

Ardagh

Local Area Plan

2006-2012



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The Planning Section
Longford County Council
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1.0 Introduction

This Plan has been prepared as a Local Area Plan (LAP) in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and subsequent amendments.

The County Development Plan is the statutory development plan for the County of Longford in the years 2003-2009. This Local Area Plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the Longford County Development Plan, 2003 – 2009. Section 3.1.1 of the plan outlines the hierarchy of settlements in the County and defines the role of Ardagh as an area covered by a village policy statement. However, given the significance of heritage that exists within the settlement, it is now more appropriate to create a Local Area Plan for the village.

The Plan takes the form of a Written Statement, and accompanying Zoning Plan and Heritage Map. If any conflict or ambiguity arises between what is contained in the written statement and the supporting plans, the written statement will take precedence.

The purpose of the Plan is to inform the general public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested bodies and set out a framework for the future development of the village over the plan period 2006 – 2012.

This plan has been prepared within the context of Agenda 21 and the need for sustainable development to protect the environment for future generations. In accordance with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and the Planning & Development (Strategic Development Assessment) Regulations, 2004, the proposed Local Area Plan was screened to ascertain if the plan required the preparation of an Environmental Report. The Screening Report was sent to the designated Environmental Authorities and it is the opinion of the Planning Authority that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

1.1 Conservation Plan

This Local Area Plan should be read in conjunction with the Conservation Plan, which sets out the reasons for the conservation of the village, along with recommendations to ensure the protection of the unique character and style of the village. The recommendations of the Conservation Plan (see Appendix 2) are intended to protect the architectural heritage in Ardagh Village, by means of careful planning, high quality new designs and appropriate repair of protected structures and buildings within the Architectural Conservation Area.

1.2 The Purpose of the Local Area Plan

The purpose of this LAP is wide ranging and is not intended for use as a rigid development control tool. Rather, the aim is to address the following issues, in consultation and discussion with the relevant stakeholders:

- To implement and reinforce the settlement hierarchy as defined in the Longford County Development Plan, 2003 – 2009
- To define, enhance and strengthen the existing character of the village
- To guide development in order to promote a settlement that is an attractive place in which to live, work and visit
- To provide guidance and direction for those proposing to develop lands within the village
- To protect and enhance areas, structures and associations that contribute to the identity of the area and reinforce a sense of place
- To implement the recommendations of the Conservation Plan

1.3 Location and Context

Ardagh is a picturesque village, located in the southern part of County Longford, 10 km south east of Longford town and 4 km south west of Edgeworthstown (see map below). It is a traditional rural Irish village but with many unique qualities, particularly in its design and in its spiritual/religious importance dating back to pre-Christian times. The village is situated beside the ancient Ardagh Mountain, which stands 650ft (200m) high. It is twice winner of the National Tidy Towns competition.



Map of Longford indicating location of Ardagh

1.4 Demographic Profile

Ardagh is a small village with approximately 200 inhabitants. More and more young families have been moving into the area in recent years, resulting in the demographic augmentation of the village as well as the simultaneous physical expansion. Although there are no specific statistics for Ardagh village itself, the CSO statistics obtained from census information in 2002 and the preliminary census report of 2006 for the electoral divisions are displayed below. However, the electoral divisions include much of the hinterland surrounding Ardagh village, and therefore do not give an accurate representation of the village itself.

Electoral Division	2002	2006	Change (Actual)	Change (%)
Ardagh East	529	567	38	7.2
Ardagh West	397	439	42	10.6

The population of Ardagh village is expected to increase by 120 over the next 20 years, which equates to a population increase of 40 people, or 16 houses, for the life of this plan. Therefore, it is only necessary to zone 2 acres for new housing developments.

2.0 Village Character

2.1 Landscape Setting

Ardagh village is mostly flat, although it is located on the slope of Ardagh Mountain, which has commanding views towards Roscommon, Westmeath and other parts of Longford. The name in Irish, *Ard Achadh*, means “high field.” The village has a substantial amount of greenery, and its position in South Longford near the Westmeath border places it among some of the best farmland in the county with abundant trees and forestry.

2.2 Morphology and Development

The history of Ardagh village begins with Ardagh Mountain, which was an important part of pre-Christian Ireland, and where St. Patrick founded a monastery. The village developed around the monastery, and grew from there. Ardagh remained the centre of the Diocese until the Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century, and beyond, at least as a spiritual if not physical ecclesiastical centre. Although Ardagh is no longer on any main routes, it has been, in the last five years, somewhat rejuvenated, with an influx of young families building new houses beside the village. Many of the inhabitants of the village work in nearby towns, particularly Longford, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon.

