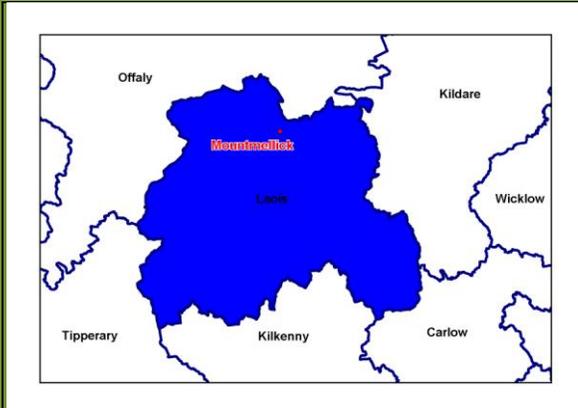


MOUNTMELICK LOCAL AREA PLAN 2012-2018



Laois County Council
October 2012



Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018

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Introduction

Context

Mountmellick is an important services and dormitory town located in north County Laois, 23 kms. south-east of Tullamore and 11 kms. north-west of Portlaoise.

It lies at the intersection of regional routes R422 and R433 with the National Secondary Route N80. The River Owenass, a tributary of the River Barrow, flows through the town in a south-north trajectory.

Population-wise Mountmellick is the third largest town in County Laois, after Portlaoise and Portarlington. According to Census 2006, the recorded population of the town is 4, 069, an increase of 21% [708] on the recorded population of Census 2002 [3,361]. The population growth that occurred in Mountmellick during inter-censal period 2002-2006 has continued through to 2011 though precise figures for 2011 are still pending at time of writing.

Mountmellick is the only urban centre in County Laois outside Portlaoise to have Town Council status. The National Spatial Strategy states that Mountmellick can be enhanced through physical and townscape improvements, water services, facilities for smaller enterprises and enhancements to road and bus networks, offering an attractive environment for residential, employment, retailing and service functions.

Historical Evolution

The name Mountmellick is derived from Mointaghe-Meelick, "the Bogs of the Marsh". In 1440, Mountmellick became a garrison for the soldiers of Henry VI, who were defending the Pale from the pressure of the Gaelic chieftains. The Quakers have made a significant contribution to the cultural and economic history of Mountmellick. The first Quaker families arrived in Mountmellick in the mid 1600's. Their industrious nature and honest ways created prosperity, wealth and employment in skills such as brewing, weaving and furniture-making, which developed Mountmellick into a town of great commercial importance. William Edmundson, a former Cromwellian soldier, was the first Quaker in Ireland and, with five other Quakers, Richard Jackson, John Edmundson, John Thompson, William Moon and John Pim, settled in Mountmellick in 1659. Mountmellick, at this time, had a population of 175, of which 95 were English and 80 were Irish. From these small beginnings, the town of Mountmellick grew and expanded into a thriving industrial centre of the midlands and the Quakers have been synonymous with this expansion to the present day.

Adoption of Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018

Preface

The **Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018** was formally adopted at a special meeting of Laois County Council on 22nd October 2012. The Plan is made in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

The Plan is known as the Mountmellick Local Area Plan (LAP). In the text it may be referred to as 'the Plan' or 'this Plan', save where the context requires otherwise. 'The Council' or the 'Planning Authority' shall mean Laois County Council.

The Plan will effectively replace the existing local authority plan for the town namely Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2007-13 as adopted by Laois County Council.

Statutory Background

Laois County Council has a statutory duty to prepare, monitor and review Local Area Plans in its functional area. The purpose of a Local Area Plan is to assess future land use needs (such as for housing, business, shopping and recreation) and to make appropriate provision for them by the designation of land; and, secondly, to contain policies with which planning applications for development will have to accord, unless the importance of other material considerations prevails.

Sections 18-20 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended outline the statutory process for the preparation and adoption of Local Area Plans. According to Section 19[2] of the Act, the Local Area Plan must be consistent with the objectives of the prevailing County Development Plan, in this case the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017.

The Local Area Plan shall consist of a written statement and a plan or plans indicating the objectives in such detail as may be determined by the planning authority for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which it applies, including details on community facilities and amenities and on standards for the design of development and structures.

Purpose of the Local Area Plan

The main aim of this Local Area Plan is to set out a framework for the physical development of Mountmellick, so that growth may take place in a sensitive, co-ordinated and orderly manner, while at the same time conserving the town's character and heritage value. The plan strives to inform the general public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested bodies of the policy framework, objectives and general land-use proposals for Mountmellick.

Overview of Plan Content

The Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018 will establish an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Mountmellick Urban Area.

The Plan consists of:

- *Volume 1: Written Statement, Zoning Map and Objectives Map*
- *Volume 2: Environmental Assessments*

The Zoning Map identifies the proposals contained in the Written Statement, including those sites which are identified for development and designated areas to which specific policies will be applied.

An early consideration in reviewing a Local Area Plan is the need to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended. **The Strategic Environmental Assessment** undertaken for this Plan is presented in Volume 2. SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing the Mountmellick Local Area Plan in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic and social considerations. By anticipating the likely effects and avoiding areas in which growth cannot be sustainably accommodated and by directing development towards more compatible and robust receiving environments, adverse effects of development are more likely to be mitigated.

The Written Statement is divided into **12 chapters**, which contain policies and proposals to guide and regulate development management decisions. It also sets out the reasoned justification and advice on how each of these policies and proposals will be implemented. Policies and objectives are distinguished by colour-coded text in separate boxes. All development proposals will be assessed against the policies in the Plan. It is important that individual policies are not considered in isolation, but will be seen as part of the whole Plan. It will not be assumed that because a proposal satisfies one particular policy, it satisfies all the policies of the Plan.

The policies and proposals set out in the Plan remain in effect for a six year period, but can be subject to amendment or review during this period where the Council considers prudent in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development of Mountmellick and its environs.

A central theme throughout the local area plan is [as is required] demonstration of **consistency** with the key objectives of higher order plans, in particular the **core strategy** [and the principle of the **Sequential Approach** as a guide to location of development] set out in the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017. The County Laois Core Strategy is based on 2006 census results. The LAP is also consistent with the **National Spatial Strategy** and the **Midland Regional Planning Guidelines**.

Sustainability is another fundamental principle that runs through the policies and proposals of the plan. The aim is to work towards a sustainable future where the needs of today are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This means careful consideration about daily socio-economic activities and their impact on key resources such as land and water quality.

The plan has been prepared for all those who live, work and visit Mountmellick and its environs. It recognises and builds into its policies the needs of the community for housing, employment, shopping, entertainment, recreation, green space, leisure and other social and community

facilities. It also recognises the high quality of the natural and built environment of Mountmellick and the need to protect, and where necessary improve, these important assets.

Schedule of Zoned Lands

In the Plan, the total area of land zoned within the Mountmellick urban area is 296.51 hectares. The following schedule is of lands zoned for particular land uses and should be read in conjunction with the land use zoning map on page 128.

Table 1: Size of Land-Use Zonings [in hectares] in Mountmellick	
Town Centre	29.45
Residential 1 Established	105.9
Residential 2	23.0
Strategic Reserve 2018-2024	24.97
Amenity/Open space	49.48
Community Educational Institutional	21.75
Industrial	25.26
Enterprise and Employment	15.56
Neighbourhood Centre	1.14

Plan Period

The Plan period shall be six years from the date of its adoption or until it is reviewed or another Plan adopted.

The Plan Making Process

The Plan has been prepared following a three stage process. Firstly, survey and analysis of the physical, social and economic fabric of the town was carried out. Secondly, a consultation process facilitated the Mountmellick Town Council, local community, individuals and organisations making submissions to the County Council. Thirdly, an extensive period of consultation with the Mountmellick electoral area Councillors was undertaken.

Consultation was a key element of the plan making process which was used to identify the key issues to be addressed in the Local Area Plan and to develop a vision for the town.

The publication of a notice on **30th August 2011** stating the intention to prepare a new Mountmellick Local Area Plan for the period 2012-2018 marked the formal commencement of the review process.

First Stage

There are a number of key stages in the process of making a local area plan. The initial stage involved a preliminary, non-statutory, consultation period during which submissions were invited on issues to be included in the Draft Local Area Plan. This took place during September 2011.

A number of meetings were held with interested parties, the general public, Mountmellick Development Association and the town council and county council electoral area members. Prescribed bodies were notified and service providers and semi-state organisations such as ESB Networks, Eirgrid, Telecom Eireann, Bord na Mona, Iarnrod Eireann, Bus Eireann, Laois Trip, Laois VEC and the National Broadband Scheme were consulted on their future plans and operational programmes for the town. There were also meetings with key internal Council sections such as Road Design and Water Services on the subject of overall infrastructure provision in the town.

Second Stage

This stage was followed by preparation of the actual *draft* Mountmellick Local Area Plan. Notice of the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan was published on 20th April 2012. Advertisements to this effect were placed in local newspapers [Leister Express and Laois Nationalist] and on the Laois County Council website inviting written submissions from the public and other interested parties during a 6 week public display and consultation period extending from 20th April to 1st June 2012. Notice of the preparation of the draft Local Area Plan was also issued to the bodies prescribed under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended. A total of **15** no. submissions were received during this stage.

To assist in and promote the consultative process, the Planning Authority facilitated two public forums on 8th May 2012 at the MDA offices, Irishtown, Mountmellick while on 3rd May 2012, the plan preparation team briefed the elected members of Mountmellick Electoral Area and Mountmellick Town Council.

The 6 week public consultation period was followed by preparation of the manager's report which listed the persons who made submissions or observations, summarised the issues raised and indicated the opinion and recommendation of the manager in relation to such issues.

Third Stage

Pursuant to section 20(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, the elected members of Laois County Council resolved to amend the Draft Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018 at their meeting of 30th July 2012. As the proposed amendments were deemed to be material alterations of the Draft Plan, it was necessary to place these proposed amendments on public display for a minimum 4 week period.

Accordingly, the proposed amendments were placed on public display during normal opening hours from Wednesday 15th August, 2012 to Thursday 13th September 2012. A total of **6** no. submissions were received during this stage.

The 4 week public consultation period was followed by preparation of the second manager's report which listed the persons who made submissions or observations, summarised the issues raised and indicated the opinion and recommendation of the manager in relation to such issues.

The Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018 was formally adopted at a special meeting of Laois County Council on 22nd October 2012.

Ministerial Direction; December 2012

On 19th December 2012, Jan O’Sullivan T.D., Minister for Housing and Planning at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government issued Laois County Council with a **Ministerial Direction** in relation to the Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018, this being pursuant to Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended by Section 21 of the Planning and Development [Amendment] Act 2010.

The Ministerial Direction was in respect of a c. 10.5 hectares [25.93 acres] landholding to the east of the town in the townland of Strahard [known locally as Debicot] which was zoned for residential development under the heading “Residential 2”.

The effect of the Ministerial Direction was to remove the residential zoning from the landholding in question; in other words the land becomes unzoned in the Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018.

Chapter 1: Strategic Context

Relationship with Other Plans and Strategies

The Plan does not exist in isolation; it is part of a wider planning framework, which includes both national and regional planning policy and guidance. These various levels of planning policy and guidance provide the strategic context that the Plan must take into account and respond to at the local level.

National Context

- The National Development Plan 2007-2013
- The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
- Sustainable Development—A Strategy for Ireland 1997
- Local Agenda 21

Regional Context

- Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022
- Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region

County Level

- Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017
- The Laois County Development Board Strategy 2009
- Laois County Council Corporate Plan 2009
- Laois County Heritage Plan 2007-2011
- Laois Housing Strategy 2011 (adopted as part of the County Development Plan]
- Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013
- Laois Retail Strategy 2011 (adopted as part of the County Development Plan)
- Economic/Promotional Strategy for County Laois 2003
- The Arts in Laois Development Plan 2006-2011
- Homeless Strategy 2010
- County Laois Play Strategy 2004-2008
- Climate Change Strategy 2009
- Local Agenda 21 County Action Plan 2009
- Laois County Childcare Strategy 2002 –2006.

National Guidelines

National planning guidelines as prepared by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, have been considered in the preparation of the Plan.

It is considered that the Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018 is consistent with the relevant national planning guidelines issued by the Department relating in particular to the following:

- Appropriate Assessment
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Flood Risk
- Retail
- Heritage Protection
- Sustainable Residential development and Urban Design
- Provision of schools
- Planning and Roads

Future individual development proposals as submitted to the Planning Authority by way of planning application will be further assessed at that time in respect of consistency with the provisions of relevant national guidelines as are applicable to that development.

Key Policy Issues for Mountmellick

- Provide an Inner Relief Road on an agreed route in the interests of traffic safety and in the wider interests of the economic and social development of Mountmellick. An Inner Relief Road would also improve access to zoned lands in the town, on which development is not coming on stream due inadequate access. Provision will be made on the Inner Relief Road for access to zoned lands including the backland area west of Patrick Street. However, development of these areas will not be impeded by poor access because there are opportunities for temporary access solutions in the interim;
-
- Ensure sufficient land is zoned to cater for the future growth and development needs of the town;
-
- Facilitate the provision of sufficient and adequate employment opportunities to cater for the needs of the population of the town;
-
- Preserve and enhance the environmental character of the town including its historic heritage and unique architectural character;
-
- Stimulate activity in the town centre and its backlands in a manner which respects the architectural character and historic context of this area;
-
- Facilitate the provision of improved amenities within the town and secure the appropriate re-development and renewal of obsolete areas;
-
- Contribute to the evolution of a socially integrated community;
-
- Ensure physical and social integration of new development into the town.

National, Regional and Local Policy Context

A Local Area Plan is the most specific tier in the hierarchy of spatial planning policy in Ireland. Its purpose is to provide a land-use framework for the development of an area that contains detailed policies and objectives that are specific to the area in question, in this case Mountmellick. It complements the broad-brush approach necessary for planning strategies at a national, regional and county level.

The hierarchy of spatial planning policy in which this local area plan operates is indicated in the figure below.



National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002-2020 (NSS) is a medium-term planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. In order to drive development in the regions, the NSS requires that areas of sufficient scale and critical mass be built up through a network of gateways and hubs. The NSS identifies the town of **Mountmellick** as being an ‘**urban strengthening opportunity**’. The NSS states that; “smaller towns in the Midlands such as **Mountmellick** in Laois...can be enhanced through physical and townscape improvements, water services, facilities for smaller enterprises and enhancements to road and bus networks. This will offer an attractive environment for residential, employment, retailing and service functions.”

The NSS sets out a number of sustainable development principles, which include:

- developing sustainable urban and rural settlement patterns and communities to reduce distance from employment, services and leisure facilities and to make better use of existing and future investments in public services;

- promoting cost-effective provision of public services like roads, drainage, waste management facilities, lighting, public amenities and schools;
- and contributing to the evolution of socially integrated communities in both urban and rural areas.

Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022

Mountmellick lies within the Southern Development Area of the overall **Midlands Region** which comprises counties Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath. The SDA sub-area borders the South-East Region and the Mid-West Region and encompasses all of County Laois save for Portarlington and its environs which are in the Eastern Development Area.

Due to excellent national road and rail links, the SDA has strong links to the Greater Dublin Area. Indeed the influence of the GDA has impacted to a major extent on commuting and employment patterns in the SDA. The SDA has a well-defined hierarchical settlement structure, with Portlaoise as the principal town, acting as the predominant urban structure and driver of economic growth.

Portlaoise is supported by a strong network of smaller rural towns and villages of which **Mountmellick** is the largest and most important. These settlements provide vital support services to the surrounding hinterland whilst strong local identities. They have also experienced strong development pressures over the last decade in particular.

Mountmellick is designated as one of 11 **Service Towns** in the Midlands region. The function of a service town is to perform important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for its local rural hinterland and support the upper tier of the urban hierarchy including the linked gateway and principal towns. Well established economic, administrative and social functions are provided in these settlements at levels commensurate with their position on the urban hierarchy.

According to the **Midland Regional Planning Guidelines**, the future development of the SDA [and by extension Mountmellick] will require the strengthening and **consolidation** of the existing infrastructure that forms an important element in the prosperity of the region. Innate strengths should be optimised, including opportunities in transport based industries such as freight and logistics.

There should also be an emphasis on a **sequential** approach to new development, within the context of the availability of current and future social and physical infrastructure. Moreover, the guidelines acknowledge the importance of the N80 National Secondary Route for **Mountmellick** and the region.

As outlined in the Guidelines, the key priorities for the SDA sub-area insofar as they relate to **Mountmellick** are:

Settlement and Population:

- *Support the consolidation of the town and village network to ensure that development proceeds sustainably and at an appropriate scale, level and pace,*
-
- *The SDA should plan for a future population growth by 2022 in the order of 10,906,*

Enterprise and Economy:

- *Create the conditions necessary to cater for targeted employment generation, having particular regard to the location of this Development Area within the region and its innate strengths,*
-
- *Focused development, promotion and expansion of Business and Technology Parks and local industrial parks in association with interagency collaboration to serve indigenous industries should also be pursued throughout the SDA,*

Transport and Infrastructure:

- *Improve the transport system particularly the N80 National Secondary Route linking Mountmellick and the Region to the gateways, other Regions and the ports of Rosslare and Belview in the South East Region,*

Social and Community Development:

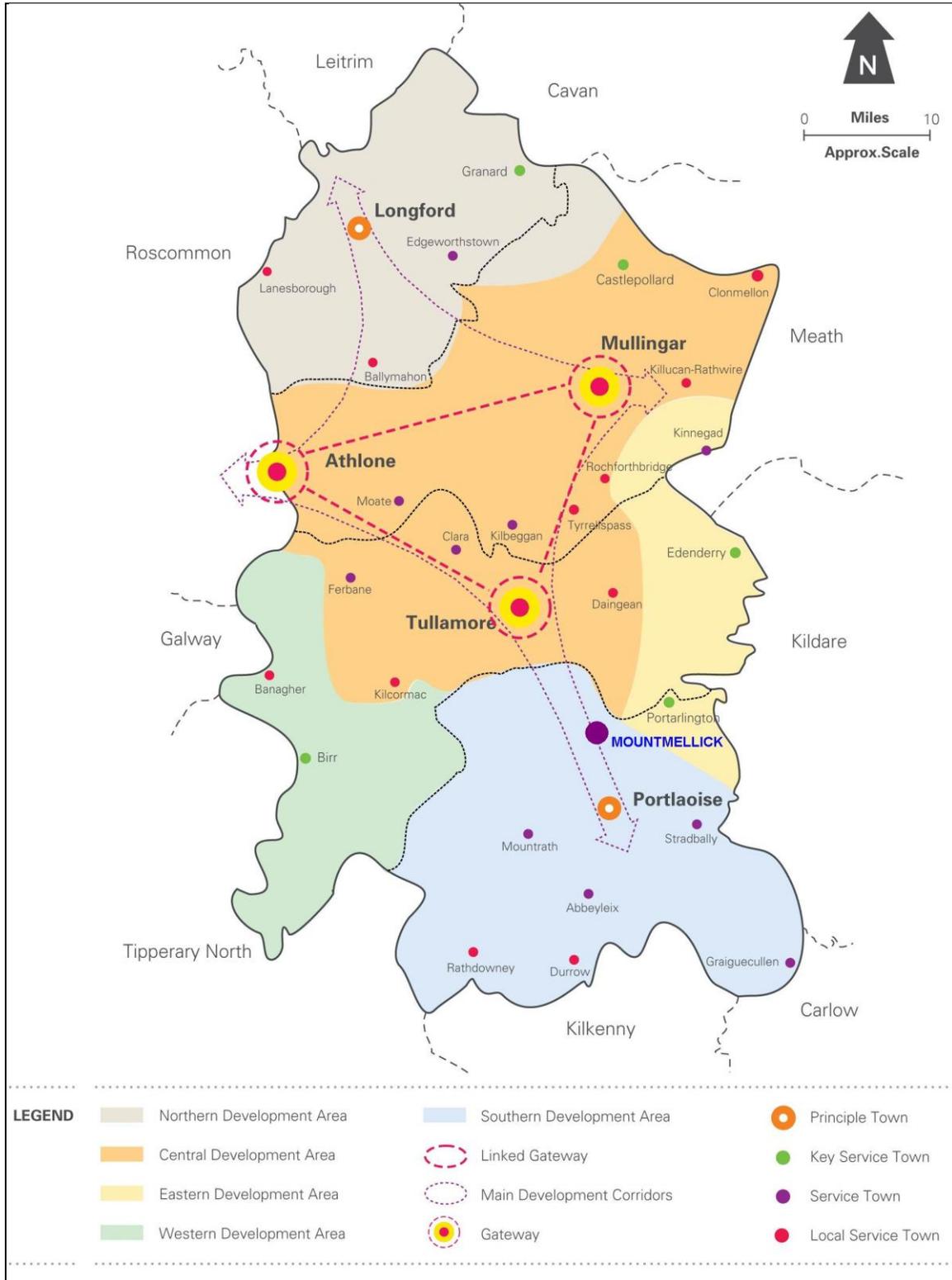
- *Support and co-operate with the relevant agencies and departments to address any identified physical, social and economic needs within the SDA,*

Rural Development:

- *Support the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification, rural tourism and renewable energy to sustain employment opportunities in rural areas.*

Source: *Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022.*

Map 1: Location of Mountmellick in the context of the Midlands Region



Under the Planning and Development [Amendment] Act 2010 there is a requirement that Local Area Plans align, correlate and demonstrate **consistency** with the over-arching national and regional objectives as outlined in the [Midland] Regional Planning Guidelines and National Spatial Strategy. As discussed in Chapter 3, this has particular relevance in the whole area of demographics and housing land requirement.

Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017

Taking due cognisance of the recommendations of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines, Laois County Council identified **Mountmellick** as one of five **Service Towns** in County Laois in the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017.

Service Towns are so designated because they perform important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for local, essentially rural hinterlands and support the upper tiers of the urban hierarchy including the principal towns. Many of them have undergone high levels of population growth over the last census period, in some cases in the absence of necessary supporting physical and social infrastructure.

The main future objective for the Service Town is consolidation of the growth that has occurred and developing a commensurate level of physical and social infrastructure. There is a presumption against additional large scale residential development. The location of new development will be guided by application of the Sequential Approach.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

- | | |
|------|---|
| CP 1 | Ensure that the development of Mountmellick over the lifetime of this plan shall be focused on employment generation, the consolidation of the town centre, the completion of ongoing developments and the provision of community and social services (where feasible); |
| CP 2 | Implement the development strategies for Mountmellick in order to be consistent with, and in accordance with, policies at a national level, regional level and at a county level; |
| CP 3 | Facilitate and promote the role of Mountmellick as a 'Service Town' as designated in the MRPG's and the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017. |

Chapter 2: Development Strategy

Introduction

The Strategic Vision contained within this Local Area Plan is based on the role of Mountmellick as defined in national, regional and local planning policy and on the aspirations of the people and stakeholders within Mountmellick as outlined in the Pre-Draft submissions and observations received, in addition to the results of the SWOT analysis carried out by the policy development team. The Vision Statement reads as follows:

To continue to develop Mountmellick as a balanced settlement centred on a vibrant town centre, to harness the location and accessibility strengths of Mountmellick in the promotion of employment and industry, to promote the town as a unique settlement for working, living and recreation, to facilitate and encourage the growth of Mountmellick as an area of tourism excellence and to balance the demands of a vibrant economy with the need for a healthy and sustainable environment and to ensure the protection of the unique built and cultural heritage of the area”.

Delivering the Strategic Vision

In order to deliver the strategic vision of this plan, the following strategic objectives will need to be delivered;

- The identification of opportunities to develop a strong and vibrant town centre which meets the retail and service needs of the hinterland in addition to offering a pleasant and attractive environment for shopping, business, recreation and living;
- To capitalise on the excellent locational advantages possessed by Mountmellick by virtue of its pivotal location on the National Secondary Route N80 and its close proximity to the M7 and M8 Motorways. The ease of accessibility represents an invaluable asset in attracting industry and employment opportunities. In order to encourage industries to locate in the town it will also be necessary to work closely with a range of national, regional and local stakeholders;
- To further develop the residential and service sectors within the town, ensuring that existing and potential future residents have a choice of high quality house types at a range of locations within a reasonable distance of the town centre, in accordance with the sequential approach. It is also desirable to provide for an attractive and vibrant town centre that will meet the retailing needs of the population of the town and its hinterland in addition to attracting new businesses. The provision for well designed and well located open spaces will further add to the residential experience within the town;
- The development of the tourism product of Mountmellick by building on the existing potential of the town including its proximity to the Sliabh Bloom Mountains. The improvement of the visual amenity of the approach roads in addition to highlighting the natural, manmade and other hidden assets of the town is vital in order to encourage and entice people to visit and stay in Mountmellick. It is an objective of this plan to

facilitate and guide the development of additional attractions and facilities to encourage tourists to extend their stay and increase expenditure in the town;

- To augment and upgrade the physical and social infrastructure of Mountmellick and to facilitate the creation of sustainable employment opportunities;
- To develop walking and cycling routes in Mountmellick.

It is vital that the strategic objectives set out above are delivered in a sustainable manner and that the economic and residential development of the town will occur in a balanced fashion, both recognising the need for the town to develop into the future and ensuring the protection of its unique built and natural heritage.

Development Strategy

The development strategy adopted for Mountmellick is entitled “*Expansion and Consolidation of Existing Built Form*” as it complements the existing structure of the town, is easily achievable and is deemed to be the most sustainable option. This strategy is aimed at protecting the character, quality and function of the established urban area and ensuring that the strategic development aspirations of the town can be delivered within the context of proper planning and sustainable development.

