

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

6.2.2.5

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the measure of the number, variety and variability of living organisms including from microscopic bacteria to more complex plants and animals. Under Section 9 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000, a statutory responsibility is 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. Accordingly the Council’s policy is as follows;

NHB 14:

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

NHB 15:

The Council shall facilitate the provision of any biodiversity plan prepared for County Longford and shall have regard to the provisions outlined within any such plan.

NHB 16:

The Council shall facilitate increased awareness of the County’s biodiversity and natural heritage through the provision of information to landowners and the community generally, in co-operation with statutory and other partners.

NHB 17:

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

NHB 18:

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

NHB 19:

It is the policy of the Council to encourage investigation into the establishment of wildlife areas and corridors, particularly in the context of educational, recreational and amenity facilities.

NHB 20:

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

NHB 21 (A):

Proposed large-scale developments, particularly on greenfield sites and in environmentally sensitive areas, shall be assessed in terms of their impact on the biodiversity of the area.

NHB 21 (B):

All projects and plans arising from this plan will be screened 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.

NHB 22:

The Planning Authority may require mitigating measures in certain cases where it is evident that biodiversity is likely to be affected. These measures may, in association with other specified requirements, include establishment of wildlife areas/corridors/parks, tree planting, wildflower meadows/marshes and other areas. With regard to residential development, in certain cases, these measures may be carried out in conjunction with the provision of open space and/or play areas.

NHB 23:

The National Parks and Wildlife Service will be invited to prioritise the preparation of Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites which are located in the vicinity of the County. This is in order to examine how the Conservation Objectives of the sites can be achieved in the context of the proper planning and sustainable development of the Plan area.

6.2.2.6

Geological Sites

The Geological Survey 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. However, the GSI has identified County Geological Sites (CGSs) within Longford that may eventually become designated sites. These sites are as follows and are as illustrated on the map contained as part of Appendix 8;

Accordingly the policy of the Council is as follows;

GEO 1:

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

Table 6.6:
County Geological Sites within Longford

Site Name	Easting	Northing	Principal characteristics Critical feature(s) key words	Townland(s)/district
Mullawornia	213000	259000	Waulsortian complex: palaeontology	Ballymahon
Mullawornia	213000	259000	Waulsortian: Lower Carboniferous stratigraphy	Mullawornia
Ardnacassagh Quarry	215200	275400	Carboniferous stratigraphy	Ardnacassagh
Esker North townland	216400	288700	Structural importance: truncated slump fold	Esker North Td
Keel	217530	266550	Mineralogy: honey sphalerite	Keel
Keel and Garrycam [site: Zn, Pb, Ba]	218500	266500	Economic geology: zinc	Garrycam
Carrickboy Quarry	220800	264700	Waulsortian: Lower Carboniferous stratigraphy, palaeontology	Carrickboy
Glen Lodge Stream	223000	282300	Youngest Silurian rocks in Longford-Down succession: palaeontology	Kiltyclogh Td
Glen Lodge Stream	223000	282300	Youngest Silurian rocks in Longford-Down succession: Silurian stratigraphy	Kiltyclogh Td
Cleenrah	225700	290600	Economic Geology: mined haematitic-Mn shale	Cleenrah
Kilcoursey Quarry	227600	276200	Carbonate mudmound, post- Waulsortian	Edgeworthstown
Enaghan, near Arva	228500	294500	Historic Iron mine.	Arvagh
Ardagullion Quarry	230400	276700	Carboniferous stratigraphy	Ardagullion



6.2.2.7 Inland Lakes and Waterways

The inland lakes and waterways of the County are important natural assets and provide a potential tourism resource as well as an essential natural corridor for biodiversity within the County. The provision of continued access to these assets in a sustainable manner is of central importance. During the previous plan period, the Royal Canal Towpath between Longford Town and Clondra has been completed and opened thus providing walking and cycling facilities along this amenity. Further extension of the scheme, in a southerly direction to the County boundary as well as the provision of a linkage with the Westmeath cycle and walking facility along the Royal Canal is currently underway and is dependent on central government funding. A Shannon Greenway shall be developed to allow walking and cycling in close proximity to the Shannon and linking with Westmeath, Roscommon and Leitrim. This section should be read in accordance with Section 6.1.2 of this plan which aims to reduce adverse impacts on the County's lakes and waterways.