The centre of Ardagh village is the village green, and there are four roads which stem from the centre towards Longford (north), in the direction of Ballymahon (west), eastwards in the direction of Edgeworthstown and the road south, past Noone’s TV repair shop, is a cul de sac. The shape of the village is cruciform (St. Brigid’s Cross), with all four roads coming together to a point at the centre beside the village green.

2.3 Buildings and Structures

Most of the buildings in the village were built in the 1860s and designed in the Arts and Crafts style by John Rawson Carroll as part of the Fetherston estate plans. The townscape value of the village is quite unique, with its careful design situating the backs of the houses to the wind, and the best prospect from the front door of Ardagh House. Unfortunately, many of the important features are nearing the end of their 150-year lifespan, and need to be replaced. It is important that this is achieved sympathetically. Additionally, as a result of the population increase, there is an increase in demand for new housing in the village and surrounding areas. It is imperative, for the future of the village, that new houses are designed and located sympathetically and are appropriate to the unique style of the established village.

2.4 Residential

Ardagh is predominantly residential, and in recent years, there has been an increase in interest in house building in the area, in line with the rest of the county and the country. However, more families are needed in the area in order to guarantee the social continuity of the village, and to prevent it from becoming a museum piece.



Two of the unique houses located in Ardagh village

2.5 Commercial

There is little commercial development in Ardagh: there are two pubs, both called Lyons, one of which is only open at weekends and the other is only open during the week. The weekday pub is also a small shop and a post office. There is also a TV and Video repair shop (Noone's). Further residential expansion in the village may warrant supplementary commercial provision. In addition to this, appropriate expansion of the existing commercial developments will also be considered over the lifespan of this plan.



Lyons (weekend) pub

2.6 Community

There is a primary school in the village, with pupils coming from the village itself as well as the surrounding parish. There is also a community centre in the village, housed in the old Protestant Primary School, which is used for community events such as bingo and quizzes, although some locals would argue that this facility is not used to its full potential. There is a primary school in the village, as well as St. Brigid's Training College, which is housed in Ardagh House. However, there is a need for sports facilities in the village, which could also be used by the school.



Ardagh Community Centre

2.7 Public Utility

Ardagh is not on any main roads, although the local roads running through the village see some heavy lorries, plant machinery and farm vehicles. Electricity is supplied by the ESB. At present water is supplied by a private group water scheme, which is currently being upgraded, and in future water will be supplied by the local authority regional Water Supply Scheme. It is proposed to provide a sewerage scheme for the village in the near future.

There is a minimal public transport link, with one service run by CIE to and from Longford on Saturdays. However, there is little demand for an increased service. There is a graveyard beside the Catholic Church, which is still in use.

2.8 Heritage

The historic importance of Ardagh, dating back to pre-Christian times, is a vital part of the charm and the appeal of the village. Archaeological and medieval sites, as well as Ardagh House, the stables and the Arts and Crafts village design, which date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all contribute to the unique quality of the village.

There are monuments included in the Record of Protected Monuments and Places (RMP) for County Longford. These monuments contribute to the archaeological heritage of Ardagh. The monuments are as follows (see recorded monuments on Heritage Map).

Location (townland)	Description
3 rd field from the road westwards (Banghill)	St. Brigid's Well, pre-Christian
Right hand side of the road eastwards (Cross)	Cross Pedestal, c. 8 th century
(Centre of village) Ardagh Demesne	St. Mel's Cathedral & Graveyard, c. 8 th century
Road northwards (Ardagh Demesne)	Medieval Church & Graveyard, c. 13 th century



St. Mel's Cathedral, dating from c. 8th century

In addition to the Monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places there are also Protected Structures within the settlement. These are as follows:

Location (townland)	Description
(Lyanmore)	St. Brigid's RC Church, c. 1880
(Lyanmore)	St. Brigid's Parochial House, c. 1900
Ardagh Village (see map)	15 Stone houses, designed by Rawson Carroll, c. 1860
(Ardagh Demesne)	St. Patrick's Church of Ireland Church, c. 1810 & Lychgate



St. Brigid's (left) and St. Patrick's Churches

3.0 Public Realm

3.1 Paths

Pavement surfaces in the village are poor quality, and the kerbing is also somewhat worn. Pavements need to be appropriately resurfaced in order to improve the overall look of the streetscape.