The spatial development pattern that is advocated reflects the need to prevent unlimited sprawl into the suburbs of the town and the floodplain of the Rivers Owenass and Barrow. This strategy performs well in comparison to the previous two options, representing the most sustainable framework that balances the various environmental, economic and social objectives within a robust development strategy.

Existing and planned transportation and utilities infrastructure is maximized and growth is directed towards sites that will consolidate the existing physical structure of the town and towards areas that minimise any associated visual and ecological impact. Consequently, the town’s environmental constraints are acknowledged and important areas of visual, ecological and recreational amenity are protected. Areas of sensitivity such as the floodplain are adequately protected.

Significantly, the chosen strategy does not inhibit the town’s aspirations to develop further as a key urban settlement and a focus for economic growth within the Southern Development sub-area of the Midland Region. This strategy option contains adequate zoned lands at appropriate locations to cater for future residential, commercial and employment requirements and supports the ongoing development of the town as a strong economic hub within a high quality living and working environment.

Chapter 3: Population Targets, Core Strategy, Housing Land Requirements

Introduction

In common with the vast majority of towns of County Laois, there has been major population growth in **Mountmellick** since the beginning of the millennium. From census 2002 to census 2006, it's population increased from 3,361 to 4,069, representing a growth rate of 21% over the five year timeframe or 4% per annum. Tables 2 & 3 and Map 2 refer.

Mountmellick is ranked third in overall population size in County Laois behind only Portlaoise and Portarlinton both of which have higher ranking status under the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines [*Principal Town and Key Service Town designation respectively*].

While in-migration from Dublin accounted for some of the growth, this phenomenon was less of a contributory factor in Mountmellick than in Portlaoise or Portarlinton mainly because of the extra distance involved and the absence of a rail connection. The bulk of the new housing development has taken place off the town centre and in the northern and eastern suburbs.

	2002	2006			Population Change; 02-06	
	Persons	Persons	Males	Females	Actual	Percentage
Mountmellick	3,361	4,069	2,038	2,031	708	21%

Source: Central Statistics Office.

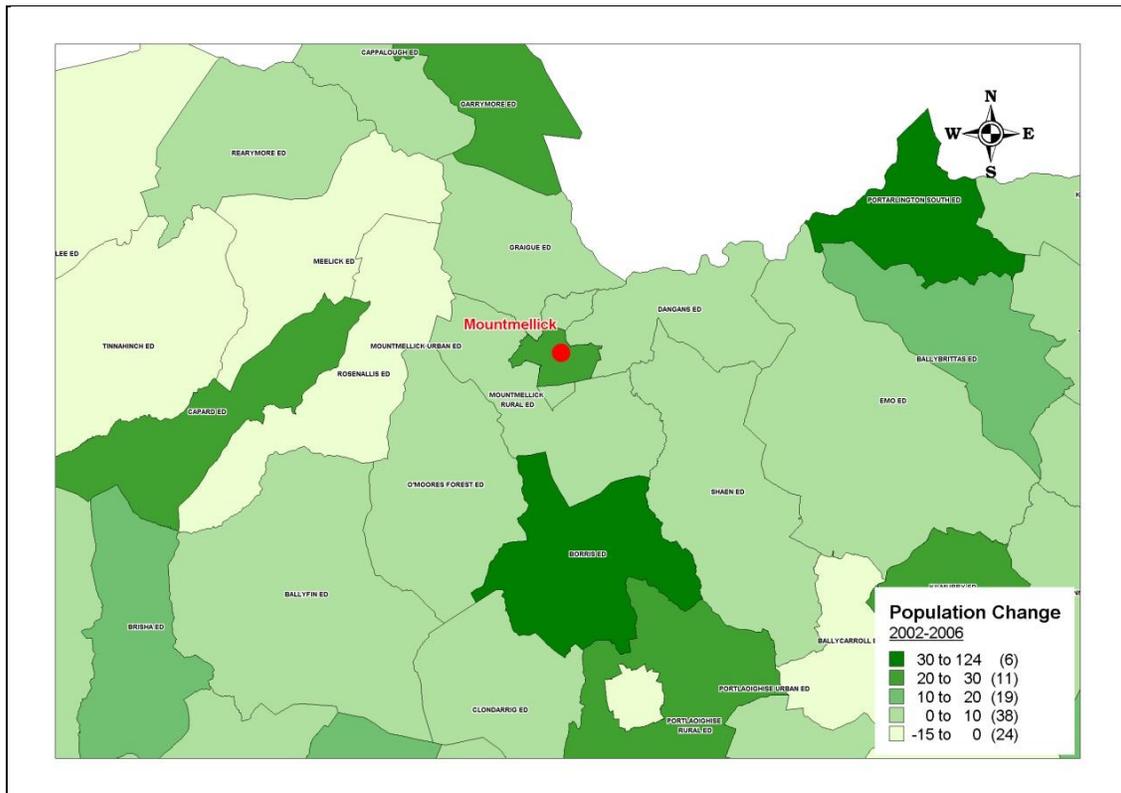
Town	2002	2006	% Change 02-06	2011	% Change 06-11
Portlaoise	12,127	14,613	20.5%	<i>Pending</i>	<i>Pending</i>
Portarlinton	4,001	6,004	50%	<i>Pending</i>	<i>Pending</i>
Mountmellick	3,361	4,069	21%	<i>Pending</i>	<i>Pending</i>

Source: Central Statistics Office.

2011 Census Results

The population growth that occurred in Mountmellick during inter-censal period 2002-2006 has continued through to 2011. The actual population figures for Mountmellick Urban are pending final publication. However growth rates are anticipated to be in line with the MRPG's and each counties core strategies.

Map 2: Population Change by DED in County Laois, 2002-2006



Core Strategy

Under the Planning and Development [Amendment] Act 2010 there is a requirement that:

*County Development Plans include a **core strategy** which is **consistent** with over-arching national and regional objectives as outlined in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines*

*Local Area Plans demonstrate **consistency** with the **core strategy** of the County Development Plan and with over-arching national and regional objectives as outlined in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines*

The purpose of a **Core Strategy** “is to articulate a medium to longer term quantitatively based strategy for the spatial development of the area of the planning authority, and in doing so, to demonstrate that the development plan and its objectives are consistent with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines.

The **Core Strategy** is positioned within a policy hierarchy that ranges from the higher level, strategic approach of the National Spatial Strategy, which seeks to provide an overall vision for development at a state level, to local area and town development plans which provide specific development objectives for private and public land within their boundaries.

The **Core Strategy** includes the following:

- A Written Statement outlining the broad aims of the strategy including: the population targets and housing demand allocation for the remainder of the plan period.
- A Core Strategy Table which demonstrates the allocation of population distribution and required amount of residential zoned lands throughout Laois.
- A Core Strategy Map which is a schematic map depicting how the planning authority anticipates that its area will develop out over the plan period in line with the availability of infrastructure, services and amenities.

The **Core Strategy** will demonstrate a level of consistency between the objectives of the local area plan and the higher order spatial plans, namely the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017, the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) and the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). This translates as defining a settlement hierarchy and implementing it by setting population targets and associated housing land requirements.

Schedule of Zoned Lands

The total area of land zoned within the Mountmellick urban area is 296.51 hectares. The following schedule is of lands zoned for particular land uses and should be read in conjunction with the land use zoning map on page 128.

Town Centre	29.45
Residential 1 Established	105.9
Residential 2	23.0
Strategic Reserve 2018-2024	24.97
Amenity/Open space	49.48
Community Educational Institutional	21.75
Industrial	25.26
Enterprise and Employment	15.56
Neighbourhood Centre	1.14

It should be noted that since 2000, 32.05 hectares of residential zoned land previously not built on has been developed. It should also be noted that this Plan includes Town Centre as a new zoning which was previously classified as General Business.

Population Targets and Housing Land Requirement 2012-2018

The **future population of Mountmellick** is governed by and shall comply with the targets set by the core strategy of the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017 which in turn is consistent with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022. Central to the population forecasts at county and regional level is the need for local authorities to avoid over-provision of zoned lands and to adopt a **sequential approach** in relation to the location of planned new development.

The sequential approach in effect favours town centre, edge of centre and inner suburban locations over suburban locations for reasons of promoting sustainability, urban compactness and ease of serviceability. There is a strong presumption against the leapfrogging effect which leads to ad-hoc and disjointed development at relatively long distances from the town centre. Lands identified in the Flood Risk Analysis exercise [see Environmental Report] as being at risk of flooding are also excluded.

By extension, **one of the key tasks** of the Local Area Plan was to critically examine all current residentially zoned lands in the context of these key criteria:

<i>Location relative to town centre</i>
<i>Sensitivities including flooding, various environmental designations</i>
<i>Serviceability for example with reference to the Laois County Council Water Services Investments Programme and</i>
<i>Compatibility with County and Midland Regional population targets.</i>

In the Laois County Development Plan 2011-17, the future population of Mountmellick is scheduled to reach **4,704** by target year 2018, requiring a housing land requirement of 33 hectares [subsequently reduced to **23 hectares** as a result of the **Ministerial Direction** described on page 8] to cater for a projected additional 635 persons residing in 265 households. See Table 5.

Lands with the benefit of extant planning permissions [including those that have commenced and are ongoing, those that commenced and are now stalled because of the prevailing recession and those that have yet to commence] are also generally considered for inclusion in the proposed Residential Zoning of a Local Area Plan. However, in the case of Mountmellick at present the extent of such lands in this category is virtually negligible.

Surplus residentially zoned lands will be disposed of by way of rezoning to other landuses, inclusion in a strategic land bank for consideration at a subsequent plan stage or de-zoned altogether.

Table 5: Housing Land Requirement 2006-2018 for County Laois & Mountmellick

	Population 2006 (CSO)	Projected Population 2018	Projected Population Growth to 2018	Projected increase in Households to 2018	Density (per ha)	Housing Land Requirement to 2018 (Inc. 50% headroom)	Area (ha) proposed to be zoned for Residential Development 2012-2018
Co. Laois	67,059	77,059	10,000	4,167			
Southern Development Area (MRPGs)							
Mountmellick	4,069	4,704	635	265	12	33 [23*] ha	33 [23*] ha

*Reduced as a result of Ministerial Direction, December 2012

At present there are **180** hectares of undeveloped residential zoned land in the town resulting in a surplus of **157** hectares. See Table 6.

Table 6: Comparison of Areas Zoned 2006-2012-2018			
Settlement per category	Area of undeveloped residential zoned land, 2006-2012	Area proposed for residential zoning 2012-2018	Area proposed for Strategic Reserve 2012-2018
Service Town Mountmellick	180 Ha	23 ha	24.97 ha

Population

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

DO 1 Monitor the delivery of population and associated residential development in Mountmellick during the plan period through the development management process and also using accurate and recent statistics as and when they are published e.g. Census 2011.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

DP 1 Support and encourage the appropriate sustainable growth of Mountmellick over the plan period and will facilitate such growth where it can be demonstrated that such proposals are consistent with national, regional and local level policy and in line with the sequential approach,

DP 2 Monitor and manage the delivery of population and housing in Mountmellick, in line with national, regional and county level objectives, through the development strategy in this plan and also through the development management process. In this regard, it is Council policy to co-operate with the Midland Regional Authority, in relation to Mountmellick as part of the monitoring and review approach,

DP 3 Prioritise the completion of development where works are ongoing in Mountmellick. In this regard, the Council will, where necessary, engage with developers, landowners and agencies involved to resolve outstanding issues and reach a satisfactory conclusion,

DP 4 Take into account future DoECLG/Government guidance in relation to the satisfactory completion of developments where works are ongoing.

Chapter 4: Enterprise & Employment

Aim: Working in partnership with national, regional and local agencies, to build on the economic strengths of Mountmellick in a balanced and sustainable manner by focusing on the opportunities afforded by its strategic location, infrastructure, environment, heritage assets and labour force and by reducing the unsustainable levels of commuting from the town.

Employment

The National Spatial Strategy recognises the need to ensure that urban and rural areas develop in a way which meets the economic and social needs of a growing population and that future development focuses on growing the attractiveness and competitiveness of places in a sustainable way. To this end, the Council considers it important that sufficient employment opportunities are created in Mountmellick to cater for the projected population of the town and also to reduce the rate of unemployment.

In the higher order plans of the National Spatial Strategy, Midland Regional Planning Guidelines and Laois County Development Plan, to which this Local Area Plan must align and be consistent with, there is a major emphasis on the importance of economic development and employment generation. For example, a key objective of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines is to:

“support employment generation, including up-skilling and training, to create more self sustaining development for the population currently residing in the area, providing an alternative to commuting to the GDA for employment”.

This emphasis follows through to the policies and objectives of the Local Area Plan.

This chapter sets out how the Council will proactively encourage the ongoing and long-term economic development of Mountmellick in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. Economic development is a key concern of the Council because industrial, commercial and retail development and job creation are fundamental to maintaining and building a sustainable communities and a strong economic base in Mountmellick and its hinterland. A key challenge for the Council is to tackle unemployment by supporting local entrepreneurship as well as attracting new foreign direct investment and small to medium sized enterprises to the town.

The Council considers that the attraction of industrial and service employment is important for the future prosperity and development of Mountmellick. While land is currently used for industrial purposes at Bay Road and Acragar, the Council has zoned additional land to the south of the town in Derryguile and Debbicot to facilitate the expansion of the industry and to promote Mountmellick as a location for industry.

According to census 2006, construction, manufacturing and retailing are the pre-eminent sources of employment in the town accounting for almost 50% of the overall total. Detailed data for sectoral employment in census year 2011 is not yet available from CSO.

The on-going recessionary conditions [both internally and externally] have exerted major pressure on employment levels in Mountmellick. The construction sector has borne the brunt of the downturn with males in the younger age-cohorts being particularly badly affected. It is estimated by the CSO that nationally more than 60% of the year-on-year fall in male employment is attributable to this sector. On a pro-rata basis the impact in Mountmellick is actually worse. Also, the town's traditional industries such as milling, bacon curing and textiles are either static, in decline or have closed altogether.

As a consequence, the numbers of those from Mountmellick on the live register have **risen** dramatically since December 2007, as indicated in Table 7. *[There is no social welfare office in Mountmellick. The closest such office is in Portlaoise. While there are no precise catchment areas for social welfare offices, the Portlaoise office caters for a large part of the centre of the county including Mountmellick].*

Table 7 : Persons on Live Register in Portlaoise Social Welfare Office: Dec. 2007-Dec. 2011					
Station	Dec. 07	Dec. 08	Dec. 09	Dec. 10	Dec. 11
Portlaoise	1,233	2,548	3,461	4,025	4,037

Source: Central Statistics Office.

CSO 2006 data indicates that **20%** [comprising sub-groups Employers and Managers, Higher Professional, Lower Professional] of the population of Mountmellick aged 15+ are in the most favourable socio-economic group in terms of income earning potential whereas **32%** are in the broad manual category [comprising sub-groups Manual Skilled, Semi-Skilled, Unskilled] which is the most **vulnerable** during a recession.

Dependency

The **dependency ratio** is an age-population ratio of those typically not in the labour force (*the dependent part*) and those typically in the labour force (*the productive part*). It is used to measure the pressure on productive population. The dependent part usually includes those under the age of 15 and over the age of 64. The productive part makes up the population in between, ages 15 – 64. It is normally expressed as a percentage.

According to Census 2006, Mountmellick has a very high dependency rate of **56%** compared to a county dependency rate of 49% and a provincial dependency rate of 44%.

Present indications are that dependency rates will increase in the short to medium term at least with knock-on repercussions for provision of health care, education and housing.

Mountmellick Development Association

Mountmellick Development Association is the pre-eminent local development group associated with job creation and social capital development. Laois County Council recognises this pivotal role and will continue to engage with the Association in the future development of the town.

Strengths

Notwithstanding these difficulties, Mountmellick has a number of valuable economic strengths which the Council recognises and will seek to build on in the lifetime of the Local Area Plan. These include:

- Its location on National Secondary Route N80. This is a key National and Regional artery affording direct access to the remainder of the Midland Region and the South East Region [including the key trading ports of Rosslare and Belview]. In addition, the M7 and M8 Motorway interchange at Portlaoise from which there are excellent links to the GDA, Dublin Port, Dublin Airport, the South-West and Mid-West Regions, is only 12 kms distant,
- The availability of relatively cheap [compared to other locations in the region], zoned and serviced industrial and commercial land and existing floorspace; for example in the Bay Road and M.D. A. Enterprise Parks,
- A strong industrial and entrepreneurial tradition dating back to the Quaker settlement of the seventeenth century,
- Active involvement of local business and community groups including Mountmellick Development Association
- Proximity to power generating sites in the Midlands and the National Grid,
- Well established social infrastructure including leisure facilities, schools,
- Untapped tourism potential having regard to its proximity to the River Barrow and Sliabh Bloom Mountains.

Role of County Council

Laois County Council will ensure that this Local Area Plan will have a positive role to play in ensuring that its planning policies promote a wide range of enterprise and employment opportunities and that adequate land and infrastructure services are in place to attract investment so that ultimately the town will fulfill its role as a *Service Town* as envisaged under the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017.

“Mountmellick must **prioritise** its economic, social and community infrastructure base so as to support its own increased population and promote a balanced spatial structure to ensure its continued vitality and development”. (MRPGs)

A number of key land use factors influence the future economic potential of Mountmellick and are considered in the preparation of this Plan. They include availability of zoned land, availability of infrastructure and quality of life considerations.

Through its landuse zoning in the Local Area Plan, the Council will seek to protect existing enterprises and provide for their expansion as well as providing sufficient land for new enterprise across a range of sectors. The Council is also concerned with maintaining and providing for additional hard infrastructure (roads, water supply, wastewater treatment, electricity grid, gas pipeline network, broadband network, incubator centres etc) and soft infrastructure (attractive

town centres, good quality of life, childcare provision, mentoring of new enterprises). These actions will serve to sustain and attract industry and enterprise to the town.

In addition, the Council through its Community and Enterprise and Economic Development Sections, will provide a co-ordinating role between various businesses and community organisations and be available to provide information and mentoring for potential investors. It will also work and interact with other key agencies including IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, County Enterprise Boards and Laois Leader to foster the necessary environment for job creation in Mountmellick.

The modern economy is characterised by rapid change with new and sometimes unexpected areas of commercial opportunity emerging, while some traditional enterprises lose their competitive advantage. While other sectors may offer opportunities during the lifetime of this Plan, the Council has identified the following sectors as having economic potential in Mountmellick.

- Foreign Direct Investment,
-
- Logistics, freight, warehousing,
-
- Tourism, angling and water based leisure activities on the River Barrow,
-
- Event Planning to expand on the Quaker settlement connection,
-
- Green economy,
-
- Land-based, land associated and home-based economic activities in adjoining rural areas, in particular agri-food industry
-
- Comparison retail sector and town centre market
-
- Office decentralisation



Plate 1: Modern industrial and commercial/retail units in Mountmellick

Employment

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| O/EE 01 | Facilitate and promote the setting up of small and medium sized enterprises and the expansion of existing businesses, |
| O/EE 02 | Co-operate with state and semi state employment agencies and local organizations to promote employment opportunities in Mountmellick, |
| O/EE 03 | Promote the local tourism industry in the area, |
| O/EE 04 | Ensure that sufficient and suitable land is zoned for employment generating uses through the development plan and local area plans as appropriate. Such land will, normally, be protected from inappropriate development that would prejudice its long term development for employment uses, |
| O/EE 05 | Ensure the provision of water, wastewater treatment and waste management facilities to accommodate future economic growth and to reserve capacity in water services infrastructure for employment generating uses, |
| O/EE 06 | Support start up businesses and small scale industrial enterprises, particularly those that have a creative and innovative dimension, |
| O/EE 07 | Facilitate the development of tourism infrastructure, |
| O/EE 08 | Work with adjoining local authorities and tourism bodies to develop the tourism potential of the region, |
| O/EE 09 | Continue to facilitate the upgrade of broadband services throughout the study area, |
| O/EE 10 | Support the preparation of a sustainable Holistic Management Plan for the future use of the Bord na Mona industrial peatlands in the vicinity of the town. |

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| EE01 | Actively encourage the implementation of Government and EU funded Local Development Programmes and Initiatives focused on the creation of job opportunities and the establishment of training and retraining programmes, |
| EE02 | Ensure that sufficient serviced land is available to cater for the employment needs of Mountmellick and its surrounding areas, |
| EE03 | Cooperate with Mountmellick Development Association in the further development of their enterprise centre and lands at Irishtown, |
| EE04 | Cooperate with the ADM Company in their Integrated Employment Plan for the Town, |

EE05	Develop land for industry at Derryguile and Debbicot to support existing industry at Bay Road and Acragar,
EE06	Grant permission for industrial projects subject to normal environmental considerations,
EE07	Promote the growth of the service employment in Mountmellick,
EE08	Capitalise on the location of Mountmellick in the Midlands region for industrial development particularly in the distributive sectors,
EE09	Support and facilitate the economic development of Mountmellick across a range of sectors while acknowledging in particular the growing importance of the knowledge economy and alternative energy sector in delivering sustainable employment opportunities,
EE10	Work in conjunction with third level institutions in neighbouring centres including NUI Maynooth and Athlone and Carlow AIT's in the creation and fostering of enterprise and research and development,
EE11	Co-operate with local and national development agencies and to engage with existing and future large scale employers in order to maximise job opportunities in the town and reduce the level of commuting,
EE12	Support and expand start-up enterprises such as those already established in Mountmellick Development Association (MDA) Enterprise Centre,
EE13	Maximise the locational advantages of Mountmellick by promoting the Town as a key regional logistics and freight distribution centre in association with the designated National Inland Port at Togher, Portlaoise,
EE14	Ensure that sufficient serviced land is available for employment generation,
EE15	Facilitate the development of agriculture, horticultural and rural related enterprises in the rural environs of the town,
EE16	Facilitate home-working and innovative forms of working which reduce the need to travel but are subordinate to the main residential use of the dwelling and do not result in negative amenity to the area,
EE17	Where appropriate, to comply with the SEVESO II Directive and to reduce the risk and limit the consequences of major industrial accidents by taking into account the advice of the Health and Safety Authority and the Fire Authority where proposals for new developments are considered,
EE18	Support and work with Bord na Mona and other relevant agencies in the sustainable diversification of former industrial peatlands in the vicinity of Mountmellick to uses such as green energy, eco tourism, water storage, biodiversity and habitat restoration, green infrastructure.

Tourism

Mountmellick is the nearest town to the Slieve Bloom Mountains for tourists travelling from the East and South of the Country. These mountains are the largest natural resource in the Midlands, and have been designated a National Environment Park.

While detailed plans and strategies for tourism are not part of this Plans mandate, there are actions which the Council can take to ensure that Mountmellick benefits from the national and regional growth in the industry.

Specific actions include:

- Conserve and protect the towns natural and built heritage,
- Put amenity developments in place,
- Co-operate and liaise with organizations involved in tourist service provision,
- Ensure that adequate information is available to potential visitors,
- Co-ordinate the physical development of the town to maximize its tourism potential.

Tourism

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:	
O/EE 11	Develop a series of local walks around Mountmellick, focusing on features of historic, architectural, scientific and cultural interest,
O/EE 12	Preserve and protect the towns’ architectural heritage and streetscapes as a basis for the expansion of tourism,
O/EE 13	Provide new street name signage and ornamental sign posting to appropriate heritage design,
O/EE 14	Co-operate with Mountmellick Tidy Towns Committee and other community organisations to enhance the town’s appearance.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:	
EE19	Protect the distinctive Georgian and Quaker character of the town in order to provide a recognised basis for the development of tourism,
EE20	Co-operate with Midlands- East Tourism, Laois Tourism and other bodies involved in tourism operation and planning, and where appropriate, to facilitate projects which will improve the amenities of the town,
EE21	Facilitate and encourage the provision of a range of accommodation and ancillary tourist services,
EE22	Promote Mountmellick as a tourist destination, especially for over night stopping tourists or as a base for visiting the Midlands,

EE23	Promote the cultural, historical, archaeological and architectural heritage of Mountmellick as tourism generating opportunities,
EE24	Maximise opportunities for the use of waterways including the Rivers Owenass and Barrow as tourism and recreational amenities. In this regard the Council will co-operate with Waterways Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service and community groups to develop the infrastructure, quality and amenity of these waterways,
EE25	Encourage walking and recreational facilities, where feasible and where development opportunities arise along waterways. In this regard land adjacent to river banks will be reserved, where possible, for linear parks for public access and where linear parks are designed and developed provision shall be made for walking and cycling routes,
EE26	Promote, protect, improve, encourage and facilitate the development of tourism as an important contributor to job creation in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area,
EE27	Work with key stake holders and agencies with the aim of increasing overseas and domestic visitor numbers.

Retail/Commercial/Town Centre



Plate 2: Mountmellick town centre from the east

O’Connell Square along with Parnell Street, Wolfe Tone Street and Sarsfield Street, comprise the traditional retailing centre of Mountmellick accommodating a diverse range of retail services mainly in the control of independent operators such as Shaws and Cost Cutters. There is evidence of considerable leakage of retail spend from the town to Tullamore and Portlaoise. A Super Valu convenience unit of 1,000 sq. ms floor area was opened on the site of a disused textile plant at the junction of Davitt Road and Connolly Street in 2009.

A Health Check assessment indicates that Mountmellick is trading averagely. It has a mix of convenience and comparison retailing, financial institutions and service providers. For the most part, retailing activity is concentrated in the town centre and edge of centre.