Accordingly the Council's policies are as follows;

ILW 1:

The Royal Canal, Rivers Shannon, Inny and Camlin and Lough Ree, Lough Gowna and the County's other rivers and lakes are recognised as important amenity and recreational resources and, as such, it is the policy of the Council to preserve, protect and enhance these important resources.

ILW 2:

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.

ILW 3:

The Council shall encourage and promote the enhancement, management, protection and the promotion of access to and understanding of the inland waterways of the County. Walkway development will be promoted, particularly in the vicinity of the inland waterways such as the Canal and Commons North adjacent to Lough Ree.

ILW 4:

Longford County Council shall, within its powers, protect Lough Ree from unsustainable, large-scale and high volume abstraction of water resources for use in areas external to Longford County. All abstractions of water from Lough Ree will be subject to assessment for compliance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, in accordance with policy NHB 6 and NHB 22.

ILW 5:

The Council shall, where possible and where resources permit, provide additional accesses to lake shores, river and canal banks, through the acquisition of land for public rights of way and parking and lay-by facilities, where appropriate. In areas adjacent to inland waterways, lakes, canals and rivers where planning permission is sought, conditions may be attached to any consequent grant of permission requiring the retention or creation of public access to the waterway in order to facilitate the creation or expansion of walking/cycling routes.



Commons North Walk

ILW 6:

It is the policy of the Council to protect, enhance and improve existing public rights of way where appropriate and where resources permit. The Council will also investigate the provision of additional rights of way, where appropriate through agreement with existing landowners and through the development management process.

ILW 7:

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

ILW 8:

Development will be strictly controlled in the vicinity of the inland waterways of the County and will not normally be permitted. Application for such development shall be assessed, in addition to normal planning criteria, in terms of its potential impact on the visual, recreational, ecological and environmental integrity of the area.

ILW 9:

The broad zones of the lakes, rivers, canals and deciduous woodlands shall be protected from inappropriate development (see Appendix 10), i.e. development which adversely affects high amenity and landscape quality in relation to their setting. For example, the environs of Newcastle House and Woods, particularly adjoining the River Inny Bridge.

ILW 10:

The Council shall encourage and promote the investigation and use of the potential of the Canal towpaths for the provision of designated walking and cycle routes and wildlife corridors for recreational, amenity and educational purposes and the promotion of links with any further designated walking, cycling and wildlife routes existing or proposed throughout the County. This should be carried out in the context of an important resource for the population of the County and with a view towards the promotion of sustainable tourism projects in County Longford.

ILW 11:

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

ILW 12:

The Council shall take whatever measures it considers necessary in order to protect, enhance and preserve the built and natural heritage of the Royal Canal and its associated structures 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.

ILW 13:

Development in the broad zones of the major rivers and lakes of the County, as illustrated in Appendix 10, will not normally be permitted and shall be restricted to extensions of existing dwellings, which shall be sensitively designed in terms of the individual site and materials. Intensive agricultural developments shall not normally be permitted in these areas.

ILW 14:

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

ILW 15:

On channels managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) a 5m (for minor channels) or 10m (for major channels) wide access strip shall be retained for opening access and maintenance purposes. The access strip should not be landscaped, paved or otherwise developed in a manner that would prevent access by a mechanical plant.

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

ILW 16:

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

ILW 17:

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

6.2.3**Architectural Heritage**

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

The architectural heritage of the County represents a finite resource and irreplaceable asset to the County and contributes to the quality of our built environment. It is important that these structures are protected as they are illustrative of a period within the historical landscape and development of the county. These structures are also key repositories of traditional building skills and design techniques.

Accordingly the general policy of the Council is as follows;

ARCH 1:

It is an objective of the Council to promote the maintenance and appropriate re-use of the existing building stock as a sustainable development issue and because of the contribution of older buildings, both individually and collectively, to the unique character, heritage and identity of the County.