3.2 Open Space

Ardagh's open spaces and designed landscapes are integral part of the overall ambience of the village. Ardagh Neighbourhood Park, beside the Heritage Centre, is a public open space, which was designed taking into account Ardagh Heritage Centre and Ardagh Heritage Trail. The Heritage Centre is housed in the old National School that is built on the site of the old Catholic Church, which is why this is thought to be where the Famine Graveyard is located.



Ardagh Heritage Park

3.3 Landscaping

There are two main landscaped green areas in Ardagh: one at the entrance to the village from the north side and the village green at the centre of the crossroads. There is a need for landscaping in new developments



Landscaping: at the entrance to the village from the north (left) and the green at the centre of the village.

There are also landscaped areas beside the two churches. The soft landscaping beside St. Patrick's Church of Ireland Church has remained relatively unchanged for over a century. The landscaping around St. Brigid's Church is picturesque but somewhat bare, and would benefit from additional native tree planting.

3.4 Walkways



Ardagh Heritage Trail was created at the same time as the Heritage Centre in 1990, and it provides a pleasant woodland walkway.

3.5 Conservation Plan

The Conservation Plan was prepared as a preliminary to the preparation of this plan. The main aims of the conservation plan are:

- Architectural Conservation Area designation
- Additions to the Record of Protected Structures
- Retention of existing historic street pattern, significant views and vistas and traditional features (see appendix 1 as well as Conservation Plan.)

3.6 Development Pressure

Following on from the Conservation Plan, the area around Ardagh House should be designated a Protected Visibility Area, zoned for exclusive protection from future development (see map). This is in order to protect the particularly important views between the village and the house. This land in front of the house, which provides a natural amphitheatre, could be used as a public performance area, village fairs and outdoor community and sports facilities, including football pitches and a public park, as part of the future development of the village. Similarly, there should be a clear physical break between the established village and new housing developments, separating the old from the new and protecting the integrity of the nineteenth century design (see map).



Area in front of Ardagh House

3.7 Development Potential

The development plan for the county for the period 2003-2009 highlights areas of Ardagh which are available for further development, and the aims presented within the plan state that: “dwelling houses should respect their location in terms of siting, design, materials, finishes and landscaping...designs should be site specific.” The underlying desire is to maintain the character of the place using the traditional paradigms, particularly the pitch of the roof, the triangular gables and windows with a vertical, as opposed to horizontal, emphasis. There are opportunities for new housing developments in Ardagh (see zoning map). All new housing layouts and designs would need to reflect and respect the existing design, character and density of the village. The approach roads have the potential for low-density housing to be built on either side of the road, while the entrances to the village from Longford and Edgeworthstown provide ample opportunity for medium-density quality housing to be built, screened by landscaped and tree-planted areas. (See map).

4.0 Design Principles

4.1 Local Character

The village is characterised by its Arts and Crafts-style houses, designed by John Rawson Carroll and built during the 1860s. Prevalent features in the village include brick chimneys, slate roofs, ornate timber fascias, latticed windows and the triangular pitched gables (see photos below). Other external features visible around the village include stone walls and cast iron gates and railings.



Typical Ardagh-style houses, designed by John Rawson Carroll

4.2 Access and Circulation

Access to Ardagh is via local roads and, as a result, heavy traffic is not an issue. However, in order to protect the integrity of the village, it is essential that any housing estates be built off the road, so as not to be seen to be obscuring or dominating the village itself. New entranceways (roads) would need to be created to cater for these. Appropriate landscaping and native tree planting, especially on main roads, would provide a screen between new developments and the historic core of the village. As per the recommendations in the conservation plan, the current pavement surfaces around the Clock Tower and at the centre of the village should be replaced with sandstone slabs. In order to improve traffic safety, the Planning Authority will also continue to promote and encourage the provision of traffic calming measures within the town. This shall also be encouraged as part of any new development.

4.3 Residential Development

Residential developments in Ardagh should be sympathetic to their surroundings. They should consider local architectural features and paradigms, as well as their physical setting.

New, unsuitable houses, with new features and materials that do not blend in with existing buildings, should not be introduced into the area.

The area behind the trees at Lyanmore, opposite the Heritage Centre, provides an excellent opportunity for a medium-density housing estate, designed to a high architectural standard and in an appropriate style which reflects, without mimicking, the style of the village around the village green. The development should consist of a curved road (preventing uncharacteristic straight lines) leading to houses around a central green area. The houses should be designed with the Rawson Carroll designs in mind, with particular reference to the overall streetscape view of the gables, and ideally with individual designs for each house, which compliment each other. Features such as the limestone detailing around doors and windows, slate roofs at the same pitch etc should be used subtly, without creating a pastiche.