Mountmellick is identified as being in the third tier in the retail hierarchy as outlined in the County Retail Strategy. It is important that new retail development in the town conforms to Mountmellick’s

role in the retail hierarchy and its role as a **Service Town** as outlined in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines, so that it provides an appropriate level of comparison and convenient retail for its surrounding hinterland.

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) published “Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005”. The Guidelines focus on the maintenance of the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre. The Guidelines recommend that Planning Authorities adopt a **Sequential Approach** to the location of retail development in towns. In line with this recommendation, the Council will assess the size, availability, accessibility, and feasibility of developing both sites and premises, firstly within the town centre of Mountmellick and secondly on the edge of the town centre. It is considered that no further large-scale out of town retail developments are required within the lifetime of this Local Area Plan.

The retail sector is important as both a fundamental service for the whole community and as a major employer in Mountmellick and its environs. The retail planning guidelines (DOEHLG) require that retail strategies be prepared for Council functional areas. The strategies to be included in all future development plans are to comprehensively address the following matters:

- Confirm the retail hierarchy, the role of centres and the size of the main town centres
- Define the boundaries of the core shopping areas
- Identify the additional floor space requirements
- Prepare policies and action initiatives to encourage the improvement of town centres
- Identify the criteria for assessment of retail developments

It is the policy of the Council to have regard to the County Retail Strategy 2011-2017, and any subsequent revisions together with Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities in determining planning applications for retail development. The Council recognises, however that retail strategies by their very nature are indicative and should not be used as inflexible, prescriptive tools to prevent retail development, rather as a guide.

The Retail Strategy forms the basis on which the Planning Authority will formulate appropriate development plan objectives and policies for retail development in its area and will be used in the determination of applications for planning permission. In the Retail Strategy, Portlaoise was identified as the major Town Centre in terms of retail function.

The strategic policy framework that underpins the specific retail policies addresses the specific requirements and guidance of the Retail Planning Guidelines. It comprises of:

- County Retail Hierarchy
- Sequential Approach
- Core Retail Area

The Sequential Approach is incorporated in the strategic policy framework to guide the location of new retail development in this Plan. This approach recognises the importance of sustaining the retail sector including the vitality and viability of the Town.

Proposals for major retail schemes in Mountmellick are required to take due cognisance of this as follows:

- In the first instance, the priority will be to locate new retail development within the town centre;

- If town centre locations are not readily available within a reasonable and realistic timescale then edge of centre sites should be considered. In the Regional Planning Guidelines, these are defined as sites that are within 300-400 metres of the Core Retail Area;
- Only after the options for town centre and edge of centre are exhausted should out of centre locations and sites be considered.

Retail and Town Centre

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

O/EE 15	Prepare a masterplan for the town centre and its backlands in the lifetime of the plan,
O/EE 16	Consolidate the existing retail and commercial function of the town centre area,
O/EE 17	Encourage the opening up of the backlands to the North and South of Parnell Street and Sarsfield Street facing onto the Owenass River. Development in these areas will be subject to flood risk assessment, Appropriate Assessment [in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive] and justification tests,
O/EE 18	Continue tree planting around the town using native species where possible,
O/EE 19	Continue landscaping in the towns public spaces and squares using native species where possible,
O/EE 20	Preserve access points as indicated on the objectives maps,
O/EE 21	Preserve carriage arches as means of access to the rear of properties.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| EE28 | Guide retail development, in accordance with the Sequential Approach, to enable the vitality and viability of the Town Centre and neighbourhood centres to be sustained and strengthened, also encourage and enhance the role of Mountmellick as a retail and commercial centre serving a wide catchment area, |
| EE29 | Encourage consolidation of commercial development in the Town Centre area, |
| EE30 | Ensure that commercial development compliments the existing town centre in terms of design, siting and function and does not prejudice the heritage value and environmental character of the town, |
| EE31 | Ensure that all applications for large retail development will be examined in the context of the Laois Retail Strategy 2011-2017 and any subsequent revisions, and the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2000-2006, |
| EE32 | Ensure the use of upper floors in commercial premises for residential purposes will be encouraged, |
| EE33 | Enforce the overall objective of safeguarding the towns built heritage by encouraging environmental improvements in the town centre shopping area. |

The provision of convenient and safe pedestrian facilities through the town will be a priority (including disabled access) as will landscape developments, and the requirement of high standards of design and finish of commercial development.

Urban Renewal

Laois County Council has identified derelict sites in Mountmellick which are in need of redevelopment. The Council will encourage such redevelopment and will encourage well-designed new development, which utilises backlands close to the Town Centre.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| EE34 | Exercise Councils powers under the Derelict Sites Act 1990 as amended, |
| EE35 | Encourage the renewal of obsolete and derelict areas in preference to development on greenfield sites, |
| EE36 | Facilitate and promote sensitive redevelopment of underused and derelict sites in the Town Centre. |

Opportunity Sites

The principal opportunity site identified during the review of the current Mountmellick LAP is the former Maltings on the Portlaoise road [N80] approach to the town (site brief, including map below). This site is level, serviced and benefits from direct access onto The N80 National Secondary Route [within the minimum speed zone]. Permission for its redevelopment to an apartment complex was granted by Laois County Council but this permission has recently lapsed.

<p>Mountmellick Opportunity Site 1: Maltings, Irishtown, Portlaoise Road.</p> <p>Site Code: MOP1</p>	
	
	
<p>Proposed Zoning: Residential 2</p>	
<p>Site Area: 0.37 ha</p>	
<p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding location on the Portlaoise Road entrance to town with direct access onto National Secondary Route N80 and remainder of Midland Region, Rosslare and Belview ports in south-east and M7/M8 motorway network via Toghher Interchange [12kms distant]; 	

- Brownfield site, formerly used as a grain mill. Buildings have been partly cleared and site is currently vacant;
- Level, fully serviced site;
- Had valid permission [expired March 2012] for major redevelopment to residential useage incorporating 37 no. apartments over four storeys;
- Variety of uses in vicinity including residential and institutional [Saint Vincents Hospital];
- Outside of critical flood zones A and B;
- Suitable for a wide variety of residential, community and institutional uses;
- An opportunity exists to intensify development at this location to provide a key landmark or gateway building, to signify the approach and entrance to the town from the Portlaoise/Carlow N80 approach in order to create a sense of arrival and departure;
- Care should be taken that this building addresses the extensive street frontage available and be designed to an exceptional standard on all elevations. Development shall comprise of high quality design, fine grained active frontage blocks providing a strong built edge to the surrounding public thoroughfare. New buildings should be permanent, timeless and contemporary structures. Car parking should be provided to the rear of the building or within the structure itself.

Other opportunity sites include the site of the former public library at Irishtown and another pivotal site at Irishtown adjacent to the Maltings [on the other side of the N80 route].

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

EE37 Promote the development of opportunity sites in Mountmellick Town and the Maltings Site in particular, having regard to the above site brief.

Chapter 5: Housing & Social Infrastructure

Background

Mountmellick will require new housing to cater for continued population growth, new household formation and to replace existing and future unfit dwellings in the town. The Plan includes land zoned to meet the new housing need during the Plan period and to provide a choice of housing locations for both current and future residents. Financial constraints will determine the rate of public sector house building, whilst, in the private sector, the market dictates both the demand for and supply of new housing, including locational preferences.

It is the policy of the Council to implement the provisions of the Housing Strategy in accordance with the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. The strategy forms part of and shall be read in conjunction with this Plan. The Council will encourage the consolidation of the town through the redevelopment and/or replacement of existing unfit dwellings and the restoration of buildings where appropriate.

Small pockets of infill development and individual replacement housing units within the Town Centre will be encouraged, as will higher density development in locations where it will have minimal impact on the amenity of its surrounds. The provision of a range of housing forms, types and locations will ensure that the needs of persons seeking housing in the area can be met.

Aims

- to ensure that there is sufficient land available in appropriate locations for all possible new housing supply requirements related to population projections;
- to have clear policies regarding proposals to build new houses and to encourage the improvement of the housing stock;
- to seek an acceptable balance and mix in the provision of social and private housing in order to promote an appropriate social and demographic balance in the Plan area;
- to ensure that there is a stock of housing built or improved to modern standards, sufficient to accommodate every household;
- to encourage new developments to locate within the existing development boundary.

Housing Strategy

Laois County Council Housing Strategy 2011-2017 indicates that the maximum amount of zoned land that could be reserved for social and affordable housing is 12%.

Provision of Social Housing and Affordable Housing

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 identified a need to increase social housing output in order to meet rising demand. The increased output will be met by the Council in a number of ways through the following measures:

- Affordable housing/Joint Venture/Shared Ownership Schemes;
- Local Authority House Building Programme;
- Sale of Developed Sites Scheme;
- Voluntary Housing Sector and the Rental Subsidy Scheme;
- Capital Assistance Scheme;
- Disabled Grants Scheme;
- Essential Repairs and others Measures;

- Homeless Forum Initiative.

Programme for Local Authority Provision

The County Council rented housing stock in Mountmellick currently amounts to 143 units. There is a four-year multi-annual housing provision plan in place. Social housing is provided through the following measures:

- new build on existing County Council-owned land;
- purchase of second hand houses;
- turnkey schemes;
- infill schemes in existing estates;
- development of derelict sites;
- development of brownfield sites;
- development in conjunction with other housing agencies;
- acquisitions under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2011.

SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

Homeless Persons

Laois County Council will actively promote integrated social solutions, including accommodation provision, to relieve the problem of homelessness (as defined in the Housing Act 1988) and will promote the provisions of the Laois Housing Strategy to meet the needs of homeless persons in Mountmellick.

The Elderly

Laois County Council and voluntary agencies play an active role in the provision of appropriate housing accommodation for the elderly in the County. Many successful schemes are in place. The age structure of the population demands an increased provision to meet anticipated needs.

Greater emphasis is now placed on the provision of lifetime adaptable housing; the provision of housing units in centrally located areas with access to all amenities such as shops, medical facilities, churches, etc. Provision through sheltered housing schemes is also an encouraged option. The special needs of the elderly, such as security, medical care, and personal safety, amongst others, are fundamental to the adequate location and provision of accommodation for this group within society. A very successful elderly housing scheme was developed at Wolfe Tone Street in 2004.



Plate 3: Elderly housing scheme, Wolfe Tone Street [left], new housing in north suburbs [right].

People with Disabilities

The voluntary housing sector and other agencies are active in terms of identifying and meeting the needs of people with disabilities. Laois County Council is working in partnership with various, voluntary sector groups and associations, to facilitate this process. The housing needs of those on waiting lists and existing tenants with disabilities are generally, being met through the Disabled Persons Grants Scheme, which provides financial assistance for the adaptation of accommodation.

Laois County Council recognises the need to promote better awareness of people with disabilities. These principles are enshrined in the Declaration “The City and the Disabled” in Barcelona in March 1995 to which the Council is committed.

Accommodation for Travellers

Accommodation options considered by Laois County Council for members of the traveling community include group housing, standard local authority housing, residential caravan parks and rural housing. The Council has a policy of providing accommodation in local authority housing, particularly new estates, for travellers. Travelling families are allocated houses in accordance with the Scheme of Letting Priorities adopted by the Council in accordance with Section 11 of the Housing Act 1988 as amended. The Council has a policy of actively encouraging travellers to avail of the various social housing options and recognises the distinctive culture, lifestyle and requirements of the travelling community.

Ethnic Minority Groups

In recent years a more ethnic and culturally diverse population has developed in Mountmellick. Provision of service and community facilities should reflect the varying needs of these new communities.

Infill Housing

Where infill housing or higher density development is proposed it should reflect the existing character of the street and/or immediate area in terms of height, proportion and materials used. Generally, proposals will be required to maintain existing building lines, respect existing roof pitches, fenestration and other details. Proposals to increase height over neighboring properties in the Town Centre will be considered on their merits, but proposals elsewhere will not normally be permitted. Residential growth in Mountmellick will facilitate the improvement to its economic base of retail and commercial outlets as well as improving the viability of public services, social infrastructure and educational facilities which serve the Town and its extensive rural hinterland.

Balanced Communities—Providing for a Mix of House Types, Sizes and Tenure

It is an objective of Laois County Council to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes are provided in each residential development. House design and layout reflect the requirements of different categories of households, particularly those with special needs. An indication of house types required for social housing is available with the triennial “assessment of need” undertaken by the Housing Section of Laois County Council. The Council will ensure that the design types are integrated into the existing building style within the estate/area.

Housing and Estate Management

The Estate Management section of the Council facilitates the establishment of and support for resident associations. This involves pre tenancy courses, meetings, organising summer camps (affordable to children in the estates) and estate improvement grants.

Unfinished Estates

In dealing with unfinished estates, it is necessary to implement the DoECLG 2010 Guidance Manual entitled "*Managing and Resolving Housing Developments*". This includes maintaining a dedicated Unfinished Estates Team and an up-to-date Register of Unfinished Estates in each local authority area. It also recommends the use of available statutory powers as a means of resolving outstanding issues. In County Laois, an Unfinished Estates Team has been established and a Register of Unfinished Estates compiled, the Council is addressing the issues associated with unfinished estates on an ongoing basis.

Housing

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

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| O/HSI 01 | Ensure the implementation of the Housing Strategy 2011-2017 and integrate housing provided under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2007 into private development in a layout which prevents segregation and promotes good design and layout, |
| O/HSI 02 | Carry out the Councils responsibilities under the Housing Acts and provide Local Authority dwellings, affordable units, voluntary co-operative housing and private sites as the need arises and as finances permit, |
| O/HSI 03 | Promote high standard of architecture in the design of new housing developments and encourage a variety of house types and tenure in individual schemes together with a social mix in private and social housing developments, |
| O/HSI 04 | Actively promote the provision of community, educational, social and recreational facilities in parallel with future housing development, |
| O/HSI 05 | Encourage suitable infill housing developments on appropriate sites in the town, |
| O/HSI 06 | Facilitate the future development of lands in Mountmellick already identified for Local Authority housing, |
| O/HSI 07 | Ensure that all proposals for housing developments are assessed and comply with the Development Management Standards section of this Plan, |
| O/HSI 08 | Identify, acquire and provide suitable sites, accommodation and facilities for the housing and re-settlement of travelling families, |
| O/HSI 09 | Require that all planning applications for 10 units or more submit a schools impact report and prepare a master plan for the area in which the site is located. |

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

HSI 01	Implement the provisions of the Housing Strategy 2011-2017 in accordance with the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2012,
HSI 02	Promote the provision of social and affordable housing accommodation in accordance with the proposals as set out in the Housing Strategy 2011-2017,
HSI 03	Zone land in Mountmellick sufficient to meet house building requirements, both public and private, over the Plan period and in the future,
HSI 04	Facilitate the Housing Authority's programme for housing, including the provision of new housing, renovation/refurbishment of existing buildings and the provision of suitable accommodation and facilities for travelling families,
HSI 05	Ensure that housing proposals do not cause traffic or environmental problems or damage visual amenity,
HSI 06	Require that new residential accommodation meets the necessary standards of health, sanitation and design,
HSI 07	Encourage residential development within the Town's development envelope and to discourage ad hoc ribbon development on the outskirts of the Town,
HSI 08	Encourage increased densities at appropriate locations in the Town Centre, building on the existing Town structure and strengthening the vitality of the Town,
HSI 09	Ensure that development does not cause or contribute towards the sterilisation of land,
HSI 10	Promote estate management in all schemes in Mountmellick, in order to support the formation of sustainable communities,
HSI 11	Promote the development of "Site Resolution Plans" involving all stakeholders such as developers, financial institutions, receivers, bond companies, Health and Safety Authority and most importantly the residents of the estate.

Community

The rapid growth experienced by Mountmellick has led to an influx of new residents into the town. Opportunities for interaction between new residents and established members of the community can often be few with the result that social bonds and sense of community takes longer to develop. Building strong, inclusive communities is a key element in achieving sustainable development objectives. Sustainable communities require not only economic development, but also provision of and access to education, health and community support services, amenities and leisure services and a good quality built environment. Communities also require opportunities to meet, interact and form bonds, essential prerequisites to the development of a sense of place and belonging.

Social Inclusion and Social Capital

Local Authorities have a mandate to promote social inclusion through all aspects of their activities. Creating a more inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is one of the major challenges facing society nationally and locally. Laois County Council is committed to reducing levels of social exclusion by way of policies, which specifically respond to the need for:

- Equality of access to public and social services for all members of the community;
- Regeneration of disadvantaged urban and rural areas;
- Targeted policies to improve equality of access to infrastructure for specific groups in Society;
- Creation of opportunities for increased participation in policy making by marginalised groups in society;
- Co-coordinated provision of public services and facilities;
- Creation of local employment opportunities;
- The development of social and affordable housing, particularly opportunities for family members to remain in proximity to each other.

Community

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

HSI 12	Prioritise the reinforcement of social inclusion and the development of social capital in all facets of decision-making processes,
HSI 13	Work with other relevant organisations, through the County Development Board, to facilitate the provision of public and social services,
HSI 14	Promote the delivery of services by means of supporting IT kiosks and information points in libraries, schools and local shops/post offices,
HSI 15	Promote the development of integrated urban transport services to meet the needs of all sections of the community,
HSI 16	Develop and implement models of participatory planning, involving communities,
HSI 17	Develop more inclusive methods of consultation, in particular with marginalised and excluded groups,
HSI 18	Support and encourage the establishment of consultation structures, particularly those associated with the County Development Board, which enhance and enable communities to engage in policy making,
HSI 19	Facilitate opportunities for interaction between members of the community and for the community to participate in decision-making in order to promote social integration and cohesion,

HSI 20	Examine, in co-operation with relevant agencies, the possibility of maximising the use of existing educational facilities for community and non-school purposes,
HSI 21	Co-operate with the Department of Education, the Vocational Educational Committee and School Management Boards in the provision of school places and sites,
HSI 22	Ensure the provision of community, educational, cultural, recreational and amenity facilities in tandem with residential, commercial and other developments.

Education

Education and training are fundamental to achieving the full socio-economic potential of the study area. School facilities are pivotal to the well-being of a community. They play a valued role in developing a skilled workforce and educated population in the interests of not only maintaining but also expanding the economic and social vitality of Mountmellick.

Even allowing for the current economic downturn, CSO and Department of Education and Skills projections indicate that birth rates will remain relatively high for the foreseeable future at least, resulting in a growing percentage of those in the standard school-going age cohorts of 0-18. This in turn has implications for provision of childcare facilities and primary and secondary level schools infrastructure in the study area.

Currently, there are two primary schools, Scoil Phadraig Naofa BNS and Scoil Iosaif Naofa GNS and one post-primary school, Mountmellick Community School in the town. County Laois Vocational Education Committee provides a Youthreach Programme, Post Leaving Certificate courses and Adult Education in the Mountmellick Further Education Centre. It also provides an outreach centre for Adult Literacy. Because of the projected increase in the population in Mountmellick, the Council acknowledges that all three schools within the town shall require extra accommodation within the lifetime of the Plan. The Council will favour new developments in the educational sphere, most especially those, which serve to broaden the level of service provided to the community.

The highest and most prestigious education achievement category is “third level degree or higher”. Approximately 8% of those in Mountmellick whose full-time education has ceased had reached this category. This is four percentage points lower than for County Laois [12%] as a whole.

Education

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

O/HSI 10	Facilitate the development of educational facilities and additional specialist accommodation to meet the existing and projected needs of the population of Mountmellick in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science, County Laois Vocational Educational Committee and local school management boards and to improve the development of sports, recreational and cultural facilities for schools.
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It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

HSI 23	Liaise with the Department of Education and the County Laois Vocational Educational Committee to ensure the provision of additional school facilities and programmes for the youth of Mountmellick and surrounding areas,
HSI 24	Encourage schools to make recreational facilities available to the public after school opening hours,
HSI 25	Ensure adequate pedestrian access and safe routes to the school consistent with the 'Safe Routes to School' initiative,
HSI 26	Support the improvement of sports, recreation and cultural facilities for schools.

Childcare

National policy on childcare provision is to ultimately increase the number of childcare places available and improve the quality of childcare services in the community. The provision of childcare facilities is now one of the most important necessities for improving economic and social well-being. In addition the National Anti Poverty Strategy identifies access to and the provision of childcare facilities as a way of combating poverty and social exclusion. The Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities emphasise the role of planning in the promotion of increased childcare provision.

The Council recognises the importance of providing childcare facilities within existing and proposed local communities in line with the "*Childcare Facility Guidelines for Planning Authorities*" [DoEHLG, 2001). The regulation of such facilities is in accordance with the Childcare (Pre School Services) Regulations, 1996. The Council will encourage nursery provision, safe outdoor and indoor play areas, crèches and other facilities. In considering planning proposals the Council will support voluntary and other agencies in providing services especially those aimed at disadvantaged areas and minority groups.

Locations for Childcare Facilities

The Council recognises the following locations for childcare facilities; larger housing estates and new housing areas at a rate of one childcare facility with 20 places for every 75 dwelling units;

- New and existing residential areas, particularly, detached houses or substantial semi-detached properties with space for off street parking and /or suitable drop off and collection points for customers and also space for an outdoor play area;
- Light industrial zones/technology and business parks and other locations where there are significant numbers working;
- Neighbourhood and District Centres, where facilities are to be located within local mixed-use service centres;
- Locations adjacent to public transport corridors which can provide safe pull in or parking areas for customers and staff, promoting sustainable modes of transport;
- In the vicinity of schools allowing parents to make one trip in dropping off school-going children and children attending childcare facilities.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

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| HSI 27 | Encourage the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations, including residential areas, Town Centre and neighbourhood centres and in areas of employment. Such facilities will normally provide open space play areas, good accessibility and off street car parking and will be subject to the normal proper planning and development considerations; |
| HSI 28 | Continue to implement the Laois Childcare Strategy; |
| HSI 29 | Require the provision of appropriate purpose-built childcare facilities as an integral part of proposals for new residential development of more than seventy-five residential units. In applications for phased developments, proposals for crèches should be submitted as an integral part of the overall development. |

Health Care Facilities

There are a number of public, voluntary and private agencies responsible for the provision of healthcare facilities in the county. The Health Service Executive is the primary agency responsible for delivering health and personal social services. The main hospitals for the county are located in Portlaoise and Mountmellick (St Vincent's Hospital) and most institutions are expected to undergo some degree of development, change of focus and possibly redevelopment over this plan period.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

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| HSI 30 | Support and facilitate the improvement of public service infrastructure and facilities in the Town, in particular public hospital, health centres, nursing homes and local clinics, Garda Stations and installations; |
| HSI 31 | Facilitate the provision of healthcare facilities, and the provision of appropriate community based care facilities subject to proper planning considerations; |
| HSI 32 | Provide for the integration of community based healthcare facilities in both existing and new communities and to ensure that they are accessible to those with special needs such as the elderly and those with disabilities. |

Fire and Emergency Services

The emergency services include An Garda Síochána, the Ambulance Service, the Fire Service, the Civil Defence, etc. All these bodies have an important role to play and their functions should be aided where possible.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

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| HSI 33 | Provide a modern and effective fire and emergency service; |
| HSI 34 | Assist the emergency services in whatever way possible. |

Library Facilities

Mountmellick Library is a state-of-the-art facility located in the refurbished Court House in Wolfe Tonw Street. The library was developed by Laois County Council in 2009. The library building is a protected structure which was refurbished and extended to best-practice standards.

The library includes children, tennager, adult, large-print and foreign language books as well as audio books, computer games, cds, dvds, internet access points, learning resources and coffee-making facilities. In addition, the library includes a spacious and bright gallery space used to host different exhibitions each month.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

HSI 35	Expand library facilities over the period of the plan to cater for the increasing demand due to an expanding population.
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Sports and Recreation Facilities

Laois County Council recognises the importance of sporting, recreation and leisure activities to the quality of life. The Council will strive to safeguard existing indoor leisure, recreational and sports facilities, including those operated publicly and privately. Changes to other uses will be resisted and changes between recreational uses will be assessed having regard to the relative merits of alternative activities. Developers will be encouraged to provide new facilities for community use, especially in mixed-use scheme proposals. New proposals should be in suitable locations and be compatible with neighbouring development. Proposals will be subject to other policies of the Plan, particularly those relating to open space.

The Council will carefully examine any enlargement, extension or development of recreational and leisure establishments or places of entertainment and will control such schemes if it considers the amenity of local residents may be seriously and adversely affected.

Development of community facilities are closely linked with quality of life issues. Quality of life issues will be addressed by the realisation of Council plans and programmes with respect to the Arts, Heritage, Tourism, Sports/Recreational and Economic Development. Realisation of this objective will necessitate a close liaison and working relationship with the County Development Board and commitment to their Strategy and to the principle of Social Inclusion.