ARCH 2:

It is an objective and policy of the Council that all development should be appropriate to its setting in the landscape or townscape, and should respond to and reinforce local character and heritage. This will ensure that high quality environments are either maintained or created by development.

ARCH 3:

It is an objective of the Council that all new development in urban and rural situations shall be guided by sustainable development principles.

ARCH 4:

It is the policy of the Council to encourage and promote the enhancement, management, protection and the promotion of access to and understanding of the architectural heritage of the County.

ARCH 5:

It is the policy of the Council that new works to existing buildings and structures of Architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness. In particular, original doors, windows, window/shopfront detailing and original exterior plaster finishes should be retained and repaired wherever possible. Replacement of existing features, such as windows, shall reflect the character of the existing structure in terms of the materials used and the architectural detailing. For example, timber sliding-sash windows should not be substituted with aluminium or uPVC windows.

ARCH 6:

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

6.2.3.1**Record of Protected Structures**

A list of Protected Structures has been prepared and is available at Appendix 11 of this plan. The structures are considered representative of the diversity of architectural heritage within the County that are of various categories of interest, including architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical and social.

In addition to the statutory protection afforded to these structures, the policy of the Council is as follows;

RPS 1:

It is the policy of the Council to ensure the protection of structures included in the Record of Protected Structures generally and in particular by:

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

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

RPS 2:

It is the policy of the Council to issue Declarations as to the type of works that would affect the character of a protected structure and therefore require planning permission.

RPS 3:

It is the policy of the Council to administer the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's Structures At Risk 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.

RPS 4:

It is the policy of the Council to acquire protected structures, where possible and where economic constraints permit, if this is necessary to protect the structure. On acquiring the structure, to its use or sale shall be considered by the Council.

RPS 5:

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

RPS 6:

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

6.2.3.2

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)

Towns and villages that contain areas of particular recognised character may be worthy of conservation in their entirety. Ardagh is a recognised heritage village within the County and great importance is attached to the preservation of the existing character and appearance of the area. Within this plan Ardagh Village is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area. The extent of the ACA within Ardagh is illustrated in Appendix 12 of this plan.

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

ACA 1:

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

ACA 2:

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

- a) The development preserves and enhances the character of the area.
- b) The development is in sympathy with the built form of the area.
- c) The form, scale, materials and detailing of the development respects the characteristics of the area.
- d) Where appropriate, views of importance, including within, into and out of the area are preserved.
- e) Landscape features of significance, including important strands of trees and hedgerows that contribute to the character of the area are protected.
- f) The development shall not result in any environmental problems such as noise or nuisance which would be detrimental to the particular character of the area.

6.2.4

Historic Gardens, Demesnes and Designed Landscapes

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage under the remit of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has prepared a survey of Historic Gardens and Designed landscapes. As identified by the survey, demesnes date back to the time of the Anglo-Normans where areas surrounding a manor were retained by the Lord for his own occupation. Many factors have since contributed to the significant changes that have occurred over the years, including the flourishing of garden design in the 18th and 19th centuries and changes in land ownership under the Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 and the Land Acts of the 19th and 20th centuries. Such changes are reflective of the aesthetic, social and cultural circumstances of the time.³¹

The Survey has identified 96 sites in Longford that are considered to be important historic gardens, demesnes and landscapes. It is an objective of the Council to ensure that development does not adversely affect the character of these areas or result in the deterioration of the features of special historic interest. 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 abandonment and neglect of these estates. In this regard it is acknowledged that it is equally important to ensure that development is not precluded altogether, and that proposals for development are considered, particularly where it can be demonstrated that this could ensure the future sustainability of the estate.

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

Accordingly the policy of the Council is as follows;

HG 1:

The Council will support the publication of an Inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes and where possible will promote the intrinsic character of those within the County. However, it is important to recognise that whilst the Council supports this, that it is equally important to ensure that development is not precluded altogether and that proposals for development are considered where it can be demonstrated that this could ensure the future sustainability of the estate.

³¹ DoAHG, National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, [Online], Available at: <http://www.buildingofireland.ie/Surveys/Gardens/> [Accessed 21 October 2013].





6.3 Quality and Character of Urban Areas

It is essential that the quality and character of urban areas are preserved and enhanced in order to improve the quality of the places where people live.