4.4 Renewable Energy

The promotion of renewable energy and low energy passive houses is considered a very high priority issue in Longford. The use of renewable energy resources are promoted at Section 4.4.3 and further guidance supplied at Section 7 of the County Development Plan, which recognises the need to adopt a more sustainable approach to energy production. This is supported by Material Variations No.s 7 and 8 of the County development Plan that encourage the use of alternative and sustainable energy sources.

4.5 Commercial Development

Any new commercial developments should be sympathetic to their surroundings, i.e. not overtly large or obtrusive, and materials used should be similar to those already used in the village.

4.6 Amenities and Recreation

The reopening of Ardagh Heritage Centre should be promoted and encouraged. Ardagh should be more actively promoted as a tourist attraction. Pedestrian and cycle permeability shall also be encouraged in association with further development in the village and future environmental improvement projects.

4.7 Open Spaces

Open spaces in the village should continue to be maintained as attractive green amenity areas. Any substantial development should include landscaping based on arcadia design principles.

4.8 Public Park

There is a natural amphitheatre between the front of Ardagh House and the Protestant Church, which should be used as a sport and entertainment space. This was used successfully for the Millennium play in 2000.

5.0 Designations

5.1 Architectural Conservation Area

Ardagh village should be designated an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), encompassing the Rawson Carroll houses, Ardagh Demesne and Ardagh Heritage Centre (see conservation map), as per the County Development Plan 2003-2009, section 5.2.5.1.

5.2 Proposed Protected Structures

The following buildings should be added to the Record of Protected Structures (see conservation map):

- ◆ Ardagh House, including in the attendant grounds the stables, gate lodges, outbuildings and all gates, railings and boundary walls.
- ◆ The water pump in the centre of the village.
- ◆ The cast iron sign at the entrance to the village.
- ◆ House 7 on the East Road
- ◆ The Travellers' Rest

6.0 Zonings

The zonings 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 Design Standards (Section 7), particularly in relation to design, materials, public open space and parking requirements.

6.1 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.

The zoning in the areas on the south and west roads provide ample locations for low-density housing development, while the zoned areas on north and east roads allow for medium-density housing development, which reflect the layout of the established village. It is important

that there is a landscape buffer between the housing development and the surrounding road and/or landscape. It is not envisaged that any more land will need to be zoned, since the population projections for the village indicate that the village population is set to increase by 40 people during the life of this plan, requiring a further 16 houses.

6.2 Buffer Zone

The buffer zones are intended to provide a gap between the old village and new developments. It is important that a small green belt is allowed to protect the visual integrity of the village.

6.3 Community/Recreational

To primarily provide for recreational open space and ancillary structures

The community/recreational zone includes the primary school and proposed recreational space, which is intended to provide an entertainment space as well as sports facilities, including a football pitch, which is intended to be used by the school and the community.

6.4 Protected Visibility Area

To protect important views and vistas around Ardagh House and the Demesne

The area around Ardagh House is an important vista, which should be protected. The design of the village is intended to be best viewed from the front of Ardagh House, and it is important that this view is not spoilt by new development.

6.5 Architectural Conservation Area

To protect the architectural integrity of the village

The statutory definition of an Architectural Conservation Area is “a place, area, group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural scientific, cultural or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of the local area plan to preserve.” It is important that the architectural character of Ardagh village is protected for future generations to enjoy, and it is proposed that, to achieve this, Ardagh should be designated an Architectural Conservation Area. (See conservation map)