Open Space and Amenities

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

O/HSI 11	Undertake a special programme of landscaping in O Connell Square and develop it as a public urban space,
O/HSI 12	Improve approaches to the town,
O/HSI 13	Develop the area along the River Owenass as an amenity area and facilitate the provision of a walkway along its banks,
O/HSI 14	Provide a public park at Ballycullen Beg,
O/HSI 15	Develop playing field at Smith Fields.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

HSI 36	Promote the development of a hierarchy of quantitative and qualitative open space areas which will facilitate passive and active recreational pursuits in the town;
HSI 37	Encourage and facilitate the provision of a wide range of community and sporting facilities in the town;
HSI 38	Work with the various clubs, Laois Sports Partnership, private interests etc, in the promotion and development of sporting/recreational and leisure facilities for the town;
HSI 39	Produce an Open Space Strategy for Mountmellick during the lifetime of this Plan. The Open Space strategy will incorporate relevant green infrastructure and include biodiversity and flood risk considerations as considered appropriate;
HSI 40	Develop a series of local walks around Mountmellick, focusing on features of historic, architectural, scientific and cultural interest;
HSI 41	Provide landscaping and small-scale amenity works at various locations designed to generally upgrade environmental quality in the town. The Council will seek to co-operate with local organisations in achieving this objective;
HSI 42	Progressively underground all overhead wires and cables, in conjunction with the various companies/agencies where feasible and subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

Crime Prevention

Informed, positive planning, particularly when co-ordinated with other measures, can make a significant contribution to tackling crime. Sustainable communities are communities which succeed economically, socially and environmentally, and respect the needs of future generations. They are well-designed places where people feel safe and secure; where crime and disorder, or the fear of crime, doesn't undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

Designing out crime and designing in community safety should be central to the planning and delivery of new development. Planning out crime also makes sense financially. Once a development has been completed the main opportunity to incorporate crime prevention measures will have been lost. The costs involved in correcting or managing badly-designed development are much greater than getting it right in the first place.

Planning can contribute directly to crime prevention through the following tools:

- Development plan policies
- Supplementary planning guidance
- Pre-application discussions and negotiations
- Development management decision-making
- Planning conditions and planning obligations

There are seven attributes of sustainable communities that are particularly relevant to crime prevention. The attributes have emerged from in-depth research into crime prevention and urban design practice and theory. These are:-

- Access and movement: places with well-defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security;
- Structure: places that are structured so that different uses do not cause conflict;
- Surveillance: places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked;
- Ownership: places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community;
- Physical protection: places that include necessary, well-designed security features;
- Activity: places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times;
- Management and maintenance: places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

HSI 43 To ensure that development proposals adopt suitable designing out crime standards.

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

O/HSI 16 Co-operate with An Garda Síochána in roll-out of community policing and neighbourhood watch schemes.

Burial Grounds

The Mountmellick burial grounds are located on the south-eastern outskirts of the town. The Council has responsibility in the provision of burial grounds including as required, the acquisition of lands and the undertaking of any necessary works on these lands. The local area plan will ensure that adequate land is reserved to accommodate such a use in accordance with the future needs of the town.

Social, Community and Cultural Events

Annual social, community and cultural events, such as Saint Patricks Day parade take place in Mountmellick. The Council will continue to support such events in accordance with planning regulations and health and safety requirements. The locations for these events will take into account the needs of local residents including noise levels, traffic management and car parking arrangements, security, and liaison with Gardaí, health and safety issues and litter prevention.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

HSI 44 Ensure that all arts and cultural facilities in the ownership and management of the Council are accessible to the wider community and to promote the role of these facilities as focal points for the community;

HSI 45 Protect the cultural heritage of historical burial grounds within the town and to encourage their management and maintenance in accordance with good conservation principles;

HSI 46

Provide or assist in the provision where required of burial grounds and extensions to existing burial grounds at appropriate locations throughout the town.



Plate 4: Mountmellick Community School [left], Saint Pauls National School [right].



Plate 5: Mountmellick GAA Grounds [left], River Owenass walk-way [right].

Chapter 6: Transport, Parking & Flood Risk

Background

Mountmellick is located in the northwest of County Laois at the intersection of regional routes R423 [to Mountrath and Mountmellick], R422 [to Clonaslee and Emo] and the National Secondary Route N80. The N80 is a key county and midland regional artery connecting the town north-westwards to Tullamore [26 kms distant] and the remainder of the Midlands Region and south-eastwards to Portlaoise [10 kms distant], Carlow and onto the South-East Region. The N80 is designated as a National Transport Corridor in the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020. Significant improvements to the N80 route are envisaged under the terms of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007, Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGS) 2010 and the National Roads Authority's National Secondary Roads Needs Study (2010).

Ready access to the M7 and M8 motorway network is available via the Togher Interchange, Portlaoise. Mountmellick lacks a rail connection with Portlaoise being the nearest station. Bus Eireann operates commuter bus services through the town. It is also on the County Laois Town Link route service.

Congestion is a major issue for Mountmellick. Virtually all through traffic including significant numbers of HGV's using the N80 passes through the town centre. The location of the post-primary Mountmellick Community College on the main thoroughfare of the town exacerbates this problem. Plans for a much needed inner relief road [which would have diverted through traffic and just as importantly opened up significant town centre backland areas for development] were refused by An Bord Pleanala in 2004.

Apart from the site of the recently opened retail outlet east of the town centre [on the site of the former textile plant], there are limited off-street public parking facilities.

In addition, each of the road schemes prioritised by the Council over the lifetime of the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017 has given ample consideration to further development of cycling facilities where appropriate. It is envisaged that further expansion of cycling infrastructure will be funded through the Council's development contribution scheme.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

TP 1	Implement road proposals, which will contribute to reducing the volume of extraneous through traffic in the town centre, including the provision of an Inner Relief Road. A future by pass of the town will be assessed as part of a national transport objective to upgrade the N80 National Secondary Route,
TP 2	Ensure adequate access points are reserved and provided to open up areas [including backland areas] for development purposes,
TP 3	Co-operate with relevant national and regional bodies and agencies to promote and facilitate the implementation of a sustainable transportation strategy for Mountmellick in accordance with the provisions of Transport 21 (2006-2015) and the Department of Transport's "Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020",

TP 4	Promote land-use planning measures which aim for transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the use of public transport throughout the town,
TP 5	To promote the integration of the needs of the car-user with the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users as far as possible in order to make the town a more pleasant and efficient place in which to live and work;
TP 6	Preserve free from development, proposed public transport and road realignment /improvement lines and associated corridors where such development would prejudice the implementation of County Council or public transport providers' plans (e.g. Iarnrod Eireann),
TP 7	Bring forward remedial parking measures following public consultation with all stakeholders, e.g. Town Council, elected representatives, traders and the general public, during the lifetime of the plan,
TP 8	To provide, extend, maintain and improve existing street lighting on the public road /footpath network throughout Mountmellick in accordance with best practice,
TP 9	Seek the provision and extension of comprehensive footpath links where deficits exist and to promote permeability and connectivity throughout the town,
TP 10	Utilise the provisions of Sections 48(2)(c) and 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended to generate financial contributions towards the capital costs of providing strategic and local transport infrastructure and facilities, and public infrastructural services and projects,
TP 11	Ensure provision of adequate parking facilities and set down areas [in terms of amount, location and finish] throughout the town including the town centre and in the vicinity of schools,
TP 12	Where a development is facilitated by public car parking accommodation which has been or will be provided, a contribution towards the cost of providing such parking accommodation shall be required, as provided by the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts 2000-2011. This charge will be related to the type of development proposed and the cost of the provision of the car park,
TP 13	Apply car-parking requirement standards to all new developments in the town in accordance with the development management standards in Section 10. It will also be policy to allow the relaxation of same where a proposed development warrants this relaxation and it is in the best overall interests of the area concerned,
TP 14	Facilitate and encourage cycling as a more convenient, popular and safe method of transport. The existing cycle network shall be extended throughout the town linking population, commercial, community facilities and transport nodes,
TP 15	Require the provision of safe bicycle parking facilities where planning permission is being granted for apartment blocks, and commercial and industrial developments,

TP 16	To work with all relevant public transport providers including Bus Eireann and Iarnrod Eireann to improve and expand public transport facilities and services in Mountmellick and to link such facilities with the town centre and other nearby settlements,
TP 17	To support the improvement of public transport services generally by reserving land in suitable locations for infrastructural and other requirements of the public transport sector eg bus shelters [where such needs have been identified],
TP 18	To ensure where possible, that all public transport is accessible to the disabled.

The current level of traffic congestion in the town is a serious obstacle to the future development of the town. The increased levels of traffic create a bottleneck effect on the N80 National Secondary Route and are causing severe traffic congestion on the Main Street. The N80 is classified as a National Transport Corridor and the construction of an Inner Relief Road is essential for future economic, industrial, commercial, cultural and social development of Mountmellick and Laois as a whole.

The Council will endeavour to address the issue of parking provision in the town centre in the lifetime of this plan. In the interests of the long-term development of the town, the possibility of providing further car parks close to the town centre will be examined.

Improvements to traffic management and operations in the Town will open up opportunities for future environmental improvements, by both public and private agencies, for better footpaths, landscaping, pedestrian and cycle priority areas etc.

Traffic and Parking

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:	
O/TP 01	Examine and facilitate a route for a bypass to the east and west of the town in the context of the N80, route options are indicated on the Objectives Map,
O/TP 02	Reserve access points to backlands fronting onto the Owenass River south of Parnell Street and Sarsfield Street and north of Parnell Street,
O/TP 03	Provide parking in the area north of Patrick Street,
O/TP 04	Secure and facilitate the provision of an Inner Relief Road,
O/TP 05	Enforce the parking bye-laws by the introduction of pay-and-display parking and the appointment of a traffic warden,
O/TP 06	Examine the feasibility of providing a coach halt area to the front of the CYMS building on Sarsfield Street,
O/TP 07	Provide more public disabled parking spaces throughout the town centre,
O/TP 08	Provide a pedestrian bridge along the River Owenass in Smiths Field,

O/TP 09	Accommodate access to the backland area in the form of a temporary solution in lieu of access from the Inner Relief Road. Development of the backland area will not therefore be hindered by delay and uncertainty associated with the implementation of the Inner Relief Road,
O/TP 10	Facilitate safe pedestrian movement by providing, improving and upgrading footpaths as required and facilitate the mobility of mobility impaired persons throughout the town,
O/TP 11	Provide adequate car parking in the town commensurate with new developments, at locations that are in proximity to the Town Centre,
O/TP 12	Improve public lighting, where necessary,
O/TP 13	To implement traffic calming measures and management where necessary in the town centre and to provide additional pedestrian crossings also where necessary,
O/TP 14	To investigate, facilitate and implement possible measures to reduce traffic congestion associated with schools in the area,
O/TP 15	To investigate and develop where possible a series of cycle lanes throughout the town.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

TP 19	Implement road proposals, which will contribute to reducing the volume of extraneous through traffic in the town centre, including the provision of an Inner Relief Road. A future by-pass of the town will be assessed as part of a national transport objective to upgrade the N80 National Secondary Route,
TP 20	Promote the integration of the needs of the car-user with the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users as far as possible in order to make the town a more pleasant and efficient place in which to live and work,
TP 21	Bring forward remedial parking measures following public consultation with all stakeholders, e.g. Town Council, elected representatives, traders and the general public, during the lifetime of the Plan,
TP 22	Require a contribution, as provided for in the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006, toward the cost of providing car parking facilities, in circumstances where public car parking has been or will be provided and such parking facilitates the proposed development. The amount of contribution sought will relate to the type of development proposed and the cost of public car parking provided/proposed,
TP 23	Apply car-parking requirement standards to all new developments in the town as set out in Chapter 11. It will also be policy to allow the relaxation of same where a proposed development warrants relaxation and is in the best interests of the area concerned,

TP 24	Ensure there is adequate provision for safe and convenient coach-set down in or near the Town Centre,
TP 25	Require the provision of safe bicycle parking facilities where planning permission is being granted for apartment blocks, shopping centers, offices etc,
TP 26	Continue the programme of improvement of footpaths throughout the town and to extend the existing network of footpaths,
TP 27	Ensure that the study corridor of road projects, the definitive routes of which are not yet finalized, are reserved free of development and ensure that any plan or project associated with transportation [roads, rail or other forms] which has the potential to significantly affect a Natura 2000 site is appropriately assessed in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats directive in order to avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the site,
TP 28	Safeguard the strategic role of national roads including associated junctions,
TP 29	Avoid the creation of additional access points from new development or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses to national roads to which speed limits greater than 60kph apply. This prohibition will not necessarily apply to developments of national and regional strategic importance in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines, which by their nature are most appropriately located outside urban areas, where the locations concerned have specific characteristics that make them particularly suitable for the developments proposed, exceptions to this policy would only be brought forward in a plan led manner, as indicated in the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines {DoECLG, 2012} and be with the agreement of the National Roads Authority.

FLOOD RISK

Background

Flooding is a natural process that can happen at any time in a wide variety of locations. Flooding has significant impacts on human activities; it can threaten people's lives, their property and the environment. Assets at risk can include housing, transport and public service infrastructure, and commercial, industrial and agricultural enterprises. The health, social, economic and environmental impacts of flooding can be significant and have a wide community impact.

The frequency, pattern and severity of flooding are expected to increase as a result of climate change. Development can also exacerbate the problems of flooding by accelerating and increasing surface water run-off, altering watercourses and removing floodplain storage.



Plate 6: River Barrow flood scenes

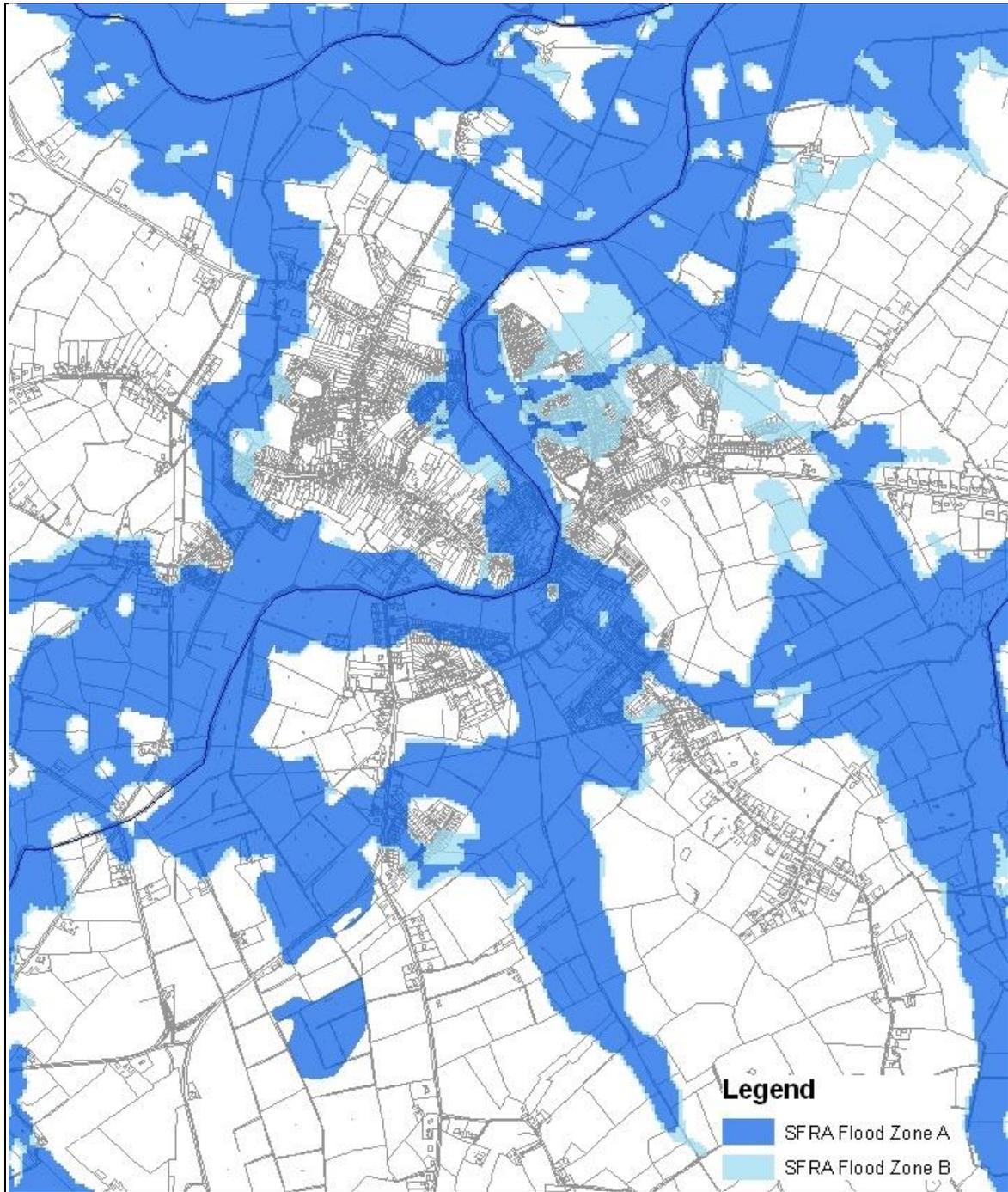
Laois County Council and Mountmellick Town Council recognise that flooding, or the risk of flooding, constrains development in key areas of Mountmellick including the **town centre, Bay Road, Irishtown as well as outlying areas such as Borness, Barrow Bay, Derrycloney and Owenass.** The Councils will strive to ensure that proper flood risk identification, assessment and management avoidance are integrated with the planning system to safeguard and provide for the future sustainable development of the town. The Local Authorities of Laois, Kildare & Offaly, acting through the joint committee known as the **Barrow Drainage Board** are responsible for maintaining the Barrow and its tributaries from its source in the Sliabh Bloom mountains to the Horse Bridge in Athy. The Barrow Drainage Board was established under the Barrow Drainage Acts 1927 and 1933.

There is a history of flooding of the Rivers Barrow and Owenass in Mountmellick. **Significant** flood events have occurred at regular intervals including in **1924, 1931, 1949, 1965, 1968, 1990, 1995 and 2008.** Flood hazard map[s] for the Mountmellick area, prepared as part of the Laois County Development Plan, indicate that there is considerable flood risk within the town and environs.

The OPW has three hydrometric stations in the Plan area as follows:

Station No	Station Reference	River	Catchment	Organisation
14003	Borness	Barrow	Barrow	OPW
14008	Kilmainham	Barrow	Barrow	OPW
14054	Derrycloney	Owenass	Barrow	LAO

Map 3: Flood Potential Map for Mountmellick Local Area Plan area



It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

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| FRO 1 | Implement, subject to availability of resources, the key recommendations of the Flood Risk Assessment of the Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2012-2018, |
| FRO 2 | Continue to undertake works under the Arterial Drainage Programme, as prioritised and as may be amended over the period of this Plan, |
| FRO 3 | Liaise with adjoining Local Authorities, all relevant departments and agencies in the alleviation of flood risk in the study area. |

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

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| FRP 1 | Support the carrying out of Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessments and Management Plans (CFRAMP) for the Barrow catchment as it relates to County Laois and ensure that the carrying out of works recommended by CFRAMP are subject to Appropriate Assessment where works have potential to impact negatively on Natura 2000 sites, |
| FRP 2 | Prioritise plans for flood defence works in Mountmellick as indicated in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in order to mitigate against potential flood risk, |
| FRP 3 | Protect water sinks because of their flood management function, as well as their biodiversity and amenity value and encourage the restoration or creation of water sinks as flood defence mechanisms, where appropriate, |
| FRP 4 | Ensure the use of sustainable urban drainage systems for new developments in accordance with the Council's drainage hierarchy, |
| FRP 5 | Adopt a precautionary approach to flood risk in its development management decisions, |
| FRP 6 | Ensure protection of Natura 2000 sites supporting rivers and streams by avoiding development on floodplains and ensure flood risk assessment policies, plans or projects are compliant with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and avoid or mitigate negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites, |
| FRP 7 | Ensure that the DoEHLG document " <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management -Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> " (2009) is fully implemented in carrying out functions during the period of this Plan, |
| FRP 8 | Seek to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, |
| FRP 9 | Ensure new development does not increase flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface water run-off, |
| FRP 10 | Ensure effective management of residual risks for development permitted on floodplains, |
| FRP 11 | Have regard to the recommendations of the Barrow Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study and to ensure that any development adjacent to these watercourses or their tributaries take cognisance of these reports/studies, |

FRP 12	Ensure that the Justification Test for Development Management is applied to proposals for development in areas at a high or moderate risk of flooding where the development being proposed is vulnerable to flooding and would generally be inappropriate as set out in Table 3.2 of the <i>“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Planning Authorities”</i> (DoEHLG, 2009),
FRP 13	Seek to ensure that development will not interfere with or interrupt existing surface water drainage systems,
FRP 14	Ensure that development adjacent to watercourses is set back from the edge of the watercourse to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance,
FRP 15	Ensure that the reasonable requirements of Inland Fisheries Ireland are adhered to in the construction of flood alleviation measures including walls, embankments and levees in Mountmellick,
FRP 16	Ensure that all new developments are designed and constructed to meet minimum flood design standards,
FRP 17	Comply with (i) the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945 and in particular section 50 which sets out the requirements on all bodies to gain permission from the Office of Public Works for culverting water courses and bridges across watercourses and section 47 of the Act which states that any person planning to erect or alter a weir must first get consent from the Commissioners or all the affected landowners (ESB is exempt from this requirement) and (ii) section 9 of the Arterial Drainage (Amendment) Act 1995 which relates to modification or relocation of watercourse, embankment or other works,
FRP 18	Recognise the important role of bogland and other wetland areas in flooding patterns. Development in these areas shall therefore be subject of a Flood Risk Assessment in accordance with <i>“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management -Guidelines for Planning Authorities”</i> [DoEHLG, 2009),
FRP 19	Liaise with the Barrow Drainage Board in the exercise of its functions for the alleviation of flood risk in the study area,
FRP 20	Ensure protection of Natura 2000 sites supporting rivers and streams by avoiding development on flood plains and ensure flood risk assessment policies, plans or projects are compliant with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and avoid or mitigate negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

The following is a core aim of the Mountmellick LAP 2012-2018 in relation to flood risk:

“To minimise the level of flood risk to people, business, infrastructure and the environment, through the identification and management of existing, and particularly potential future, flood risks. Flood risk will be incorporated in an integrated, pro active and transparent manner in line with evolving best practice into decision making processes for future development and use of land in the County”.

The Council has adopted policies for a more rigorous assessment of flood risk having regard to the EU Floods Directive and the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009) issued by the DoEHLG. The Council has identified floodplains which merit preservation and will safeguard

these areas from inappropriate development. In making its zoning decisions and planning application decisions, the Council will rely on the best available flood-risk data and will be mindful of the unpredictable nature of climate change.

The Council will protect wetlands (bogs and fens) from drainage works where planning permission is required. The Council will assess the surface water drainage implications of proposed new developments in urban and suburban areas.

Measures such as the installation of interceptors or bunding of domestic oil tanks should be provided to minimize contamination. Applicants must provide design specifications, calculations and rationale for proposed drainage systems in accordance with the Council's Storm Water Management Policy 2007 or as amended. Storm water discharge rates from any new residential or commercial development should not exceed that of a pre-development green or brownfield site.

Chapter 7: Physical Infrastructure

Background

The provision of efficient and effective infrastructure to service Mountmellick Town is essential to its environmental sustainability and economic development. Transport infrastructure objectives and policies are set out in Chapter 6. This section deals with physical infrastructure associated with the supply of drinking water, waste-water treatment, surface water drainage, waste management, energy supply and broadband and telecommunications.

Water Supply and Foul Drainage

Rapid economic progress and population expansion in recent years have placed unprecedented pressure on key infrastructure components in Mountmellick. A major challenge for the local authority is to ensure that infrastructural development keeps pace with economic growth. The provision of adequate water and waste-water infrastructure is fundamental to economic growth and to meeting the particular requirements of industrial, residential, agricultural and commercial developments, all within the context of safeguarding the environment.

For Mountmellick to develop sustainably it is vital that there is sufficient water supply and wastewater treatment capacity in place to cope with current and future socio-economic demand.

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

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| O/ INF01 | Upgrade drinking water and waste water treatment systems, where necessary subject to finance being available, |
| O/ INF02 | Improve the wastewater network in those areas of the town where deficiencies exist at present, |
| O/ INF03 | Preserve the capacity of the wastewater network for lands zoned in this Plan, |
| O/ INF04 | Ensure the development of separate networks for both foul and surface water, |
| O/ INF05 | Facilitate the changeover from septic tanks to mains connections in areas such as Garoon, Pond Lane and Manor Lane, etc subject to funding being available, |
| O/ INF06 | Preserve free from development, the wayleaves of all public sewer and water mains, |
| O/ INF07 | Improve the quality of surface watercourses in Mountmellick Town, |
| O/ INF08 | Refurbishment of the existing sewers in the sewerage network, |
| O/ INF09 | Upgrade the Sewerage Treatment Works to cater for the treatment of wastewater in Mountmellick, |
| O/ INF10 | Carry out improvements as outlined in the Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012 (WSIP) and subsequent WSIPs as resources allow, |
| O/ INF11 | To improve leak detection and resolve leakage, where possible, in the water supply network. |

Wastewater Treatment

The Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) serving Mountmellick is owned and operated by Laois County Council. It provides secondary treatment in the form of an activated sludge plant. The final effluent discharges into the Owenass River to the east of the WWTP.

The WWTP has been operating since the 1970s with a storm tank and additional aeration capacity recently being provided as part of the Phase I sewerage scheme. The existing secondary treatment system now needs to be overhauled. In addition, tertiary treatment facilities are required. Phase II of the capacity upgrade will increase its capacity to 8,000 population equivalent in order to cope with these immediate needs and ensure the continued protection of the Owenass River.

In future years, as development takes place in Mountmellick, the existing secondary treatment system will not be able to cope with an increase in influent flows. Thus additional capacity is required to ensure the water quality and ecological interests of the Owenass River are adequately protected. Phase III of the capacity upgrade will increase capacity to 18,000 population equivalent to cope with the future development of Mountmellick Town.