The visual quality of urban areas has an impact on the existing community so it is envisioned that any new developments will respect and enhance the environment for existing residents as well as new ones.

CHAR 1:

It is the policy of the Council that areas of vacant, derelict and under-used land within existing built-up areas (Brownfield sites) should be brought into productive use, as an alternative to the use of Greenfield sites which inevitably involves some loss of natural resources.

CHAR 2:

It is the policy of the Council that all new development in urban and rural situations must be guided by high standards of design. During the lifetime of the Plan, the Council will produce appropriate design guidance in this regard, subject to resources.

CHAR 3:

The Council shall aim to identify and protect the character and quality of Urban areas through policy contained as part of this plan with regard to settlements defined at Section 2.1.6.

CHAR 4:

It is the policy of the Council to encourage the re-use of the existing building stock in an appropriate manner in line with standard conservation principles and the Council's policy on sustainable development in order to integrate proposed development into the existing streetscape and to reduce potential construction and demolition waste.





6.4 Amenities

Amenities within the County include natural and recreational amenities as well as social and community infrastructure.

These facilities provide many cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits and provide a positive contribution towards quality of life within the County.



R198



19

6.4.1 Natural and Recreational Amenities

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

AM 1:

It is the policy of the Council to 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:

- Provision of open space amenities.
- Sustainable management of water.
- Protection and management of biodiversity.
- Protection of cultural heritage.
- Protection of protected landscape sensitivities.

AM 1 (B):

The Council recognises the importance of the County's biodiversity. During the lifetime of the Plan, the Council will prepare and implement a Biodiversity Action Plan that, inter alia, identifies the key biodiversity features of the County and prioritises actions to protect and enhance the natural heritage of the County.

AM 2:

It is the policy of the Council to promote linkages between established landmarks and landscape features and views, including recognition of these elements when zoning land and when considering individual development proposals.

AM 3:

It is the policy of the Council to provide, where feasible and appropriate, car-parking, lay-by facilities and access point in scenic and/or amenity areas as identified on the accompanying Scenic Routes Map (Appendix 6). These include the following areas:

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

Amenities in these areas shall be provided or improved in accordance with their protected status.

AM 4:

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

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

AM 5:

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

AM 6:

It is the policy of the Council to protect existing rights of way and investigate further provision particularly in relation to access to the Royal Canal and the County's lakes, rivers and forests and areas of historical, archaeological, architectural, recreational and cultural importance. To this end, the Council shall investigate the compilation of a register of rights of way within the County including mapping of same.

6.4.1.1 Parks and Public Open Spaces

AM 7:

It is the policy of the Council to assess the existing public open spaces in the settlements of the County. Any deficiencies in public open space and areas where this deficiency may be addressed will be identified and provision facilitated through the zoning and development management process.

AM 8:

Developers of residential schemes may be required, as a condition on any grant of Planning Permission, to locate open spaces in such a way as to provide links to, or consolidation of, areas of public open space within a settlement. This requirement may be over and above the minimum required open space provision as set out in the residential policy section of this document.

AM 9:

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

AM 10:

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

6.4.1.2 Sports Facilities

AM 11:

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

6.4.2 Social and Community

Social and Community services are provided by the Local Authority and other organisations in order to facilitate the educational, health, social, cultural and religious needs of the population within the County. It is essential that through the planning process adequate measures are taken to secure such development, in order to improve the quality of life experienced by people within Longford. The provision of social and community facilities will be further developed in line with the Core Strategy as defined in Section 2.1 of this plan.

6.4.2.1 Community Services

Rapid increases in population over the last census periods have been accompanied by substantial change in the composition of that population. This growth in population has had implications for the development of community services as the needs of the population base has changed from that previously experienced in the County. It is within this context that planning for community services will occur into the future, requiring a robust and adaptable policy base from which services can be provided promptly and with precision.

SC1:

It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the provision of community services, where appropriate, in order to meet the needs of new and existing communities.