Appendix 1: S.W.O.T. Analysis

Element	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Topography	Ardagh's situation on the slopes of Ardagh Mountain gives the village a characteristic setting	As a result of its location, parts of the village are exposed to strong winds	The opportunity exists to enhance the landscape with native tree and shrub planting etc	Radical new developments could alter the natural topography.
Environment	Rural area with plenty of green and wooded areas, allowing for biodiversity	Many native and foreign trees and plants associated with Ardagh House have been lost	The area around Ardagh House can continue to provide a green space allowing native plants and animals to thrive	Overdevelopment would be damaging to the environment
History & Society	Long and varied history, dating back to pre-Christian times. Some buildings date back to early medieval period.	This historical significance of the village is not used to its full potential.	Reinvention of tourism policy, incorporating re-opening of the heritage centre, would benefit the area	Some older buildings are under threat and require urgent conservation attention.
Archaeology	Early Christian settlement, monastery founded by St. Patrick, two graveyards (monuments) and a medieval church (dating from the Norman period)	Some graves already deteriorating	Much could be learned from such a significant site, and there would be much to learn from further archaeological excavation with the subsequent production of records	Damage could occur naturally if there is no intervention to save damaged stones etc
Morphology	Road layout in shape of St. Brigid's cross - only slightly altered in nineteenth century from original	Strong at the centre, weak at the edges: needs good quality houses at the entrances to emphasise entrance to the village.	Strengthen approach roads to village with appropriate architecture and landscaping	In danger of alteration if obtrusive or insensitive new development are permitted
Streetscape	Architect designed streetscape - well-planned	The age of the buildings: materials reaching the end of their lifespan and need replaced sympathetically so as not to detract from the character.	The potential exists to enhance the streetscape with high quality designed new houses	Could be radically altered with inappropriate new housing in inappropriate locations
Architecture	Variety of high quality architecture - arts and crafts, neo-classical, gothic etc	Some houses have been left to deteriorate and require urgent work.	Existing architecture be enhanced with high quality new designs	Inappropriate architecture in inappropriate locations would spoil the established planned village
Views and Vistas	Many pleasing views and well-designed vistas	Many native trees on approach roads have been lost	The lands around Ardagh House and the village could be enhanced with appropriate native tree planting	Poor quality designs in the wrong place would spoil established views and vistas

Appendix 2: Recommendations of Conservation Plan

12.1 Conservation

1. Ardagh village should be designated an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), encompassing the Rawson Carroll houses, Ardagh Demesne and Ardagh Heritage Centre (see map 12.3), as per the County Development Plan 2003-2009, section 5.2.5.1.
2. The following buildings should be added to the Record of Protected Structures (see map 12.3):
 - ◆ Ardagh House, including in the attendant grounds the stables, gate lodges, outbuildings and all gates, railings and boundary walls.
 - ◆ The water pump in the centre of the village.
 - ◆ The cast iron sign at the entrance to the village.
 - ◆ House 7 on the East Road
 - ◆ The Travellers' Rest
3. The historic street pattern and layout of the village should be retained.
4. All significant views and vistas should remain unspoilt: this is particularly important in the case of the view from the front door of Ardagh House, from where the design and layout of the village is best viewed, and best illustrates the setting of the estate. (See section 3)
5. Traditional features and materials should be used where possible: such as timber fascias, cast iron railings and gates, slate roofs, timber and cast iron windows, brick chimneys etc (see section 3)

12.2 New Works

6. New development should be strictly controlled so as to avoid overtly inappropriate and disproportionate designs spoiling the look and the style of the village.
7. Traditional features, such as roof pitch, timber fascias etc should be incorporated in new designs, although these should not simply become "pastiches".
8. Extensions to Protected Structures and buildings in the ACA should be built out of sight.
9. Curtilage should always be considered in any new development/ alterations to existing Protected Structure or building within the ACA.

12.3 Enhancement

10. The ivy growing around the medieval church should be trimmed, after consultation with the Heritage Officer, and in accordance with the National Monuments legislation.
11. The two historic graveyards should be maintained and important historic gravestones should be protected.

12. New, appropriate pavement surfaces should be used to replace current ones. Sandstone slabs would be the most appropriate and sympathetic material.
13. New, more appropriate public amenity litterbins should replace existing inappropriate ones (see section 7).
14. Signage, both commercial and directional, should be appropriate to the place and unobtrusive.
15. External lighting should be unobtrusive.
16. One colour for fascias, railings and gates throughout the village should be encouraged.
17. A social attraction, ideally the reopening of the Heritage Centre, would be a sympathetic way of revitalising the village.
18. A new use should be found for the Old Rectory.
19. Native trees should be replanted on the approach roads towards Ardagh House as per OS Maps, especially within the boundary walls of Ardagh House and on southern side of road from Ardagh Mountain.

12.4 Future Course of Action

20. All works affecting National Monuments, Protected Structures and buildings within the ACA should be carried out in accordance with the County and National Development Plans, County Heritage Plan, Planning and Development Act 2004 and National Monuments Acts 1930-2004.
21. A Village Policy Statement should be developed for Ardagh, following on from the findings of this report.
22. The findings of this report should be monitored and reviewed periodically, by means of photographic survey.