If this increased capacity is not provided, then the development of Mountmellick Town will be constrained in future years.

Sewerage Network

There are three main pumping stations in Mountmellick serving the network, each of which has an emergency storm overflow discharging to the Owenass River – Connolly Street and Irishtown which in turn flow into Emmett Terrace. There is also a small pumping station on a housing estate to the north of the town which feeds directly to the WWTP via a dedicated rising main. As part of the wider Mountmellick Sewerage Scheme Phase 2, the three main pumping stations are due to be upgraded.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

INF01	Provide a reliable system for the safe and adequate disposal of wastewater in a manner which is environmentally sustainable and which is within the resources of the Council,
INF02	Provide the necessary drainage facilities to serve the needs of all development within the Town and to prevent pollution,
INF03	Ensure that sufficient capacity exists to cater for existing consumers, the needs of the projected population increase, and facilitate future industrial and commercial development,
INF04	Encourage only as much development, both in terms of quantity and type of development as can be provided for, based on the utility services available or the period within which they will be provided.

Water Supply

The Council recognises the importance of an adequate water supply and drainage system for development in Mountmellick. This supply is nearing capacity. It is an objective of the Council, during the period of this plan to enhance the service with the addition of a new Drinking Water Scheme. This will ensure an adequate water supply for development in Mountmellick for the period of the Plan.

Mountmellick is a significant part of the capital project 'Portlaoise/Mountmellick Water Supply Improvement Scheme' which is currently on the DoECLG's "Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012" and is listed under "Schemes at Planning".

The scheme involves the construction of new water distribution mains in Mountmellick, ten new source wells located in three new wellfields (in Eyne, Killeen and Coolbanagher) and an expansion of the existing Water Treatment Plant at Kilminchey.

The scheme is being designed to cater for the water supply demand projected for the next 20 years. This would see a doubling of the water supply capacity for Mountmellick. An advance contract has already seen the commissioning of the first new well in the Eyne wellfield. This was completed in 2008 and now supplies directly to the Derryguile reservoir for supply to Mountmellick (complimenting the existing supply from the Catholes Treatment Plant).

Production well-drilling and pumping tests (for the quantity and quality of water) have been completed on all of the remaining nine new wells in the three proposed wellfields. A second well at Eyne was commissioned in April 2011. A new section of watermain (approx. 1 kms. long) was laid in 2011 (under "Small Schemes" funding) to replace the Derryguile trunk main into Mountmellick, thereby increasing the available mains pressure in Mountmellick.

Water Quality

A number of surface water bodies are protected by way of SAC designation. Sensitive aquifers which form part of the groundwater network also require protection and careful management. Various aquifers have been identified for protection in consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland. Map 1.12.1 of the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017 indicates the County Aquifers Protection Plan.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

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| INF05 | Continue to provide an adequate quantity and quality supply of water suitable for domestic, industrial, agricultural and other uses, |
| INF06 | Increase the capacity of the current service through the Portlaoise - Mountmellick Water Improvement Scheme under the Water Services Investment Programme. This will facilitate development growth in a manner which can be supported by the water network, |
| INF07 | Promote water conservation measures within the Town and its environs by requiring the installation of water meters in all new residential units and in units where planning permission is required for an extension, |

INF08	Protect the water supply source at Derryguile,
INF09	Implement the 'Polluter Pays Principle' for non-domestic usage,
INF10	Comply with the European Union Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC,
INF11	Continue to undertake improvements and extend the existing infrastructure of the water network,
INF12	Have regard to the condition location and accessibility of heritage items in the planning and provision of services (telecommunications, water, and sanitary services),
INF 13	Comply with the provisions of the Water Framework Directive 2000,
INF 14	Implement the measures of the South East and Shannon River Basin Management Plans relating to water quality in County Laois.

Solid Waste Management Strategy

Laois County Council adopted the Regional Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region 2005-2010. The Plan highlights current levels of waste and sets objectives whereby overall levels will be reduced and stabilised in order to comply with both national and European legislative guidelines. The guidelines set down a hierarchy of preferential modes of waste management, focusing on prevention, minimisation, re-use/recycle, and disposal with energy recovery and disposal of residual waste.

Central to the strategy is a focus on the promotion of environmental protection through education.

There is no landfill site in Mountmellick. The closest sites are the EPA licensed facilities at Kyletalisha, Portlaoise and Derryclure, Tullamore which receive municipal and construction and demolition waste. The combined tonnage collected at both sites in 2011 was 130,000 tonnes.

Recycling is a key component of the strategy for a sustainable approach to waste management in County Laois. There is a public civic amenity site [at Kyletalisha] and 2 bring bank centres in Mountmellick.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

INF 15	Promote the principles of reduce, reuse & recycle,
INF 16	Promote the implementation of the Regional Waste Management Plan (2005-2010),
INF 17	Promote the development of facilities in accordance with the waste hierarchy principle, this involves a shift towards preventative and waste minimisation measures,
INF 18	Encourage the recycling of construction and demolition waste and the reuse of aggregate and other materials,

INF 19	Promote the 'polluter pays principle' in Mountmellick functional area,
INF 20	Encourage the provision of recycling facilities (i.e. bottle banks, bring centres etc.) at suitable locations in the town, to facilitate domestic recycling initiatives,
INF 21	Promote and facilitate communities to become involved in environmental awareness activities and community-based recycling initiatives or environmental management initiatives which will lead to local sustainable waste management practices.

Electricity

The provision of a continued reliable and suitable capacity electricity system is vital for the future development of Mountmellick. Traditional and high tech industries require such an electricity system. Retailers and homes also require a reliable electricity system.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

INF 22	Continue to facilitate the development of this supply within the Town, subject to amenity and preservation requirements, as set out in this Plan,
INF 23	Support the continued development and renewal (where required) of the existing electricity system for Mountmellick.

Gas

The provision of piped gas to the town helps to ensure reliable energy sources are available to meet the future needs of Mountmellick.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

INF 24	Facilitate the expansion of gas pipeline around the town.
INF 25	Protect the existing gas pipe work.

Broadband

The provision of a high quality urban broadband network is critical if the town is to benefit from technological advances in this field including the setting up of planned e-working centres under the Smarter Travel umbrella.

The development of broadband access is taking place mainly on foot of two national schemes; the **County and Group Broadband Scheme** and **Metropolitan Area Networks Scheme [MANS]**. As a result, all bandwidth requirements can be satisfied and the vast majority of businesses in the town now have the option of accessing high speed broadband services delivered on fibre network.

Telecommunications

There is recognition of the essential need for a high quality communications network in maximizing the competitiveness of the economy of Mountmellick and its role in supporting regional and national development generally.

Laois County Council recognises the national and local importance of a high quality telecommunications service and acknowledges that the development of such infrastructure is a key component for future industrial development and employment creation. Any developments in this activity should be in line with Planning Guidelines for Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, (DOEHLG, 1996) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended. It is general policy that telecommunications infrastructural services should be located underground and that existing overhead cables and associated equipment should progressively be located underground to safeguard visual amenity.

However, some telecommunications services such as mobile telephony may require the provision of overground masts and antennae/ satellite dishes. The same may also be true of television receptors and masts. While it is the policy of the Council to permit such masts and their antennae, the design, siting and visual impact of satellite dishes and equipment is of paramount importance. This type of development will not be permitted however in the following areas:

- a) adjoining or within the curtilage of protected structures;
- b) on or within the setting of archaeological sites, structures and zones;
- c) sites beside schools.

In order to avoid an unnecessary proliferation of masts, the Council will encourage owners and operators to facilitate the co location of antennae on existing support structures and masts.

In relation to health and safety aspects, it is a requirement for operators to provide a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines (Health Physics, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Jan) 1988) or the equivalent European Pre-standard 50166-2 which has been conditioned by the licensing arrangements with the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. It is necessary to furnish evidence that an installation of the type applied for complies with the above Guidelines.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

INF 26	Support the Government Guidelines on "Telecommunications Antennae & Support Structures-Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoEHLG, 1996),
INF 27	Encourage co-location of telecommunications facilities where feasible,
INF 28	Preserve significant landscape views from the visual intrusion of large scale telecommunications infrastructure,
INF 29	Ensure that telecommunications infrastructure is adequately screened, integrated and/or landscaped so as to minimise any adverse visual impacts on the environment,

INF 30 Extend the telecommunications network in Mountmellick and facilitate access to it by all sections of the community.

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

O/ INF12 Ensure that the broadband Metropolitan Area Network is activated and maintained and facilitate its expansion where required. To facilitate the expansion, where possible, of the broadband service for domestic customers.

Surface Water Drainage

A major by-product of development in Mountmellick is surface water run-off. In the past, conventional drainage design was relatively simplistic, generally involving a rational method to size and locate pipes to ensure surface water was removed as quickly as possible from the site in question. This often resulted in increased potential for flooding of other areas further down the system, pollution of the natural environment and contamination of drinking water sources. Storm water discharge was identified by the South–East River Basin District (SERBD) project team as one of the causes of poor water quality in the district.

Current best practice centres on the **Sustainable Drainage Systems [SUDS]** approach. SUDS comprise a system of devices for managing surface water run-off in a manner that aims to simulate natural drainage, using cost effective solutions with low environmental impact to drain away surface water run-off through collection, storage and cleaning before its ultimate release into the receiving environment.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

INF 31 Require on site surface water attenuation measures, if, in the opinion of the local authority, a development is likely to cause flooding or potentially destructive storm surges in existing watercourses. These measures will be in accordance with the requirements of the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems scheme,

INF 32 Require developers to demonstrate that their application will not impact on the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and associated South-Eastern River Basin Management Plan,

INF 33 Require that all development incorporate the maximum provisions to reduce the quantity and rate of run-off,

INF 34 Ensure that all development incorporate the provisions of the Barrow Catchment Flood Risk and Management System Study (Barrow CFRAMS) which is currently being undertaken by the OPW and the regional authorities.

Litter

In accordance with the Litter Pollution Act 1997, Laois County Council adopted a Litter Management Plan covering the period 2012-2014. The Plan details the measures proposed by the Council in relation to litter prevention and control and also sets out areas where joint co-operation is sought. Comprehensive action is to be achieved in five key areas:

- Education and information
- Litter prevention and control
- Enforcement
- Community involvement
- Recycling and recovery

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

INF 35	Strongly enforce the provisions of the Litter Pollution Act 1997, by prosecuting offenders, where applicable,
INF 36	Implement the strategic actions of the Litter Management Plan,
INF 37	Preserve and maintain water, air and noise quality in the town in accordance with good practice and relevant legislation,
INF 38	Ensure that noise levels caused by new and existing developments throughout the town do not exceed normally accepted standards and that new developments shall incorporate measures to ensure compliance with the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 and any subsequent revision of these Regulations.

Chapter 8: Environmental Management

Climate Change

Climate change is recognised as a significant global environmental problem. In response to this the Kyoto Protocol has set targets on Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. National policy as outlined in "The National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012" highlights the need for a radical strategy to meet the climate change commitments made in the Kyoto Protocol.

The National Bio-Energy Action Plan and South East Bio-Energy Implementation Plan 2008-2013, both contain targets for the development of renewable energy, while the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009-2020 sets out objectives relating to the development of a secure, efficient and low-carbon energy supply.

Changes to Planning and Development Regulations that relate to micro-generation of renewable energy are noted. New Planning & Development Regulations came in to effect in July 2008 which makes the provision of wind turbines, combined heat and power (CHP) Plants, solar panels and biomass boiler units in association with industrial, commercial or public buildings exempt from the requirement to obtain planning permission subject to certain conditions. The provision of the following items for domestic use is exempt from the requirement to obtain planning permission subject to certain considerations (Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2007):

- Stand-alone wind turbines
- Building mounted wind turbines
- Building mounted solar panels
- Stand alone solar panels
- Ground source heat pumps
- Air source heat pumps
- Biomass (includes fuel storage tanks /structures)

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

ENV 01	Encourage the production of energy from renewable sources subject to general planning considerations, and in particular the micro-generation of renewable energy which is considered of particular relevance within the Mountmellick Urban Area,
ENV 02	Support the National Climate Change Strategy and, in general to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases including the delivery of sustainable land use patterns,
ENV 03	Seek to improve the energy efficiency of its existing building stock, and to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings.

Sustainable Design and Construction

The methodology and details associated with the sustainable construction and use of buildings is complex, is undergoing rapid change and technological advancement. Although some technical elements below are administered by way of building control regulations, some are suitable for administration under the planning application process. Sustainable design and construction techniques may be considered during each stage in the life-cycle of a building: site selection,

sourcing of materials, building and open space design, appliance specifications, workmanship and maintenance, re-use, demolition or restoration.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to

ENV 04 Encourage the use of sustainable design and construction techniques for all development works.

ENV 05 Proposed developments for over 100 housing units or for commercial or retail floor space exceeding 2000 sq metres shall be accompanied by a sustainability statement which will evaluate the proposals under the following headings;

(i) Land use efficiency

Re-use of buildings; re-use of brownfield sites; efficient use of land generally, reduce building footprints, compact development of lands in proximity to sustainable transport nodes, commercial services and municipal infrastructure

(ii) Reduction in water consumption and surface water generation

- rainwater and grey water harvesting systems;
- use sanitary goods with water-efficient settings;
- minimising and delaying surface runoff by using green roofs, permeable hard standings, water features or increasing proportion of open space devoted to soft landscaping

(iii) Reduction in energy consumption

- siting buildings in wind-sheltered locations, away from cold air pockets, in locations that benefit from good sunshine;
- orientating buildings and arranging windows to maximise solar gain and natural light balanced against the need for shade and comfortable spaces;
- careful working of internal spaces positioning rooms such as kitchen-dining rooms or cafeterias in areas that benefit from good sunlight and positioning offices and bedrooms in more shaded locations;
- constructing thermally massive walls that are super-insulated with thermal breaks, use windows with low-E values;
- use of energy efficient lighting systems;
- use A-rated white goods, harness sustainable energy by using solar tubes, photovoltaic panels, geothermal energy systems, wind turbines;
- installation and maintenance of high performance stoves or boilers that use timber or pellets from sustainable sources, combined heat and power units (CHP), create air-tight buildings with heat recovery ventilation systems;
- reduction in noise and light pollution; avoidance of micro-climatic effects such as the creation of wind tunnels in urban environments

(iv) Consideration of green house gas emissions, sustainable and local materials, and embodied energy

- recycling of building materials;
- use of sustainable and low-toxicity materials that are reclaimable, recyclable or rotatable such as sheep wool or straw bale insulation, lime-mortars, natural slate roofs in order to reduce waste and avoid Sick Building Syndrome;
- preference for materials with low embodied energy such as locally sourced timber—
- framed buildings, windows and fascia boards over concrete structures, uPVC
- windows and box fascias;
- construction of carbon neutral buildings; use of native species that thrive without high fertiliser or pesticide inputs in Landscaping Plans and the use of trees to sequester carbon

(v) Reduction in Waste Generation

- provision of sufficient space for the storage, separation and composting of waste;
- preparation of Waste Management Plans related to major construction works;
- preparation of end-of-life dismantling or Restoration Plans; use of anaerobic digestors;
- low input municipal wastewater treatment systems;
- in rural areas, maintenance of septic tanks and where appropriate, installation of ecological sewerage treatment systems such as reed bed systems that do not require mechanical or electrical inputs.

(vi) Support Ecology and Biodiversity

The incorporation of ecologically friendly elements into Landscaping Plans for public open space to commercial, civic or residential development is encouraged such as:

- the ornamental use of log piles or wood pyramids to function as micro-climates for invertebrates
- the use of seed, fruit or berry bearing species for birds and butterflies
- the avoidance of pollen-free plant varieties for bees and butterflies
- the provision of bird and bat boxes for nesting and roosting.
- the provision of artificial ponds or wetlands areas can form part of SUDS, as well as providing an opportunity for aquatic flora and fauna
- create new ecological linkages or stepping stones such as green verges to footpaths, hedgerows, tree belts, ditches, green roofs etc

Soil Quality

Soils are generally resistant to pollution. However, unlike other environmental receptors once polluted soils are not resilient and remediation can include excavation and removal of contaminated material. The most common chemicals involved are hydrocarbons, solvents, pesticides and heavy metals. Contaminated soil can adversely affect human health and the natural environment.

Commonly-used measures to prevent soil pollution include the use of bunds around domestic and commercial fuel storage tanks, hard surfaces and interceptors to refuelling areas and impermeable base liners to protect underlying soil.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

ENV 06	Ensure that developments that may potentially adversely affect soil quality do not proceed unless mitigatory measures are used;
ENV 07	Require the submission of land contamination surveys and decontamination proposals as necessary, when considering brownfield development proposals on lands that are potentially contaminated;
ENV 08	Undertake consultation with the EPA or HSA or other statutory agencies in relation to the remediation of contaminated lands.

Seveso II Directive

The EC Control of Major-Accident Hazards Directive (the Seveso II Directive, also known as the CoMAH Directive) places special responsibilities on operators of sites that have major accident

potential. It also requires that land-use planning take into account this potential. There are currently no Seveso sites within the Mountmellick urban area.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

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| ENV 09 | In accordance with Seveso II, the Councils will ensure that the objective of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents are taken into account in the consideration of relevant planning applications, in particular in respect of the siting of new Seveso establishments, modifications to existing Seveso establishments, development in the vicinity of a Seveso establishment, which, by virtue of its type or siting, is likely to increase the risk or consequences of a major accident, |
| ENV 10 | The Councils will consult with the HSA or other relevant statutory agencies in order to obtain technical advice in respect of Seveso establishments before decisions are taken and such technical advice will be taken into consideration in the determination of planning applications. |

Noise Environment

In recent decades industrial processes have generally become cleaner and generate lower emissions including noise and vibrations, the importance of protecting noise sensitive environments such as residential areas remains an important function of planning policy.

Noise associated with construction works is considered to be temporary in nature and is generally not a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications. Noise mitigatory measures include soundproofing of industrial buildings or the specialist glazing of residential developments.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

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| ENV 11 | Utilise zoning objectives and employ industrial or enterprise buffer zones to achieve a balance between noise/light generating uses including certain industries and noise sensitive uses including residential areas and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC; |
| ENV 12 | Request additional information as necessary where the Councils consider development proposals may result in an inappropriate balance between noise sensitive and noise generating uses and require the use of appropriate mitigation measures; |
| ENV 13 | Restrict development generating noise in excess of best practice standards. |

Light Pollution

Light pollution consists of excessive or obtrusive artificial light. Light pollution can disrupt ecosystems, adversely effect residential amenity and where lighting is excessive is a wasteful use of energy resources.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

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|---------------|--|
| ENV 14 | Ensure new street lighting schemes to residential areas, the town centre and public open spaces are human in scale, with fixture designs that limit upward or horizontal light, in order to create safe and comfortable environments for the pedestrian, while limiting glare and ensuring energy efficiency, |
| ENV 15 | Applications for the floodlighting of sports pitches, tourist attractions or other high-order structures will be carefully considered and will indicate horizontal and vertical luminance levels (lux levels)of the fixtures and include details of when the lighting are to be used. Floodlights are to have fully-shielded light fixtures with cowl accessories, |
| ENV 16 | Reduce road-lighting along major roads where lighting exceeds road safety requirements. |

Chapter 9: Built Heritage

Background

The town of Mountmellick is cruciform, a main street terminated at each end by road junctions. It has a number of fine Georgian buildings and one of the finest examples of a Georgian square in Ireland, O'Connell Square, formerly known as Drogheda Square, which dates back to the late 1700s.

The built heritage of Mountmellick is fundamental to the cultural identity of the town and the quality of life of its citizens. This includes eighteenth and nineteenth century two- and three-storey town houses and walled gardens, vernacular structures, extensive industrial heritage, Quaker artefacts, ecclesiastical architecture and a considerable amount of features of interest including stone walls and street furniture.

On the whole, Mountmellick town centre presents as an attractive streetscape. The main focus of the town centre is the lengthy main thoroughfare incorporating Wolfe Tone Street, Parnell Street, O'Connell Square, Pearse Street and Sarsfield Street. A river walk exists along the banks of River Owenass.

Unfortunately, heavy traffic movement in the town centre, derelict and dilapidated buildings, inappropriate modern developments and poor footpath surfaces take from the town. All new developments should respect the existing scale and proportions of the streetscape to integrate successfully into the urban core.

It is an objective of the Plan to seek the protection of all structures within the Plan area which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. The list of properties entered in the Record of Protected Structures is contained in **Appendix 1 of the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017**. This list is not necessarily definitive and may be amended from time to time.

Record of Protected Structures

The Council recognises the value of protected structures and the importance of maintaining them in active useage.

Mountmellick contains a wealth of architectural and archaeological heritage. There are 77 no. protected structures in the urban area. The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) included in the current Laois County Development Plan is legislated for under Section 51 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 as amended. Within the Plan area, protected structures are predominately located on Wolfe Tone Street, Parnell Street, O'Connell Square, Pearse Street and Sarsfield Street; this clustering is clearly indicated on map 4 below.



Plate 7: Protected structures in Mountmellick town centre; from left, RPS 014 & RPS 025



Plate 8: Protected structures in Mountmellick town centre; from left, RPS 024 & RPS 029



Plate 9: Protected residential structures in Mountmellick town centre; from left, RPS 019 & RPS 40A

All applications pertaining to the redevelopment of buildings where such features occur should include a detailed methodology prepared by a suitably qualified person for the maintenance and repair of these features.



Plate 10: Examples of traditional archways and doorways in RPS in Mountmellick town centre; from left RPS 003, RPS 030 & RPS 026

Shopfronts

The town centre contains a wide variety of shop fronts. Shopfronts provide colour and add variation to main streets, older shopfronts can contain clues of the history of commerce and the development of the town. New shopfronts may reflect a more traditional design or be more contemporary in approach but they should have regard to the features of the building that they front, particularly when they occur in protected structures.



Plate 11: Examples of traditional shopfronts on RPS in Mountmellick town centre; from left RPS 048 & RPS 049

Dereliction

The Derelict Sites Act 1990 as amended requires that owners or occupiers of any land take all reasonable steps to ensure that the land and any structure within, does not become, or continue to be, a derelict site. A derelict site is any land, which detracts, or is likely to detract, to a material degree, from the amenity, character or appearance of land in the neighbourhood of the land. There are a number of derelict sites within the town centre and it has been the policy of the planning

authority to pursue these, using the levies, where appropriate. The Council will continue to monitor the levels of dereliction in the town centre and take appropriate action where necessary including application of levies and CPO powers.

Conservation of the Built Environment

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

O/BH 01	Preserve the townscape character by ensuring that the designs of new structures harmonise in terms of scale, form and character with the established pattern of development,
O/BH 02	Discourage the use of uPVC and insensitively designed shopfronts in the town centre,
O/BH 03	Retain existing distinctive townscape features such as carriage arches shall be retained where appropriate,
O/BH 04	Protect such buildings in Mountmellick which are of special architectural, artistic or historic merit,
O/BH 05	Refer, where appropriate, applications for development to the prescribed bodies, including the Minister for the Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, in the case of sites of archaeological, architectural or natural heritage,
O/BH 06	Examine the feasibility of designating an Architectural Conservation Area at an appropriate location in the Town Centre such as O'Connell Square,
O/BH 07	Issue declarations on types of works that would or would not materially affect the character of a protected structure, where requested,
O/BH 08	Request archaeological excavation and testing or preservation wherever archaeological material is likely to be affected by a proposed development,
O/BH 09	Place overhead cables on the main thoroughfare underground.

The inclusion of a structure in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) does not preclude appropriate use or development. However, no works, which would affect the character of the structure, or any element of it, which contributes to its special interest, may be carried out to a Protected Structure without prior planning approval with the Planning Authority. In addition to the exterior of the building, the interior and any structures lying within the curtilage of the structure are also protected.

An owner or occupier of a Protected Structure may make a written request to the Planning Authority to issue a Declaration [under Section 57 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended] as to the type of works, which it considers would or would not materially affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure that contributes to its special interest.



Plate 12: Protected [public] structures in Mountmellick town centre; from left, Court House RPS 053 & Methodist Church RPS 009



Plate 13: Protected [public] structures in Mountmellick town centre; from left, Saint Josephs Catholic Church RPS 002 & Presentation Convent RPS 001

Architectural Conservation Area

Much of the early growth of the town in the seventeenth century is associated with the arrival of the Quaker settlers whose legacy survives through local place names, surnames and building heritage. Mountmellick developed into a town of exceptional architectural quality. The town centre was dominated by O’Connell Square. Unfortunately some properties are now in an unkempt and derelict condition. It is also dominated by vehicular traffic. Nonetheless it retains the potential to become a major focal point for the town including as a potential Architectural Conservation Area.

Keynote buildings in the town centre are many and include the protected ecclesiastical buildings Presentation Convent, Saint Josephs Catholic Church, Methodist Church and Saint Paul’s Church of Ireland and a series of prominent three and four-storey mix of residential and commercial buildings fronting the Square, many of which are also on the Record of Protected Structures.

From this linear core, the remainder of the town emanates. The town centre is the traditional centre of trade and commerce for the town and its hinterland and it continues to provide these functions

with predominant land uses including retail, services and banking and there is also a noteworthy presence of residential use within the town centre. The layout of this historic core dates principally from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, provides that all Development Plans must now include objectives for preserving the character of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs).

This designation was introduced to reflect the observation that the special character of the built environment is not confined to individual buildings but also resides in the way buildings are arranged to make streets and open spaces and the way buildings relate to other buildings.