6.4.2.2 Schools and Education Facilities

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

Location	Name	Level/Type
Ballymahon	Convent of Mercy	Secondary
Granard	Cnoc Mhuire, Convent of Mercy	Secondary
Longford	St. Mel's College	Secondary
Longford	Mean Scoil Mhuire	Secondary
Ballymahon	Ballymahon Vocational School	Secondary/Vocational
Granard	Ardscuil Phadraig	Secondary/Vocational
Lanesboro	Lanesboro Community College	Secondary/Community College
Templemichael	Oliver Plunkett Vocational School	Secondary/Vocational
Moyne	Moyne Community School	Secondary/Community College
Ardagh	St. Mel's	National
Aughnaclyffe	Scoil Naomh Colmcille	National
Baile Nua an Chaisil	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	National
Bunlahy	Scoil Naomh Guasachta	National
Clontumpher	Scoil Naomh Treasa	National
Ballinamuck	St Patricks	National
Ballymahon	St. Matthew's	National
Cluain da Rath	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	National
Taghshinny	Taghshinny N.S.	National
Muckerstaff	Naomh Padraig N.S.	National
Cloonagh	St. Columba's N.S.	National
Edgeworthstown	St. Mary's	National
Edgeworthstown	St. John's	National
Killasonna	Kilasonna N.S.	National
Aughnagarron	Scoil Mhuire	National
Granard	Sacred Heart	National
Cloontagh	Cloontagh N.S.	National
Lanesboro	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal	National

Location	Name	Level/Type
Fermoyle	Fermoyle N.S.	National
Lenamore	Scoil Naisunta an Leana Mor	National
Abbeylara	St. Bernards N.S.	National
Cnoc an Mharcaigh	Scoil Naisunta Cnoc an Mharcaigh	National
Ballinalee	Samhthann N.S.	National
Longford	Scoil Naomh Micheal	National
Battery Road	Longford N.S.	National
Killashee	Noamh Earnain	National
Keenagh	Naomh Dominic N.S.	National
Colehill	Colehill N.S.	National
Stonepark	Stonepark N.S.	National
Battery Road	St. Christophers S.S.	Special School
Glen	Scoil Brid	National
Longford	St. Joseph's Convent	National
Longford	Gaelscoil an Longfoirt	National
Drumlisk	St. Mary's N.S.	National
Dromard	St. Patrick's N.S.	National
Moyvore	Forgney N.S.	National
Newtownforbes	Scoil Mhuire N.S.	National
Templemichael	St. Emer's	National

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

Of historical significance for Longford, is the history of the Moyne Latin School. Today, The Moyne Community School exists as the inheritor of the Latin school. The Latin School is significant not only for the history of the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, but also for the history of the Irish church at home and abroad. While it was lacking in equipment and facilities, it was rich in the tradition of learning. The school kept no systematic records before the 1930's and the earliest available roll-book dates back only as far as 1932. It is not possible to give a definite date for the beginning of the school as it had its origin in the Penal Times when education for Catholics was prohibited and records were not kept.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

SC 2:

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

SC 3:

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

6.4.2.3 Childcare Facilities

Childcare facilities have become an increasingly important element in the County's economy, enabling many people to return to the workforce and promoting social inclusion. The Council recognise the importance of the provision of high quality childcare facilities in order to contribute to the social, emotional and educational development of children and improve access to employment opportunities for parents or guardians.

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

- To encourage and facilitate the provision of a broad range of high quality childcare facilities in appropriate areas, in order to promote the social, emotional and educational development of children and increased economic development through the expansion of employment opportunities for parents/guardians.
- To promote the provision and expansion of appropriate childcare facilities in suitable locations in accordance with national guidelines and the Childcare (pre-school services) Regulations, 2006.

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

SC 4:

To identify appropriate locations within settlements for childcare facilities. Areas zoned Residential, Educational, Institutional and/or Commercial as part of this plan or other relevant statutory document will generally be considered suitable for the establishment of childcare facilities, subject to usual planning considerations (as outlined below).

SC 5:

Areas within a Light Industrial/Business Park Designation will generally be considered favourably, subject to normal planning criteria (as outlined below). Areas within or adjacent to sites utilised for heavy and/or extractive industries will not usually be considered for the provision of childcare facilities.