An Architectural Conservation Area [ACA] is a place, area, group of structures or townscape of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, or which contribute to the appreciation of protected structures.

In these areas the protection of the architectural heritage is best achieved by managing change on a wider scale than the individual structure, in order to retain the overall architectural or historic character of an area.

New development within these areas will only be granted planning permission if it can be demonstrated that it will not harm the character or appearance of the area. ACAs provide an opportunity to build upon an existing character by establishing a high standard of urban design. A distinctive sense of place can be created through street lighting, street furniture, paving, signage, and by encouraging best conservation practice in the repair and maintenance of historic buildings and also by insisting on high design standards for new developments.

At present there are no designated ACAs in Mountmellick. It is Council policy to preserve the special character of the Mountmellick town centre streetscape and in this regard it is an objective of this plan to examine the feasibility of designating particular area[s] of the town centre such as O'Connell Square as An Architectural Conservation Area.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:	
BH 01	Preserve and protect Mountmellick's Built Environment and heritage status in terms of streetscapes, individual buildings, public spaces and features of historical, architectural or artistic interest using the powers vested in it by the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2012,
BH 02	Protect the streetscapes and vistas which are resultant from Mountmellick's present urban form,
BH 03	Encourage retention of traditional shop fronts of good quality and to ensure that new shop fronts are designed to a high standard and along traditional lines, where appropriate,
BH 04	Exercise its statutory powers to preserve and enhance the amenity and unique character of the town. A major consideration in development management will be the effect of any proposed development upon the environmental character of the Town's historical and architectural features;

BH 05	Protect structures which are included in the Record of Protected Structures and which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest;
BH 06	Refuse permission for the demolition of a Protected Structure, except in exceptional circumstances, generally only those in which it can be shown that a greater public interest will be served through the demolition of the building, outweighing the loss to the architectural heritage. In situations where permission is granted to alter or demolish, either partially or totally, a Protected Structure, a full record of the Structure and its significant elements will be required, to best conservation practice,
BH 07	Look favourably on proposals for change of use of a Protected Structure where this would secure the future conservation of the building and where proposals are in keeping with the character of the building,
BH 08	Ensure that any interventions to Protected Structures are undertaken in accordance with best conservation practice and using sustainable and appropriate materials,
BH 09	Ensure protection, conservation and where necessary restoration of the Architectural Heritage and vernacular features of the town for future generations,
BH 10	Recognise the importance of the Main Street and O Connell Square area as public urban space of high quality and to devise policies which enhance their attractiveness and central function in the town's civic and commercial life,
BH 11	Exercise, where appropriate, the powers conferred by Sections 59-80 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2012 to ensure the conservation of Protected Structures. In most cases, the Council will seek the refurbishment and reuse of buildings, rather than demolition and new-build,
BH 12	Ensure the retention of original archways / access ways to the rear of existing properties,
BH 13	Provide for an appropriate level of survey and recording (including photographic records) of buildings, structures and sites which are the subject of development proposals,
BH 14	Seek the identification of possible architectural conservation areas to preserve the character of the areas of Special Architectural Heritage interest, such as O'Connell Square,
BH 15	Monitor the levels of dereliction throughout the town and take action when necessary in accordance with the Derelict Sites Act 1990 as amended.

Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological heritage consists of such material remains (whether in the form of sites and monuments or artefacts in the sense of moveable objects) and environmental evidence. As

archaeological heritage can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of the past it is of great cultural and scientific importance.

Archaeology in its various forms ranging from fragmentary buried remains to the fabric and contents of modern domestic and industrial buildings is a vital component of the culture and conservation of the study area. Unlike in Portlaoise and Portlaoise, there is no zone of archaeological significance in Mountmellick.

Record of Monuments and Places

The term 'monument' includes all man-made structures of whatever form or date except buildings habitually used for ecclesiastical purposes. All monuments in existence before 1700 A.D. are automatically considered to be historic monuments within the meaning of the Acts. Monuments of architectural and historical interest also come within the scope of the Acts.

A recorded monument is a monument included in the list and marked on the map which comprises the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) set out county by county under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. The definition includes Zones of Archaeological Potential in towns and all other monuments of archaeological interest which have so far been identified.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

- BH 16** To ensure the preservation (either preservation in-situ or, preservation by record) of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, and of sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally,
- BH 17** To ensure the protection and conservation of heritage objects and their setting where settings are appropriate,
- BH 18** To take into account archaeological heritage when considering proposed infrastructure developments (including transport, telecommunications, sewerage and water) located in close proximity to Recorded Monuments or Zones of Archaeological Potential,
- BH 19** To ensure that all archaeological excavations are undertaken to the highest standard and the resultant information made publicly available. Developers will be required to fully implement "*Archaeology & Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers*" (ICOMOS, 2000) in planning and executing development in sensitive areas.

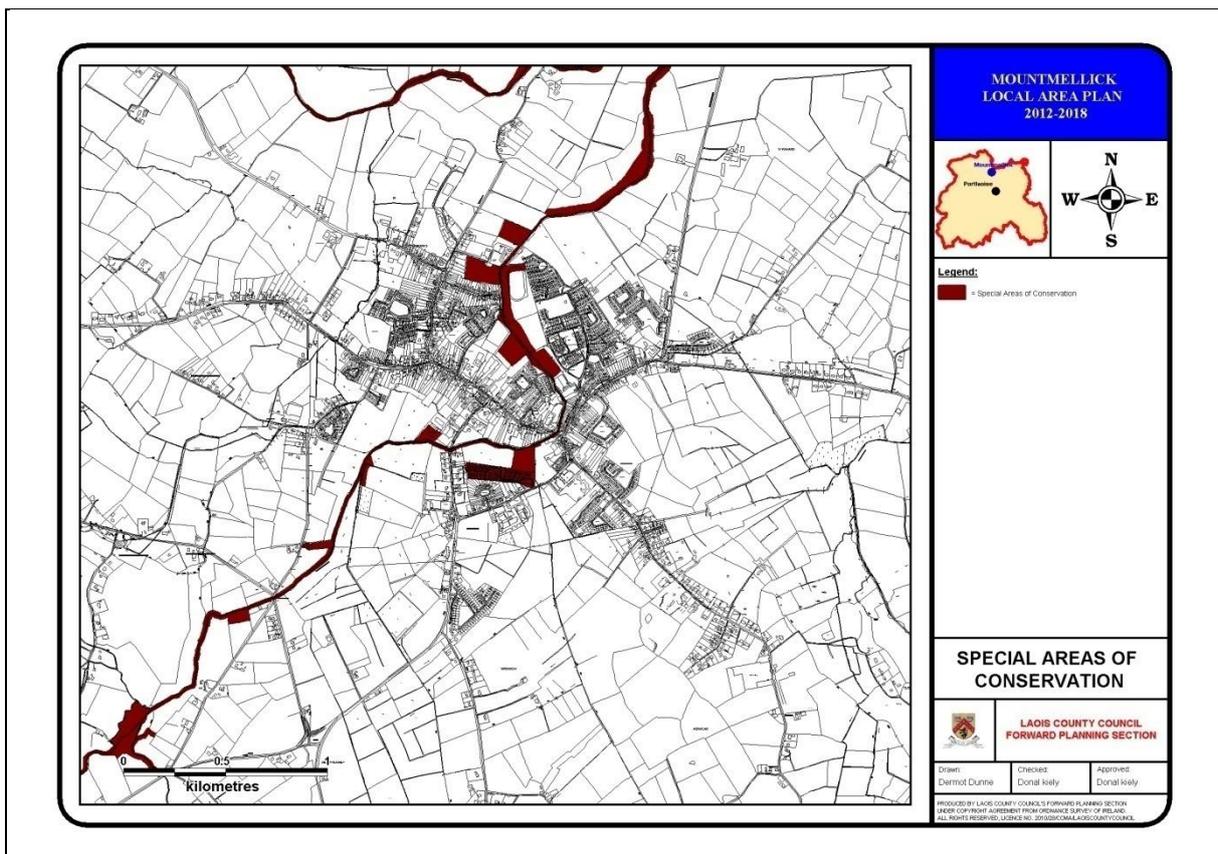
Chapter 10: Natural Heritage

Introduction

The Mountmellick urban area supports a wide diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats. These habitats host a wide range of wild plant and animal species, which are coming under threat due to development pressures and the increasing demand for new development land. These lands include significant expanses of fresh water and associated habitats along the River Owenass.

The River Owenass, which is protected by way of ecological designation as part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, [code 002162, Map 5], meanders through the town centre interacting with both the natural and built heritage to give a unique and distinct character. It joins with the River Barrow approx. 2 kms north of the town. The cSAC is designated for supporting Priority I Habitats listed in Annex I of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora namely alluvial wet woodlands, petrifying springs, oak woodlands, floating river vegetation, estuary, tidal mudflats, Salicornia mudflats, Atlantic salt meadows, Mediterranean salt meadows, dry heath and eutrophic tall herbs. The alluvial wet woodland and floating river vegetation habitat could be affected by water quality changes within the River Barrow.

Map 5: River Barrow & River Nore SAC in Mountmellick Local Area Plan area



Man-made habitats within the urban area are also important biodiversity areas. Gardens [especially the exceptionally lengthy rear gardens of properties on the main thoroughfare] provide habitats for a range of wildlife including various bird species, invertebrates such as bees and butterflies and mammals such as hedgehogs, mice, rats and foxes. These species move around between gardens using hedgerows and vegetated areas. These urban green spaces, however small, are therefore of

importance as they form part of a network of green spaces across the study area including gardens, parks, graveyards, amenity walks and patches of woodland and scrub within which animals and plants continue to thrive.

Improved grassland, semi-improved grassland, peatland are the main habitat type in the outskirts of the town. With the exception of individual sections of mature hedgerows which offer potential habitat for breeding birds and foraging bats, these habitat types are of low ecological significance.

Much of these land cover types have come about as a result of recent human interaction with the landscape. In the past two decades particularly, lands which were previously occupied by the agricultural and natural vegetation and peatland land cover categories have undergone urbanisation with land cover of artificial surfaces now attributed to these areas along with resultant loss of biodiversity.

The following habitats in the study area are of higher ecological significance, in terms of either botanical interest or potential habitat for other faunal species:

• **Scattered broad-leaved trees:**

- Dispersed throughout study area
- Interest features: mature/well established trees, potential habitat for roosting bats and breeding birds.

• **Dense scrub:**

- Located throughout study area; Interest features: potential habitat for breeding birds.

• **Hedgerows:**

- Located throughout study area; Interest features: botanical diversity, potential habitat for breeding birds, and foraging bats.

• **Rush pastures:**

- Located within sections of the River Owenass; Interest features: Potential botanical diversity and SAC habitat, potential habitat for breeding and wintering birds.

Fauna-Existing Environment

The River Barrow and River Nore SAC of which the River Owenass is a constituent is part selected for the following species listed in Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) -sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), river lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*), brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), Nore freshwater pearl mussel, white clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) twaite shad (*Alosa fallax fallax*), Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), and Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*).



Plate 14: River Owenass through Mountmellick

Tree Preservation Orders

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) enable local authorities to preserve any single tree or group of trees and brings them under planning control. Tree preservation orders are only made if it appears that a tree or group of trees need to be protected in the interests of amenity in the environment. The Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended has further outlined the legal framework and procedures provided in the 1963 Act to make a TPO. There are no TPO's in the study area.

Natural Heritage Areas

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated due to their national conservation value for ecological and/or geological/geomorphological heritage. They cover nationally important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms or geomorphological features, wildlife plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural. There are no NHA's in the study area.

Ecological Networks

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive recognises the importance of ecological networks as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife, including for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species of flora and fauna. The Directive requires that ecological connectivity and areas of ecological value outside the Natura 2000 network of designated ecological sites are maintained and it recognises the need for the management of these areas through land use planning and development policies. Ecological networks are important in connecting areas of local biodiversity with each other and with nearby designated sites so as to prevent islands of habitat from being isolated entities.

Ecological networks are composed of linear features, such as treelines, hedgerows, rivers and canals, which provide corridors or stepping stones for wildlife species moving within their normal range. They are particularly important for mammals, especially for bats and small birds. Within and surrounding the Plan area, the ecological networks are made up of components including the Rivers Barrow and Owenass, their tributaries and banks, the various woodlands, as detailed above, and hedgerows as well as suburban lands used for agriculture. The above components provide habitats for flora and fauna and facilitate linkages for the flora and fauna both between and within designated ecological sites and the non-designated surrounding countryside of the study area.

River Water Quality

The EPA carries out water quality monitoring on the Owenass River. River water quality is graded by the EPA from Q1 (seriously polluted) through to Q5 (unpolluted) based on the presence or absence

of macro invertebrate communities. In accordance with the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 'good ecological status' in respect of macro invertebrates is considered to be equivalent to Q4 or above.

The latest EPA biological quality rating (2009) at Station No. 0220, the bridge north of Irishtown House (<1km upstream of the WwTW outfall) is Q3-Q4. Similarly, the latest biological quality rating (2009) at Station No. 0300, 1.7 kms. downstream of Mountmellick, is Q3-Q4. These monitoring results highlight that the Owenass River was in an unsatisfactory ecological condition, not currently achieving 'good ecological status' and that sewage discharges were the suspected source of pollution.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| NHP 1 | To facilitate, maintain and enhance as far as is practicable the natural heritage and amenity of the Town by seeking to encourage the preservation and retention of woodlands, hedgerows, stone walls, rivers, streams and wetlands. Where the removal of such features is unavoidable appropriate measures to replace like with like should be considered, subject to safety considerations, |
| NHP 2 | To encourage access to natural heritage and to promote access where it is practicable and does not affect the integrity of protected sites or conflict with their conservation objectives, |
| NHP 3 | To maintain, protect and where possible enhance the conservation value of existing European designated sites in the town and any additional sites that may be proposed for designation during the period of this Plan, |
| NHP 4 | To fully implement the policies and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of proposed development where it is possible that such development may impact on a designated European or national site or a site proposed for designation, |
| NHP 5 | To ensure an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and in accordance with DoEHLG guidance, is carried out in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, |
| NHP 6 | To promote the protection of trees, in particular native and broadleaf species specimen trees which are of conservation, amenity and biodiversity value and to incorporate these into the design of new developments. A management plan should be provided to ensure that trees are adequately protected during development, |
| NHP 7 | To require the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment where deemed necessary by the planning authority (and where necessary an Appropriate Assessment in relation to Natura 2000 sites) including bat and otter surveys for developments along river, stream and canal corridors. These assessments should where appropriate suggest a minimum buffer of undisturbed vegetation to be retained to mitigate against pollution risks, reduce flooding potential, maintain habitats and provide an ecological corridor. This buffer zone shall, where possible be maintained free of development and hard surfaces, |

NHP 8	To seek the creation of a riparian buffer strip along either side of all watercourses where practicable,
NHP 9	To ensure that floodplains and wetlands, where appropriate, are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection value.

Over 10% of land area in Ireland is formally and legally designated as being of European importance for nature conservation. Protection is afforded by the designation of Special Protection areas (SPAs), candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).

The Owenass River which flows through the town forms part of the River Barrow and River Nore candidate Special Area of Conservation. This area is of considerable conservation significance for the occurrence of good examples of habitats and of populations of plant and animal species which are listed on Annexes I and II of the EU Habitats Directive respectively. Furthermore, it is high conservation value for the populations of bird species which use it. The Owenass River is particularly important for spawning to fish.

It is the objective of Laois County Council to:

O/NH 1	To undertake a study to survey, document and map significant mature trees and groups of trees of high amenity or biodiversity value within the town subject to funding,
O/NH 2	To investigate the use of Tree Preservation Orders under the Planning Act 2000, as amended, to protect significant trees as identified in tree surveys,
O/NH 3	To carry out habitat mapping on a phased basis (including wetlands) within the plan area. This habitat mapping will identify Local Important Biodiversity areas in co-operation with NPWS, DoEHLG and Inland Fisheries Ireland,
O/NH 4	To encourage the development of proposals for new woodlands utilising funding available through schemes such as the Neighbour Wood and Native Woodland Schemes,
O/NH 5	To identify suitable buffer zones between designated ecological sites and areas zoned for development,
O/NH 6	To seek the improvement and extension of the riverside walk along the banks of the River Owenass,
O/NH 7	Protect the natural environment of the Owenass River and its corridor through the town.

However, areas in the town outside this protected site also have a level of natural value in terms of the plant and animal life they support.

Wildlife Corridors

The Owenass River, in particular represents “Wilderness Corridors” for wildlife and aquatic life forms through the town. The Councils policy of providing and extending the linear park along the Owenass

River will safeguard and further enhance this amenity. Where natural features are in danger from development the Council will exercise its development control powers to protect their environment.

Trees

The Council will not normally grant planning permission for development which requires the felling of sound mature trees, save where it is absolutely necessary in the interests of safety (both for the development and traffic) or the siting of the development.

In such cases the Council will require the developer to replant suitable trees and take adequate steps to ensure their survival. There are a small number of stands of trees which are attractive features of the town and important in their contribution to the architectural setting and these will be examined over the plan period with a view to their preservation.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

NHP 10	Protect the natural environment of Mountmellick especially along the River Owenass,
NHP 11	Encourage the further development and extension of a Riverside Walk along the River Owenass during the course of this Plan,
NHP 12	Continue the programme of tree planting throughout the town,
NHP 13	Identify trees or groups of trees worthy of preservation and to secure their protection.

Open Space & Amenities

Open space provision in Mountmellick comprises primarily public open space associated with residential areas, together with privately owned and operated sports grounds/playing pitches and playing fields at Smiths Fields.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

NHP 14	Ensure that new residential areas have sufficient, well-designed, good quality open space in accordance with relevant open space standards in Section 10 Development Management Guidelines of this Plan,
NHP 15	Link open spaces and amenity developments throughout the town so as to secure integration of the provision as far is possible,
NHP 16	Co-operate with Sporting Organisations who wish to expand or develop facilities,
NHP 17	Encourage the provision of all weather sports facilities within lands designated for open space and amenity purposes following consultation with local community,

NHP 18	Encourage the provision of shared facilities between clubs and groups where necessary,
NHP 19	Ensure that proposals for new amenity/recreation facilities, provide good accessibility to local residents, pedestrians, cyclists and those with special mobility needs,
NHP 20	Ensure that proposals do not detract from the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly residential areas.

Landscape

The aspects of our natural, built and cultural heritage that make up our landscape are intertwined. Landscape appraisals deal with land management including tillage farming, afforestation or quarrying, natural heritage features such as rivers and their flood plains and the built environment including structures, streets and open spaces. Landscape is dynamic and undergoes constant change. It responds to our society, economy and values.

Human beings strongly influence landscapes in particular in and around urban areas such as the Mountmellick Urban Area. Landscape also responds to natural processes including slow processes such as ecological succession, processes of sediment erosion and deposition associated with river basins as well as dramatic, periodic events such as floods. In light of the wide-ranging and intertwined elements that influence landscape, a holistic approach to its management is appropriate.

Landscape Character Assessment

The inclusion of landscape objective is a statutory requirement of a Development Plan in accordance with the European Landscape Convention (2000). A Landscape Character Assessment is contained within **Appendix 6 of the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017** which has identified a number of Landscape Character Types within the County. This will inform the policy framework as well as the development management decision-making process.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

NHP 21	Enhance the urban landscape of Mountmellick Town having regard to urban gateways, key open spaces, important landscape features such as the Rivers Owenass and landmark structures. This will be subject to clear demonstration that there will be no impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive or significant adverse effects on other environmental receptors,
NHP 22	Protect significant views of identified landmark structures within the Mountmellick Urban Area,
NHP 23	Ensure the effective management of lands adjoining the River Owenass to maximize views and interaction with these important landscape features. This will be subject to demonstration that there will be no impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive or significant adverse effects on other environmental receptors.

Place Names

Place names are an important part of our cultural heritage, providing a link to the past and reflecting the natural, built and cultural heritage of a locality. It is important that place names of all new developments reflect local topography, history, culture, ecology or significant people or events and incorporate traditional and Irish language place names from the locality.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

NHP 24	Preserve historic place names and historic street names,
NHP 25	Ensure that the names of all new developments include local historical, heritage or cultural associations,
NHP 26	Encourage the use of bi-lingual or Irish language place names and signs.

Chapter 11: Urban Design & Development Management Standards

Introduction

In order to ensure the proper planning and sustainable development of Mountmellick it is essential that development should conform to a number of requirements, which are set out in this chapter under the following main headings:

- New Urban Residential Development;
- Changes of use, extensions and alterations to Dwellings;
- Commercial, Office and other Developments;
- Conservation and Archaeology;
- Community Development;
- Accessibility;
- Development Contribution Planning Scheme.

The Development Control Policies and Standards have been formulated to take into account a number of contextual guidelines and regulations in addition to the policies and objectives set out in the County Development Plan and which include the following: -

- The Planning & Development Acts 2000-2012 and Associated Regs 2001;
- The Planning & Development Act 2000 Part V – Housing Supply 2000;
- Residential Density Guidelines 2009;
- Retail Planning Guidelines 2012;
- County Retail Strategy 2011-2017;
- Childcare Facilities 2001;
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines (Draft);
- Telecommunications Antenna and Support Structure Guidelines 1996;
- Architectural Conservation Guidelines 2004;
- European Community (E.I.A.) Regs. (Various) 1987 to date;
- Seveso II Directive (1996) and subsequent amendments.

URBAN DESIGN

Urban design considers the relationships between buildings and the spaces around them. This section aims at identifying principles, which should give understanding as to how successful spaces work. This section provides the basis for assessing planning applications on urban design grounds and is based on international best practice.

In order to achieve sustainable communities and a high quality built environment, which is one of the over riding goals of the Mountmellick Local Area Plan, a number of principles must be established and applied to all development proposals in Mountmellick.

The following principles have been identified as being important to successful build environments

- Local Setting and Context
- Building Layout
- Ease of physical and social integration
- Identity and Legibility
- Vitality (Use Content)
- Visual Quality

Local Setting and Context

Local Setting and Context is important in the development of all places and spaces and will vary from place to place. It is important to identify the established pattern of development within the location in order to successfully address the character, scale, height, proportion and detail of adjoining and adjacent buildings. Each area will have its own distinctive form and character. New developments should respect this and reflect it, to some degree in their proposals, taking into account the natural heritage of the area also.

Building Layout

New development proposals should arrange buildings so that they provide continuity and enclosure onto the public realm, creating a coherent urban fabric that encourages security and vitality. New developments should also be designed to create active frontages that contribute towards the creation of streets. This should include the creation of mixed-use areas, which provide a range of different uses such as shops and homes, which present a vibrant landscape. Design should seek to minimise the risks of anti-social behaviour through appropriate layout, boundary features and means of enclosure.

Ease of Physical and Social Integration

Streets provide the network for people to move within urban areas; public spaces fronted onto by buildings are also the arena for public activities. Streets should generally link with other streets at both ends and routes should be as short and direct as possible to encourage people to walk to their destinations easily. The character of any proposal should be based around the creation of positive public spaces with roads incorporated and not generated by the road design requirements.

Identity and Legibility

New developments can be designed to reinforce the character and identity of existing places or to create a strong identity in new areas. The creation of new identities for urban areas is dependent on its urban form. Urban form includes such factors as size and heights of buildings, the urban grain, building lines, the use functions of an area, the identity of the Community, the areas history and the areas historic buildings. These factors suggest a particular identity for an area, which should be respected by new developments.

Legibility means that development is structured in a way that creates distinctive places and spaces that may be easily read and that are easy to move around. A legible layout is based on designing at a human scale in response to the positive features of a site and how it relates to the wider area, rather than technical demands. Such a layout will avoid the creation of homogenous characterless areas resulting from the use of identical buildings, which produce feelings of disorientation and monotony. A differentiation of building form in a layout, such as noticeable increase in density, in a particular direction, may indicate the presence of a main road or the direction of an urban centre. Landmark buildings can provide more legible layouts if used in an appropriate context.

Visual Quality

Good quality building design is vital in creating a visual and cultural identity of an area. The primary objective is to create buildings that are of high visual quality, capable of long life and adaptability to other uses. The Council aims to promote the use of high quality contemporary and innovative design that respects the context and sense of place. The Council also promotes the use of local building

traditions, which can be used to compliment new exciting design. A variety of heights are encouraged in appropriate locations in order to establish landmarks and address create a sense of place.

It is the policy of Laois County Council to:

- UD 01 To protect, conserve and where necessary restore or enhance the quality, character and distinctiveness
- UD 02 To promote good architectural design in relation to the replacement of buildings in the town.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Both quantitative and qualitative criteria are included in requirements for new residential developments set out below. These requirements will form the basis for evaluating planning applications for new residential development with a view to improving the quality of development in the Town.

Housing Development in an urban context will be guided by the guidelines for Planning Authorities on residential density and the need for good quality of design in terms of buildings and layout and the desire to improve quality of life.

These requirements are informed by a number of key principles to:

- Build on the positive elements of the Town's character through new high quality residential development;
- Provide a good quality of life for persons living in and visiting the Town;
- Create new residential areas with a distinctive sense of place;
- Create new sustainable residential areas which allow for new and improved access to public transport and local facilities and make the best use of development land and infrastructure;
- Use a range of design "tools" or methods, guidelines and standards, to achieve better residential development;
- Encourage the concept of energy efficiency and re-use of on-site materials;
- Encourage high densities through innovative design in appropriate locations.

Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas

The Minister for the Environment & Local Government issued Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Residential Density in September 1999.

The Minister for Environment, Heritage & Local Government issued Guidelines for Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas in 2008 and Best Practice Urban Design Manual Part 1 and 2. These Guidelines provide a framework for the sustainable development of residential areas. The guidelines should be used to guide the preparation and assessment of planning applications for residential development in urban areas. In terms of energy efficiency, the guidelines promote settlement patterns that can help minimise transport-related energy consumption, increase the use of energy efficient technology and best practice, thereby reducing energy consumption of the community.

Housing Strategy 2001-2017

A Housing Strategy for County Laois has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2012.

Every applicant for permission for residential development, other than for exempt residential development, must specify in the planning application how he or she proposes to meet the requirements of the housing strategy in relation to the development for which permission is being sought.

Such proposals will be taken into account in determining planning applications for such development. Planning applications for residential development will therefore be assessed on the basis of the Housing Strategy, the land use zoning, the design and layout, accessibility to public transport, housing mix, the provision of special needs housing and the provision of social and affordable housing.

Urban Residential Development – Design and Layout Controls and Safeguards

It is the policy of Laois County Council to encourage the well planned and economic provision of housing on serviced lands. Developers are advised to consult with Laois County Council in advance of purchasing lands for residential development and discuss proposals at the earliest stage. The following criteria will be taken into account when assessing applications incorporating higher densities:

- Size of Site;
- Proximity to Town centre facilities and to existing public transport corridors;
- Quality of Proposed Layout and Elevation Design;
- Mix of Dwelling Types;
- Ancillary Facilities;
- Quality of Proposed Open Space and General Landscaping;
- Quality of Pedestrian Linkages between Open Spaces and to and from Local Facilities;
- Levels of Privacy and Amenity;
- Traffic Safety;
- Energy Efficiency;
- Management Arrangements;
- Childcare Facilities;
- Site Ecology;
- Local or Action Area Plans;
- Facilities for Children and the Elderly.

Smarter Travel A Sustainable Transport Future encourages the incorporation of the following objectives in the preparation of residential/commercial schemes

- A general requirement that significant housing development in all cities and towns must have good public transport connections and safe routes for walking and cycling to access such connections and local amenities
- Integration of cycling and public transport
- Specification of a maximum permitted level of car parking for commercial sites, which have suitable public transport facilities and are within walking/ cycling distance to amenities
- A general restriction of the future development of out-of-town retail centres except in exceptional circumstances and consideration of a similar requirement that parking charges be introduced for most existing centres

Layout of Housing Schemes

Best Practice Urban Design Manual Part 1 &2 2008

This Design Guide accompanies the Department's guidelines 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and introduces 12 criteria for sustainable residential development:

- 1 Context:** How does the development respond to its surroundings?
- 2 Connections:** How well connected is the new neighbourhood?
- 3 Inclusivity :** How easily can people use and access the development?
- 4 Variety:** How does the development promote a good mix of activities?
- 5 Efficiency:** How does the development make appropriate use of resources, including land?
- 6 Distinctiveness :** How do the proposals create a sense of place?
- 7 Layout:** How does the proposal create people friendly streets and spaces?
- 8 Public Realm:** How safe, secure and enjoyable are the public areas?
- 9 Adaptability:** How will the buildings cope with change?
- 10 Privacy and Amenity:** How does the scheme provide a decent standard of amenity?
- 11 Parking:** How will the parking be secure and attractive?
- 12 Detailed Design:** How well thought through is the building and landscape design?

These guidelines highlight the role of urban design in creating and maintaining successful residential schemes measured in terms of:

- sense of place
- ease of movement
- connectivity
- quality of public realm
- variety
- efficiency
- inclusivity
- adaptability
- Higher densities must be accompanied in all cases by high qualitative standards of design and layout
- "Leap-frogging" effect to be avoided
- Scale of new development to be in proportion to existing development

No substantial residential scheme to proceed without adequate provision for retail, school, health, public transport and community facilities—either in place or to be provided in tandem

In the interests of a good housing scheme layout, incorporation of the following into new development will be sought:

- Division of the estate into groups of houses, giving each group a sense of spatial enclosure;
- Pedestrian routes and footpaths which provide access to local shops, bus stops etc.;
- Orientation in accordance with sustainable development concepts, taking account of existing views, overlooking, overshadowing and energy efficiency;
- Separation of through traffic from local housing traffic;
- Layout which discourages on-street parking;
- Curves and changes in surface colour and texture of the road layout which discourages speeding and promotes pedestrian priority;
- Houses situated in order to ensure that overlooking and privacy issues are addressed;

- Road widths, which reflect the number of houses being served. A reduction in width may be appropriate where small numbers of houses are being served;
- Rear Garden Depths of 15m in respect of Greenfield sites. Exceptions of a reduced standard will be permitted where deemed appropriate and in infill urban housing and proximity to public/private open space facilities;
- New houses should be encouraged to use alternative energy systems such as solar panels and or under floor heating systems to allow for energy conservation where appropriate;
- The Council will promote the development of passive and low energy buildings and encourage developers to design and build houses / buildings towards an “A” rating standard as set out by the national building energy rating (BER) methodology.
- Recycling ‘Bring banks’ should be included.

Layout of Apartment Developments

The **Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities September 2007** aim to ensure the design and layout of new apartments will provide satisfactory accommodation for a variety of household types and sizes, including families and children. The quantitative standards outlined in these guidelines will be applied as a minimum for apartment developments especially with regard to minimum floor areas, living space areas, bedroom areas, storage space and balcony areas.

The layout of apartment developments should:

- Incorporate common spaces, terraces and courtyards, steps which are of good design and will encourage use by residents;
- Provide for access for all disabilities;
- Incorporate spaces which are designed so as to provide a safe and pleasant environment, which are multifunctional and allow for fire brigade access, parking and passive recreation;
- Provide concealed refuse bin storage areas, bicycle storage areas and washing and drying facilities for, and accessible to each of the apartments;
- Present a live edge to the street by locating doors and windows onto the street frontage;
- In the case of residential accommodation over shops or other business premises, a separate access should be provided for the upper floor accommodation;
- In addition to planning requirements, building control and fire prevention requirements must be met;
- Underground car parking will be encouraged where appropriate;
- Encourage dual aspect orientation;
- Provide private open space for each apartment;
- Dual aspect design

The overriding concern should be the quality of the proposed residential environment and higher densities should only be acceptable if the criteria, which contribute to this environment, are satisfied. In this regard, the planning authority will consider the preparation of Design Guides illustrating good examples of residential layouts at increased densities, appropriate to local circumstances. These considerations will be incorporated into a review of residential guidelines appropriate to County Laois.

House and Apartment Design

A high quality of house and apartment design will be sought. All new housing and apartment developments should:

- Reflect the existing character of the street by respecting the proportion, pattern, massing, density and materials of surrounding buildings
- Maintain existing building lines, roof pitches and window proportions
- Incorporate variations in window design, roof type etc. around a common theme, in housing estates of more than 20 houses
- Provide access for 'wheelie bins'
- Provide facilities to incorporate satellite dishes where appropriate

Any policy, which promotes the incorporation of higher residential densities, must take into account the need for proper internal space planning which ensures adequate standards in relation to overall dwelling and individual room sizes.

The "Guidelines on Residential Developments in Urban Renewal Designated Tax Incentive Areas" (Department of the Environment 1995) will be applied as a minimum for apartment developments. With regard to local authority dwellings, the Council will have regard to the "Social Housing Design Guidelines" which were issued in 1999.

The Planning Authority will encourage the provision of dwellings in higher density developments, which are capable of being extended. Aside from the normal single storey extensions, the conversion of the attic space for additional floor space will be promoted as a method of providing extra living/sleeping space or storage without increasing site coverage.

The Council encourages the use of hardwood for windows and doors in all new structures rather than uPVC, which is considered to be environmentally unsustainable.

Masterplans

Where large scale developments are proposed, the developer should submit a Masterplan of the site in conjunction with surrounding lands. This provides the knowledge and assistance in that the layout of the site can develop in an integrated coherent fashion with adjacent lands.

Housing Estate Completion

Developers will be required to give security to the Council in the form of an adequate cash deposit, bank bond or insurance company bond or other such security, to ensure satisfactory completion and maintenance of the estate. Developments should be phased to ensure that new residents have the benefit of proper access and services when the houses are occupied. A Construction Management Plan shall be submitted with planning applications for large-scale developments. At the commencement of any development the developer will be required, both in the interests of existing residential amenity and in the interests of health and safety to complete work on the boundaries/perimeters of the site in accordance with the permission granted. The phasing of such work will be submitted and agreed with the Planning Authority. The Planning Authority insists that "Taking in Charge" requests are made immediately upon completion and/or in phases.

Infill Housing

In-fill housing should reflect adjoining premises and where appropriate attention should be paid to the existing character of the street including proportions, height of structures, massing and materials as well as existing building lines, roof pitches, height and window detailing. A minimum distance of 2.5m between semi-detached and detached housing is required. In general, this distance should be equally divided between dwellings so as to allow for a usable side entrance.

Where proposed development of significant height is located close to existing development the Planning Authority may require daylight and shadow projection diagrams to be submitted. The recommendations of “*Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice*” (BRE 1991) or “*B.S. Lighting for Buildings Part 2 1992: Code of Practice for Daylighting*” should be followed in this regard.

Backland Development

The Council will encourage the provision of comprehensive backland development where the opportunity exists. The following should be taken into consideration for backland development:

New dwellings that closely overlook the rear curtilage of existing dwellings will not normally be permitted

Street Lighting & Public Utilities

Street lighting should be at least to the standards set out in the ESB publication *Public Lighting in Residential Developments*. Pedestrian links must also be illuminated. Lighting levels within a new development must create a secure environment. Dark corners and alleyways should be avoided. The use of low pressure sodium lighting and full cut off lighting shall be encouraged for environmental, economic and road safety reasons. Lampposts in prominent positions can help to define an area and promote a sense of place among the residents.

To preserve the amenity and visual character of an area, and in the interests of public safety, all services including electricity, public lighting cables, telephone and television cables shall be provided underground in all new developments. Provision should be made for the unobtrusive siting of transformer stations, pumping stations and other necessary service buildings. Pole mounted equipment (such as transformers) will not be permitted.

CHANGE OF USE AND ALTERATIONS TO DWELLINGS

Extension to Dwellings

The design and layout of extensions to houses should have regard to the amenities of adjoining properties, particularly as regards privacy. The character and form of the existing building should be respected and external finishes and window types should match the existing. Extensions should:

- Follow the pattern of the existing building as much as possible;
- Be constructed with similar finishes and with similar windows to the existing building so that they will integrate with it;
- Have a pitched roof, particularly when visible from the public road or when the building is two or three stories high. It is difficult to obtain a satisfactory external appearance with flat roofs:
- Dormer extensions should not obscure the main features of the existing roof, i.e. should not break the ridge or eaves lines of roof. Box dormers will not be permitted where visible from a public area;
- Traditional style dormers should provide the design basis;
- Front dormers should normally be set back at least three-tile courses from the eaves line and should be clad in a material matching the existing house;
- Care should be taken to ensure that the extension does not unduly overshadow windows, or have windows in flank walls, which would reduce a neighbour’s privacy.

Granny-Flats

Granny-flat extensions consist of independent living spaces for elderly people within the curtilage of a dwelling house belonging to a family member. Granny flats shall be an integral part of the main dwelling unit capable of reintegration for single-family use. The following criteria must be met:

- Where a bona fide need for such a unit exists;
- Where the unit acts as a physical extension to the main house with full integration between the existing house and proposed extension;
- Where such a unit is located at ground floor level;
- Where the unit is capable of re-integration for use as part of the main dwelling following its cessation of use as a granny flat sheltered dwelling;
- Entrances should be via the main dwelling unit, where own door entrances are proposed these should be located to the side or rear of the dwelling.

Conversion of Existing Houses to Flat Accommodation

The subdivision of houses and housing above business premises and housing on primary traffic routes may be permitted. Permission to convert to flats will not normally be granted unless:

- The minimum size of unit is 38 square metres for a 1-bed unit;
- There are areas available for necessary amenity purposes, parking etc;
- Development meets the requirements of the building regulations, and
- Each flat has a refuse bin storage areas and washing/drying facilities which are accessible to the occupants of that unit.

Proposals for conversion into flats should take account of standards set out in the “Guidelines on Residential Development in Designated Tax Incentives Areas” published by the DOEHLG.

Public Open Space

Public open space should be well designed from a visual perspective as well as being functionally accessible to the maximum number of dwellings within a residential area. A well-designed open space will be based on the principles of adequate overlooking, supervision and accessibility.

The emphasis should be placed on the retention of existing natural features and good proportions. Narrow tracts of open spaces are non-functional, hard to maintain, therefore unacceptable and will not be considered in assessing the adequacy or otherwise of open space provision in a new residential development.

In new development areas provision for open spaces should be identified at an early stage. It is important to plan for hard surface play areas. A hierarchy of open space provision in residential areas to meet the needs of children in different age groups will be encouraged.

Appropriate pedestrian and cycle linkages between open spaces should be clearly indicated on the site layout plan. Opportunities for providing new public open space may be limited due to site constraints and the need to protect the established pattern of streets and spaces.

Public open space will be required at the rate of 10% of the gross site area with a minimum unit of open space of 200sqm and 10m as a minimum dimension of any side. A minimum of 80sq.m of public open space per dwelling will be required in new residential developments. Where this cannot be provided or where it is not appropriate to provide this, a contribution to local amenity facilities in lieu

of the shortfall will be required. The provision of public open space should be cross referenced with County Laois Play Strategy which gives guidance on the types of recreational facilities required for all age groups with residential layouts.

Planning applications for major schemes should include a landscaping plan and a planting schedule. Proposals for the management of open space should also be included. As a first preference, consideration should be given to the use of native species of trees and shrubs.

Private Open Space

In Town centre and urban areas the quality of private open space will be crucial to successful residential development.

In apartment developments, private open space should be provided in a number of ways including, balconies, winter gardens, indoor amenity spaces, shared internal courtyards and roof gardens. In Townhouse and mews developments private open space should be provided in small rear yards and balconies.

A detailed landscape plan should be submitted with any application for development containing shared semi-private open space. In Suburban Areas focus must be placed on the quality of private open space rather than quantity alone.

LANDSCAPING

Soft Landscaping

Planting and landscaping can be used to incorporate new buildings into their surroundings and provide privacy between dwellings. New planting should consist of local plant types indigenous to the area and be incorporated into the site so as to enhance the overall appearance. When selecting plant species for landscaping, consideration should be taken of the proposed location of the site and its attendant character such as soil conditions, pollution, safety, maintenance requirements, the possibility of vandalism of the site, and aesthetic potential.

Hard Landscaping

Hard landscaping design, including paving and street furniture, is an important element in defining the character of the spaces between buildings and public open spaces. Hard landscaping works can help to:

- Provide a visual link to the surroundings;
- Define and enclose space, and delineate public from private space;
- Provide securing to private areas;
- Distinguish between pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movement;
- Provide suitable play space for children;
- Materials must be appropriate, durable and of a good quality. Careful consideration must be given to the design of hard surfaces such as streets, squares, open spaces, paved areas, footpaths and driveways;
- The textures and colours of the materials chosen must be sympathetic to the locality and be an integral part of the design;
- Walls, fences, metal railings and gates used to define spaces and their usage have a major impact on the visual character of the development. These should be carefully selected with local distinctiveness in mind and will need to be an integral part of the overall design concept;

- The sitting of street furniture should not provide undue obstacles for people with disabilities;
- The integration of art into public domain can contribute positively to the urban form creating local distinctiveness and enhancing a public space. Major development schemes will be expected to contribute to public area in the locality;
- Following underground works, it is an objective of Laois County Council to ensure the reinstatement of material or the replacement with materials of similar style and quality.

Site Coverage

In order to prevent adverse effects of over development in urban locations site coverage of: 50% for residential development, 66% for Industrial, retail and commercial developments would be appropriate. Within the Town Centre Zone, the maximum site coverage shall be 80% for all development. However, flexibility will be applied in the interests of achieving a more sustainable use of inner urban/town centre land.

A particular site coverage standard shall be acceptable only where it is consistent with other standards such as car parking, plot ratio, open space requirements etc.

Plot Ratio

Plot Ratio standards are used to prevent the adverse effect of over development on the layout and amenity of buildings, to ensure an adequate sense of enclosure and the efficient and sustainable use of serviced land. Plot ratio is defined as the gross floor area of buildings on a site divided by the gross site area and is used to depict the intensity of use on the site. In calculating the area of site adjoining road widths are excluded. In the built up areas of the town, it is desirable that an adequate proportion of sites be reserved for off loading, air circulation, refuse storage etc. Generally 20% of a site where a commercial, institutional or industrial development is proposed will be required to be left uncovered. Generally the maximum plot ratio standard shall be 1.0 for all development. Within the town centre the maximum plot ratio shall be 2.0.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

General Considerations

The general principles guiding the location of commercial development in the county have been set out in preceding chapters. In assessing planning applications a number of considerations will be taken into account:

- Conformity with the land use policies in respect of Commercial Development;
- The design, quality and mix of uses being proposed particularly in Town centres where redevelopment and changes of use need to be orientated towards creating a vibrant and lively, quality directed commercial core;
- The requirement that design quality protects but also enhances the architectural character of the Town, particularly in relation to landmark structures and viewpoints;
- The potential impact to be generated in terms of traffic movement, parking provision and desirability thereof and whether or not consideration has been given to access and commuter movements;
- Whether or not the proposed development will have a significant detrimental effect on the amenities of the surrounding areas;
- The energy efficiency and overall sustainability of the development which includes practical considerations, such as servicing, deliveries, waste/recycling and overall management thereof;

- Whether or not a land contamination assessment is necessary and is required as part of the Planning Authority requirements, and
- Whether or not an E. I. S. has been deemed necessary and provided as part of the Planning Authority requirements

Small-Scale Businesses in Residential Areas

The scale and nature of operations will be taken into account. Uses such as the repair of vehicles will not normally be permitted in a residential area. The level of customers/callers will be taken into account. The Planning Authority shall consider such small scale business where:

- The use of the house for business purposes is secondary to its use as a dwelling and the floor area of the business should reflect this,
- Adequate parking is provided,
- No loss of residential amenity to the adjoining residences in terms of general disturbance, noise, traffic generation etc.

Permission will be subject to the normal environmental and planning criteria. Any subsequent change or proposed expansion of the business will need to be reconsidered by the Planning Authority to assess whether the premises are still acceptable.

Warehouses and Industrial Uses/Business Campuses

The guiding policy considerations are set out in Chapter 4 “Enterprise and Employment”. In cases where these developments generate heavy traffic, they may not be sited where they would encourage movement of heavy vehicles through residential areas.

The criteria for assessment of such developments will include:

- The nature/activities/processes of the proposed development and site location factors;
- The compatibility with adjoining uses;
- The traffic implications and alternative access, servicing and sustainable mobility plans/commuting arrangements;
- The quality of building design;
- The site layout including car parking arrangements;
- Landscaping Plans;
- The energy efficiency and overall sustainability of the proposed developments

Industrial Development

A landscaped buffer zone will be a requirement of planning permission for any Industrial/Warehousing development where it adjoins another zoning or where it would seriously injure the amenities of adjoining land uses.

Public Houses/Late Night Clubs/Disco

Night clubs and disco bars play a role in urban areas providing a night use which adds to the attraction of a town. They will not, however, be permitted in residential areas. Noise levels at the boundaries of these establishments will be monitored as circumstances require and mitigation measures will be required at the time of the submission of the planning application.

Filling Stations

Applications for filling stations should take account of the following:

- Access to filling stations will not be permitted closer than 35 metres to a road junction;
- Frontage on public roads must be at least 20 metres in length;
- All pumps and installations shall be set back at least 5 metres from the road;
- A wall, of a minimum height of 0.5 metres, must separate the forecourt from the public footpath;
- All external lighting should be cowled and directed away from the public roadway to prevent traffic hazard;
- A proliferation of large illuminated projecting signs will not be permitted at filling stations. Generally only one such sign will be permitted;
- Turbo-drying or car washing facilities will be located so as not to interfere with residential amenities;
- Any shop being provided shall be ancillary to the principal use of the premises as a filling station and shall be a maximum size of 100 sq.metres excluding storage;
- An undue concentration of filling stations shall not be permitted, as in the past oversupply has led to closures with resulting unsightly derelict filling stations;
- Late night opening will only be permitted if it does not impact adversely on nearby residences;
- A landscaping plan will form part of any planning application.

Taxi/Hackney Cab Bases

The importance of taxi and cab services as a means of transport in the Town is recognised. However, cab bases will not be permitted where they are likely to interfere with traffic flows or on street parking. The Council fully endorses that taxi and cab bases should be fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Hot Food Take-Aways

Within the commercial core of the Town a proliferation of hot food “take-aways” will not be encouraged. Additional takeaways will not be permitted where there is a loss of office and retail frontage, in order to preserve the character of these areas. Regard will be had to the impact of hot food take-aways on the residential amenities in an area. ‘Stand alone’ take-aways, not attached to restaurants, will not be encouraged. The Planning Authority may impose restrictions on opening hours of hot food take-aways where these are permitted.

Gaming Arcades

Within the commercial core of the Town Gaming Arcades will not be permitted at ground floor. At all other locations regard will be had to the impact of gaming arcades on the residential amenities in an area and on the loss of retail/office frontage. The Planning Authority shall impose restrictions on opening hours of Gaming Arcades where these are permitted.

Childcare Facilities

The provision of childcare facilities is subject to the Child Care Act and the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 1996. The Planning Authority recognises the need for properly run and conveniently located childcare facilities throughout the county. It is the policy of the County Council to implement the Planning Guidelines on Child Care Facilities, 2001 [DoEHLG].

Applications for childcare facilities in a residential area will be assessed on the basis of their impact in terms of noise, loss of residential amenity, traffic generation and general disturbance. In general, the factors to be considered in determining application for a childcare facility are as follows:

- Have regard to the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 1996, in relation to the planning implications of these Regulations;
- Suitability of the site for the type and size of facility proposed;
- Availability of outdoor play area and details of management of same;
- Convenient to public transport nodes;
- Safe access and convenient parking for customers and staff;
- Number of such facilities in the area;
- Intended hours of operation (in certain residential areas, 24 hour operations could be problematic);
- The Council fully endorses that childcare facilities should be convenient to public transport nodes in order to achieve sustainability.
- encourage the provision of childcare facilities which are flexible and capable of being managed for a number of different uses and to encourage the further use of existing facilities.

Access for People with Disabilities

Where buildings are intended for public access they should be accessible to people with a disability and their facilities should be so designed as to accommodate people with a disability without difficulty. Part M of the Building Regulations 2000 as amended aims to ensure that buildings should be accessible and usable by everyone. Dwellings should be designed and constructed so that:

- People with disabilities can safely and conveniently approach and gain access;
- People with disabilities can have access to the main habitable room. At this level, it is considered adequate to provide for access to habitable rooms on the storey containing the main living room;
- At entry level a WC should be provided, or where there are no habitable rooms at entry level, in the storey containing the main living room, with adequate provision for access and use of the WC by people with disabilities;
- Design consideration for public buildings and areas should include the provision of tactile surfaces, new technologies and appropriate signage light and symbols as well as appropriate hierarchy of lighting to meet different types of accessibility issues. When access is being planned for people with disabilities it should be through the same entrance as others;
- Access considerations will be extended to the public realm with the position of street furniture and other elements being assessed on an ongoing basis. The siting of street furniture such as bins etc. should be where it does not substantially reduce the width of pavement available.

SIGNAGE & ADVERTISING

Advertising Hoardings, Billboards Location

The Council will not normally permit the erection of large non-local advertisement structures or hoarding in the open countryside or along main traffic routes. These large-scale structures are detrimental to the amenities of the area and also give rise to creation of a traffic hazard.

Outdoor advertising hoardings will normally be restricted and will not be permitted:

- Close to a listed building, a public open space or an important view;

- In predominantly residential areas, especially on prominent gable walls;
- Where a proliferation of them already exist;
- On street elevations;
- On buildings in the central commercial core;
- On stone walls in suburban areas;
- Where they may cause a road hazard;
- Where there may be a detrimental visual implication.

Advertising on Buildings

In general advertising on buildings should conform to the following:

- Be sympathetic in design and colouring both to the building on which they will be displayed and their surroundings;
- Not obscure architectural features such as cornices or window openings;
- Illuminated signs or other advertising structures will not be allowed above the eaves or parapet level on buildings in any part of the county;
- Shop front advertising should be designed as an integral part of the shop.

Fingerpost Signs

The erection of fingerpost signs will require a licence or planning permission from The Planning Authority and should comply with the following:

- Directional signs for major tourist attractions and community purposes will be considered but product advertising will not be permitted;
- Signs must be of a standard size and colour which will be decided by the Council;
- Signs, which interfere with road safety, and the County Council or N.R.A directional signs will not be permitted.

The basic planning control principle is to reduce visual environmental clutter to the basic necessities and to improve the overall quality of physical environmental character of the County for the benefit of people living, working or visiting the county.

Shopfronts and Commercial Facades

The Planning Authority's objective is to maintain, and over a period of time, raise the general quality of advertisement and shopfront design and to limit the quantity of advertisements where excess would spoil the character of particular shops or streetscapes. It is with this objective in mind that the following design guidelines will be applied in assessing Planning Applications, and it is intended that they will promote active co-operation between traders, designers and the County Council in implementing these guidelines.