SC 6:

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

SC 7:

The following planning criteria will be used to assess applications for childcare facilities in all cases:

- The suitability of the site for the size and type of facility proposed
- The availability of appropriate external play areas
- The accessibility of the proposed development, particularly in relation to public transport nodes, pedestrian access from existing residential areas and/or the workplaces of potential clients and existing educational facilities.
- The ability of the applicant to provide safe access, adequate parking, circulation and drop off facilities for clients and staff.
- The implications of the proposed development on the existing traffic flow and general road safety of the area.
- The availability of suitable sanitary services, or the ability of the applicant to provide such services safely within the site.
- The proposed operating hours of the facility

SC 8:

In the case of proposed developments in areas other than those mentioned above, discussions with the Planning Department at Pre-Planning stage are highly recommended. In this regard and prior to arranging a pre-planning consultation, the applicant is advised to discuss their proposal with the relevant representatives from the Health Service Executive and Fire Department, and incorporate their respective requirements in order to facilitate useful pre-planning discussions.

SC 9:

In addition to the normal documents to be submitted in association with an application for Planning Permission, it is advisable that the following information is submitted as part of an application for permission for a childcare facility:

- A description of the Nature of the Facility, e.g. Full day Care, Sessional Day care, Drop-in Facility, After School care etc. to include the numbers and ages of children to be catered for
- Parking provision, vehicle circulation and drop-off areas for customers and staff
- Proposed hours of operation
- Provision, maintenance and security of open space.

6.4.2.4 Health Care Facilities

Responsibility for the provision of Health Care Facilities in County Longford lies with the Health Service Executive (HSE). However, it is the policy of the Council to facilitate and encourage the provision of improved health care facilities in appropriate locations, subject to the relevant design criteria.

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

Accordingly the Council's Policy is as follows;

SC 10:

The Council shall consult with the HSE at the preparation stages of Plans or relevant variations, in order to ascertain and include any plans for proposed physical developments in the relevant area.

SC 11:

The Council will seek to increase existing and promote the provision of additional essential local health services including private Medical Centres.

SC 12:

In relation to proposed surgery development, including change of use from residential development, for medical practitioners including doctors, dentists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, chiropodists, etc, the following issues shall be taken into consideration (in addition to normal planning criteria) in the assessment of applications for planning permission:

- The availability of car parking in accordance with Development Plan Standards.
- The potential impact on the residential amenity of the area.
- The size of the proposed practice in relation to the catchment area and the character of its location.

6.4.2.5 Burial Grounds

There are a large number of cemeteries in County Longford and the Council plays an important role in the management and operation of the majority of these cemeteries. There are some cemeteries in respect of which the Council does not have a direct responsibility. The Council endeavours to ensure that the cemeteries with regard to which it has a responsibility are well maintained. A programme of maintenance and improvement works is undertaken annually. The Council is committed to ensuring that adequate cemetery provision is available throughout the county and that the cemeteries which it is responsible for are accessible and suitably serviced with regard to car parking provision. The Council is conscious of the sensitive nature of cemeteries and in this regard any proposals with regard to the development of lands in the vicinity of cemeteries will be assessed with regard to the likely impact of the proposed development on the cemetery. The Council's policy is therefore underpinned by the following aims;

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

Accordingly the Council's policy is as follows;

SC 13:

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

SC 14:

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



6.4.2.6 Fire Services

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

The Council has a role to play with regard to ensuring that Fire Service vehicles can access locations where fires or other incidents occur. In this regard the views and requirements of the Fire Service will be taken into account when decisions are being made in relation to proposed developments.

The Council also seeks to ensure that Fire Safety Standards are maintained on an ongoing basis. The Fire Service carries out inspections of many premises on an annual basis and in certain circumstances the requirement to undertake particular works or other measures may be identified as part of the inspection process.

The Council recognises that businesses can suffer during periods when their operations are restricted; however the principle responsibility of the Council is to ensure that the safety of persons is prioritised.

Accordingly the policy of the council is as follows;

SC 15:

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

SC 16:

To provide advice and guidance with regard to proposed developments in order to ensure that appropriate provision is incorporated in the design of developments that reduce the likelihood of injury or damage to property.