The scope of these guidelines encompasses not only shops, but also all other business frontages such as restaurants, pubs, banks and offices.

Statutory protection is given to buildings of special architectural merit or historic interest, which have been listed in the Development Plan. The fundamental effect of listing is that works, which otherwise would be exempted development, require planning permission. Any alterations to shopfronts that are part of such should be consistent with the age and style of the buildings.

In general the need to change old shopfronts will be closely examined, as it is the policy of Laois County Council to preserve and retain traditional shopfronts of townscape importance. The condition of the existing frontage should be expertly examined, as the replacement of shopfronts in a poor condition may be a premature solution. A careful repair can make good a neglected shopfront without incurring the cost of a new shopfront. In addition, refurbishment of shopfronts can often offer an opportunity to strip away later additions and to re-establish the proportions and details of the original framework.

The repair, restoration and replacement of shopfronts must be sympathetically carried out to protect the architectural character of the Town/area in question. It may be necessary to accept that modern shop fronts are not appropriate in certain old buildings or traditional shopping parades. Where new shopfronts are acceptable in these situations the quality of design and finish should be of the highest standard and accurate facsimiles of period fronts may be necessary.

Where existing shopfronts are of no special merit, total replacement is acceptable and a modern design to a high standard will be encouraged provided it respects good architectural and conservation principles.

Fascia Signage and Illuminative and Projecting Signs

As a general principal fascia signs and projecting signs should be simple in design, not excessive in number, illumination or size. The following basic guidelines will be applied in assessing Planning applications:

- Plastic derived fascias with product advertising will not be permitted;
- Quality signage is strongly encouraged in all circumstances;
- Projecting signs should be of 2.4 metres clearance above street level;
- Internally illuminated fascias will not be permitted;
- Overall illumination of fascia signage or shopfronts or distinctive architectural features should be discreet and limited to spot-lighting, up-lighting or disguised minimalist strip lighting;
- The use of banners, flags, billboards and other forms of commercial and cultural advertising will be strictly controlled in Town centres and essentially restricted to those outlets of a cultural–entertainment activity.

Security Screens

The following standards in respect of Security Screens shall be applied:

- Planning permission is required for the erection of roller shutters;
- External roller shutters will not generally be permitted in the county;
- Box housing for shutters, mounted externally or concealed behind a large projecting fascia is a material alteration which is unlikely to be permitted in any shopping street;
- Security screens located inside the shop window or to the rear of the display area do not require planning permission as a general rule and are encouraged;
- Demountable metal-grills or wrought iron-work grills may also be acceptable.

Canopies

Planning permission is required for the erection of canopies. Canopies of traditional design and materials, which are retractable, will be favoured. In all circumstances canopies should not illustrate

products unrelated to the primary activity of the premises and also should not be a hazard to pedestrians, visitors or shoppers.

Bus Shelters/other structures

Advertising on bus shelters will be permitted in locations, which do not detract from the primary purpose of the transport shelter. General advertisements and promotional design advertisements on telephone kiosks within Town centres will not be permitted.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

An efficient telecommunications system is important in the development of the economy. The Council policy in relation to telecommunications is in Chapter 4 "Enterprise and Employment". However, in considering location requirements the Council take into account the following factors outlined in the Department of the Environment's Planning Guidelines for Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures 1996 and Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended.

Telecommunication installation will not be favoured in residential areas, on land on which development may be restricted or prevented for amenity reasons, or in parts of the county, which are architecturally important; and affect security installations. Nor will they be favoured unless it is clear that the developer has made reasonable efforts to share with other users of existing or proposed sites in the vicinity of the proposed mast. Evidence of this will be required.

If the proposal is contrary to any of the above, the Council will need to be satisfied that the installation is of strategic importance if permission is to be granted. A report as to the public safety implications of the proposal should accompany any planning application. Regard should be had to locating new masts in existing industrial areas, where their visual impact would be less.

In assessing telecommunications facilities and structures, Planning Authority will have regard to the technical advice of the Irish Aviation Authority where such proposed locations may have an inappropriate or detrimental impact on flight paths.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSEMENT

In compliance with E.U. Directives, Environmental Impact Statements (E.I.S.) are required for projects, which are likely to have significant affects on the environment. E.I.S.'s are obligatory for certain major developments and may be required for a wide range of other developments. The E.U. (E.I.A.) Regulations, 1989 as amended specify the types of development and threshold levels for which E.I.S.'s are required.

MAJOR ACCIDENT DIRECTIVE, SEVESO II

Unlike the earlier Seveso 1 Directive (82/501/EEC), Seveso II includes provisions in relation to land use planning. Article 12 of the Directive requires Member States to ensure that the objectives of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents are taken into account in land use policies and/or other relevant policies. These objectives must be pursued through controls on the following:

- The siting of new establishments.
- Modifications to existing establishments.

- Development in the vicinity of an establishment, which, by virtue of its type or siting, is likely to increase the risk or consequences of a major accident.
- Article 12 of the Directive provides that appropriate consultation procedures must be put in place so as to ensure that, before decisions are taken, technical advice is available to Planning Authorities in respect of relevant establishments. The Health & Safety Authority provides such advice.

Such technical advice will be taken into account in the consideration of any such application for planning permission.

PROTECTED STRUCTURES & ARCHAEOLOGY

Protected Structures and other Buildings of Significant Heritage Interest

The following information is required to be submitted with each application for permission for restoration, refurbishment, demolition development or change of use:

- An Architectural Assessment Report as per the “*Architectural Heritage Protection-Guidelines for Planning Authorities*” {DoAHG, 2011},
- A comprehensive schedule of proposed work that follows the guidelines as set out in the “*Architectural Heritage Protection -Guidelines for Planning Authorities*” {DoAHG,2011}.

Archaeological Investigations

In general the following guidelines will apply. Developments, which impact on archaeological record, will be treated as follows:

- The archaeological remains of potentially significant sites within the Zone of Archaeological Potential will be preserved or investigated;
- Outside of the Zone of archaeological Potential, where in the opinion of the Planning Authority developments involve major ground disturbances, particularly in the vicinity of known monuments, planning conditions in relation to archaeology may also be applied;
- The Council will require that archaeological investigation be undertaken prior to the commencement of development. All such investigations must be undertaken by a qualified archaeologist in consultation with Laois County Council and the Office of Public Works;
- When deciding to grant permission for developments within the Zone of Archaeological Potential, the Council may impose conditions which render the developer liable for the cost of the archaeological investigation or the preservation of the archaeological record;
- Conditions may be imposed which modify the development, in order to facilitate the archaeological investigation or preserve the archaeological record.

Developers will be encouraged to supply an archaeological assessment and a method statement outlining construction procedures as part of their planning application. This is intended to facilitate assessment of the proposal.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As a general principle the location and provision of Community Development facilities is a pre-requisite to the enhancement of viable, enjoyable, sustainable and attractive local communities. In assessing planning applications for leisure facilities, sports grounds, playing fields, play areas,

community halls, organisational meeting facilities, medical facilities, childcare facilities new school provision and other community orientated developments, regard will be taken of considerations such as: -

- Overall need in terms of necessity, deficiency, and opportunity to enhance or develop local facilities.
- Practicalities of site location in terms of uses, impact on local amenities, desirability, and accessibility.
- Conformity with the requirements of appropriate legislative guidelines: such as childcare and education facilities.

CAR-PARKING STANDARDS

Residential Parking Standards

Parking is an integral element of overall land use and transportation policy within the Town. The purpose of the parking standards is to ensure that an appropriate level of parking is provided to serve new development. Where a developer cannot provide the specified number of car-parking spaces within the site, a financial contribution in lieu will be required towards the cost of providing such spaces off the site or planning permission will be refused. The issue of car parking in Mountmellick has become a critical factor in deciding on the appropriateness of developments in the Town centre. Strict consideration will be given to the amount of parking spaces likely to be generated by new developments and the ability to provide that amount of parking on site.

Table 8: Parking Standards for Residential Developments

Location	Parking space per unit
Town Centre Apartments / Mews Type developments	1.5
Dwelling House (Town Centre)	1.5
Dwelling House (Suburban)	2

Group and clustered parking will be required where spaces cannot be provided on individual sites.

Construction and layout standards for multi-storey and underground car parks are set out in the document, *“Design Recommendation for Multi-Storey and Underground Car Parks”* (current edition), published by the Joint Committee of the Institute of Structural Engineers and the Institution of Highways and Transportation.

Car Parking should be considered having regard to potential of the site to accommodate it, the needs of the residents and proximity to local public transport and local services. It should be located where it will not detract from the quality of the street or the development and it should satisfy appropriate layout standards.

Other Car Parking Standards

Units for which one car parking space is to be provided are set out in table below. Development Contributions will be required in cases where there is a shortfall in on site car parking.

Table 9: Areas Other than Residential for which Parking Spaces are Required

Land Use	
Apartment	1.25 spaces per apartment
Café	1 space per 10 sqm
Caravan, Camping sites	1 per caravan/tent space
Cinema, Dancehall, Disco	1 space per 5 seats
Community Hall	1 space per 5 seats
Crèche/ Playschool	1 space per staff member plus 1 space per 4 children
Cultural Uses/ Library	1 space per 50 sqm
Dwelling	2 spaces per unit
Funeral Home	1 space per 10 sqm
Garden Centre	1 space per 50 sqm
Guest House/Hostel/Hotel	1 space per bedroom
Health Centre	1 space per staff and 3 spaces per consulting room.
Hospitals	1 space per bed
Industry	1 space per 50 sqm
Medical and Related consultants	1 space per staff and 3 spaces per consulting room.
Motor Sales	1 space per 100sqm
Nursing Home	1 space per 2 bedrooms
Offices < 100 sqm	1 space per 20 sqm
Offices > 100 sqm	1 space per 25 sqm
Place of Worship/Funeral Home	1 space per 10 sqm
Playing Fields	25 spaces per pitch
Pub	1 space per 10sqm
Recreational Buildings (Commercial & Community)	1 space per 20sqm
Restaurant	1 space per table/4 seats
Retail Warehouse	1 space per 50 sqm
School	2 spaces per classroom
Retail < 100sqm (Comparison)	1 space per 50 sqm
Retail > 100sqm (Comparison)	1 space per 30 sqm
Retail < 100 sqm (Convenience)	1 space per 25 sqm
Retail > 100 sqm (Convenience)	1 space per 20 sqm
Sport/Leisure Complex	1 space per 25 sqm
Warehouse (Wholesale)	1 per 50 sqm
Workshops	1 per 50 sqm

The lack of any or inadequate car parking for a development is sufficient reason, in its own right, to refuse planning permission.

Cycle Provision

Cycle Provision (Access and storage) will be particularly important in respect of developments for apartments, public services, hospitals, colleges and community facilities and details of such provision will be required as part of any planning application for such development.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Requirements and Contribution for Parking, Sanitary Services and Amenity

Contributions towards expenditure by the Council for works, including expenditure on roads, water and drainage schemes, open spaces and other amenities, which facilitate development, will be required. The Planning Authority may grant an exemption from contribution in accordance with Development Contribution Scheme in the following cases:

Churches, community halls, development for public social purposes, provision of sporting facilities (excluding licensed premises attached to clubhouses) and extensions to dwellings;

Renovation, to a high standard of a protected structure or other building of architectural interest currently in poor condition, provided the renovation is faithful to the building's design and period.

The details and basis for the determination of the contributions will be set out in a Development Contribution Scheme in accordance with the provision of section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

Undergrounding and Concealing of Services

In new housing and in other forms of urban developments all services including E.S.B., telephone and television cables shall be placed underground. Service buildings or structures should be sited as unobtrusively as possible and must be screened. Care should also be given to the treatment of maintenance boxes, electrical boxes and bin storage on facades so that such items are concealed as unobtrusively as possible.

Required Distances from Sewerage Treatment Works

Proposals to develop in close proximity to existing or proposed sewerage treatment plants and Pumping stations will be assessed having regard to:

- The nature of the effluent being treated;
- Prevailing wind direction;
- Noise;
- Type of treatment process employed;
- Sludge treatment;
- Visibility and screening of treatment plant.

Development will not be allowed within the buffer zone around the existing waste water treatment works or 50m of a foul pumping sewer station. This distance may be increased if significant environmental issues are likely to arise and will be judged on a site by site basis. The buffer area may be used to fulfil open space requirements. Road gullies in an area of extreme vulnerability will be required to include measures to prohibit contaminated surface water from entering ground water sources.

Naming Streets, Housing Estates

Naming of streets and residential estates shall reflect the local place names and local people of note, heritage, language or topographical features as appropriate and shall incorporate old place names from the locality as much as possible. The use of bi-lingual and Irish-Language signs will be encouraged. Naming and numbering of residential estates shall be approved in advance by the Place

names Committee of the Planning Authority. Along with suggested estate names, developers must submit reasons for their choice. A Council Committee has been formed to advise on naming of new residential developments. Signage should be of appropriate size and material and shall be erected in a timely manner.

The use of Management Style Companies is not considered generally acceptable for the traditional form of residential layout and is to be discouraged. Their use is only considered necessary in exceptional circumstances. The Planning Authority expects requests for taking in charge estates to be made at expeditiously as possible.

Requirements for Traffic and Transport Assessment, Road Safety Audits and Related Matters

Planning applications for significant development proposals should be accompanied with Traffic and Transport Assessment [TTA] and Road Safety Audits [RSA] to be carried out by suitably competent consultants. Guidance is given in this respect in the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government/Department of Transport/Dublin Transportation Office publication “Traffic Management Guidelines” and National Roads Authority DMRB [HD 19/09 Road Safety Audit].

To assist with the aforementioned, the National Roads Authority has prepared Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines, which are available at www.nra.ie. The Guidelines seek to promote best practice for the preparation of TTA and explain the relevance of TTA in the planning process.

In assessing proposals for provision of tourist and leisure information signs on national primary and secondary roads, the Planning Authority will have regard to NRA Policy on the Provision of Tourist & Leisure Signage on National Roads [March 2011]. The Planning Authority will also have regard to Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities [2012] with reference to controlling the proliferation of non-road signage on and adjacent to national roads.

In assessing proposals for development, the Planning Authority will refer to the requirements of S.I. No. 140 of 2006 Environmental Noise Regulations to ensure that such proposals identify and implement noise mitigation measures [to be borne by the developer] where warranted.

Chapter 12: Land-Use Zoning

Land-Use Zoning Objectives

The Land Use Zoning Objectives for this Plan are set out in the policies and illustrated on the accompanying maps. The purpose of land use zoning is to indicate to property owners and to the general public the types of development, which the Council considers most appropriate in each zone. In the promotion of redevelopment and urban renewal, this allows the developer to plan investment with some certainty. In the control of development, zoning seeks to limit competing and incompatible uses in order to promote greater environmental quality.

The Town centre zoning is intended as a means of encouraging the redevelopment of under-utilised or derelict land but also to safeguard the amenity of residential enclaves and to protect certain areas with high amenity value.

Zoning of lands outside the Town centre, on the other hand, is intended primarily to guide and facilitate the physical development of land for specific purposes, to protect existing amenities and to allow for changes in land use over time in an orderly fashion. In considering the extent and types of use zoning objectives, the following factors have been taken into consideration;

- ✚ The present development area and trends in development since 2007;
- ✚ Current land use zoning objectives as contained in the Mountmellick Local Area Plan 2007-2013 as adopted by Laois County Council,
- ✚ The amount of committed and uncommitted land within the existing development area;
- ✚ The accessibility, availability and location of land for development;
- ✚ The location and adequacy of existing social infrastructure (schools, community facilities etc)
- ✚ The character of the Town with regard to the scale and pattern of development;
- ✚ The need to promote proper planning and sustainable development in accordance with National, Regional and Local Policies which are set out in higher order plans including National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines, Laois County Development Plan,
- ✚ Physical features and amenities of the Town;
- ✚ The present and future situation regarding the provision of essential physical infrastructure – especially water, wastewater, roads, flood defences;
- ✚ The presence of an important aquifer and the need to facilitate the orbital road system;
- ✚ The use of the **Sequential Approach** in guiding the location of planned development;
- ✚ The implications of flood risk analysis and environmental designations;
- ✚ The housing land requirement as determined in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and the Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017

The following land use zoning objectives have been established for Mountmellick.

Table No 10 Land Use Zoning for Mountmellick

USE	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
<p>Town Centre (Primary/Core Retail Area)</p>	<p><i>To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of the existing Town centre and to provide for and improve retailing and commercial activities</i></p>	<p>The purpose of this zone is to protect and enhance the special character of Town Centre and to provide for and improve retailing, residential, commercial, office, cultural, public facilities and other uses appropriate to the centre of a developing urban core.</p> <p>It will be an objective of the Council to encourage the use of buildings and backlands and especially the full use of upper floors, preferably for residential purposes. Warehousing and other industrial uses will not generally be permitted in the urban core of towns and villages.</p> <p>Proposals for new development in areas at risk of flooding as identified on the land use maps within this zone will be subject to the development management justification test as outlined in “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Local Authorities” [DoEHLG, 2009].</p>
<p>Residential 1</p>	<p><i>To protect and enhance the amenity of developed residential communities</i></p>	<p>This zone 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, doctors surgeries, playing fields etc.</p> <p>It is an objective on land zoned for <u>Residential 1</u> to protect the established residential amenity and enhance it with associated open space, community uses and where an acceptable standard of amenity can be maintained, a limited range of other uses that support the overall residential function of the area.</p> <p>Within this zoning category the improved quality of existing residential areas will be the Council’s priority.</p> <p>In established residential areas in areas at risk of flooding as identified on the land use maps, where the replacement or the reconstruction of an existing dwelling is considered appropriate for wider planning reasons the planning authority should require that development management justification test is carried out in accordance with the “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines-Guidelines for Local Authorities” [DoEHLG, 2009].</p> <p>There will be no increase in the number of residential units or households There will be no adverse impact on the function of the floodplain, watercourse or conveyancing routes.</p> <p>Residual risk is addressed and reduced where possible, for example through relocation of buildings, and/or flood resilience/resistance measures applied to the site and buildings.</p>

USE	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Residential 2	<i>To provide for new residential development, residential services and community facilities within the Plan period 2012-2018</i>	<p>This zone is intended primarily for housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to foster the development of new residential communities such as schools, crèches, small shops, doctor’s surgeries, playing fields etc.</p> <p>It is an objective, on land zoned for <u>Residential 2</u> to promote development mainly for housing, associated open space, community uses and where an acceptable standard of amenity can be maintained, a limited range of other uses that support the overall residential function of the area.</p> <p>Within this zoning category the improved quality of residential areas and the servicing of orderly development will be the Council’s priority. New housing and infill developments should be of sensitive design, which are complimentary to their surroundings. No piecemeal development can take place unless it does not conflict with the possible future development of the reserved development areas of the town. Adequate undeveloped lands have been zoned in the Plan for residential use to meet the requirements for both public and private house building over the Plan period</p>

USE	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Strategic Reserve	<i>To provide lands for future development in line with national and regional targets over the next Plan period 2018-2024</i>	<p>Regarding lands included in the Strategic Reserve land bank, it is important to highlight that the inclusion of such lands will not in any way infer a prior commitment on the part of Laois County Council regarding their future zoning during the review of the subsequent development plan for the plan period 2018-2024. Such a decision will be considered within the framework of national and regional population targets applicable at that time and the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.</p> <p>In areas at risk of flooding as identified on the land use maps, where the development is considered appropriate for wider planning reasons the planning authority should require that Development Management Justification Test is carried out in accordance with “<i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines-Guidelines for Local Authorities</i>” [DoEHLG, 2009].</p> <p>There will be no increase in the number of residential units or households. There will be no adverse impact on the function of the floodplain, watercourse or conveyancing routes. Residual risk is addressed and reduced where possible, for example through relocation of buildings, and/or flood resilience/resistance measures applied to the site and buildings.</p>
Community Educational Institutional	<i>To provide for and improve local & neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities</i>	<p>This zoning of lands provides for local civic, religious, community, educational and other facilities ancillary to neighbourhood uses and services.</p> <p>Proposals for new development in areas at risk of flooding as identified on the land use maps within this zone will be subject to the development management justification test as outlined in “<i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Local Authorities</i>” [DoEHLG, 2009].</p>
Tourism	<i>To provide for and improve tourist amenities in the County</i>	<p>The areas included in this zoning objective are intended to meet with the needs of the tourist in the County. Uses such as accommodation of all types and ancillary services such as food and beverage establishments will be encouraged within the use zone.</p>

USE	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Open Space and Amenity	<i>To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space</i>	The areas included in this zoning objective cover both private and public open space and are dispersed throughout urban centres of every size. The Council will not normally permit development that would result in a loss of open space.
Neighbourhood Centres	<i>To serve the needs of new/existing residential areas.</i>	<p>This zoning provides for the development of a new/existing neighbourhood centre to serve the needs of new/existing residential areas. A mix of retail, community and recreational development will be sought in this zone. Only limited residential development will be considered in new developments sufficient to ensure the satisfactory working of the neighbourhood centre.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Centres are intended to serve the immediate needs of the local working and residential population and complement, rather than compete with the established town centre.</p> <p>The purpose of these Neighbourhood Centres is to serve the local community through the provision of retail facilities and other services. Ideally these should be within walking distance of the area they are intended to serve. The retail element of these local centres will be controlled so as not to negatively impact on the existing town centre. These controls will usually take the form of setting a maximum retail floor area for the shop units to be provided in these neighbourhood centres. The largest size of a new convenience store shall be restricted to no more than 300 sq.ms. in a Neighbourhood Centre.</p>

USE	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Industrial Warehousing	& To provide for industrial and development	<p>and improve warehousing</p> <p>This zoning provides for industrial and warehousing uses. Other uses, ancillary or similar to industry and warehousing will be considered on the merits of each planning application and may be acceptable in this zone. Where employment is a high generator of traffic, the location of new employment at appropriate scale, density, type and location will be encouraged to reduce the demand for travel. The layout of new employment sites will have to have regard for alternative sustainable modes of transport. Site layout should emphasize the necessary connections to the wider local and strategic public transport, walking and cycling networks. Residential or Retail uses (including retail warehousing) will not be acceptable in this zone. Where any Industrial/Warehousing land adjoins other land uses, Laois County Council will require that a buffer zone is provided for and landscaped accordingly in accordance with the Development Control Standards chapter of this Plan.</p> <p>To provide for industrial development, in particular for heavy industry associated with environmental emissions, including noise and odour and with intensive or hazardous processing and also provide for light industry, technology related office development and general office development that exceed 400 square metres.</p> <p>In areas at risk of flooding as identified on the land use maps, where the development is considered appropriate for wider planning reasons the planning authority should require that Development Management Justification test is carried out in accordance with <i>“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Local Authorities”</i> [DoEHLG, 2009].</p> <p>There will be no increase in the number of residential units or households. There will be no adverse impact on the function of the floodplain, watercourse or conveyancing routes.</p> <p>Residual risk is addressed and reduced where possible, for example through relocation of buildings, and/or flood resilience/resistance measures applied to the site and buildings.</p>
General Business	To provide for commercial activities.	<p>and improve</p> <p>The purpose of this zone is to provide for commercial activities and acknowledge the existing/permitted retailing. Any specific development proposal must have due regard to the location of the site within the wider Town context and be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p> <p>Proposals for new development in areas at risk of flooding as identified on the land use maps within this zone will be subject to the development management justification test as outlined in <i>“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Local Authorities”</i> [DoEHLG, 2009].</p>

USE	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Enterprise and Employment	<p><i>To provide lands for Enterprise and Employment use, more specifically low input and emission manufacturing, recycling facilities, campus-style offices, storage uses, wholesaling and distribution, commercial services with high space and parking requirements that may not be suitable for town centre locations</i></p>	<p>The purpose of this zone is to provide for activities which will generate employment and encourage enterprise. It is the policy of the Council to ensure that there is adequate land available to facilitate opportunities for employment creation, and the Council will accommodate commercial and enterprise uses that are incapable of being situated in a town centre location, provided that such development does not detract from the town centre’s commercial function. Warehousing, commercial, enterprise, recycling facilities and ancillary services should be provided in high quality landscaped campus style environments, incorporating a range of amenities.</p> <p>The uses in this zone are likely to generate a considerable amount of traffic by both employees and service traffic. Sites should therefore have good vehicular and public transport access. The implementation of mobility management plans will provide important means of managing accessibility to these sites.</p> <p>Proposals for new development in areas at risk of flooding as identified on the land use maps within this zone will be subject to the development management justification test as outlined in “<i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management-Guidelines for Local Authorities</i>” [DoEHLG, 2009].</p>

USE	OBJECTIVE	PURPOSE
Transport and Utilities	<i>To provide for the needs of all transport users and other utility providers.</i>	<p>Car parks and commercial development associated with the provision of public transport services are considered appropriate in this zoning. This zoning also provides for and preserves land in the ownership of the Council or other bodies charged with the provision of services such as electricity, telecommunications, water, wastewater etc. to the town.</p> <p>The Flood Guidelines allow for consideration of the development of essential infrastructure such as primary transport and utilities distribution (including electricity generation) within flood zones as identified provided that it cannot be located elsewhere. Reconstruction or replacement and minor extensions or alterations to such infrastructure will not be required to satisfy the justification test. However and appropriate level of flood risk assessment should be carried out in accordance with <i>“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Local Authorities”</i> [DoEHLG, 2009].</p>

Zoning Matrices

Uses other than the primary use for which an area is zoned may be permitted provided they are not in conflict with the primary use-zoning objective. The Zoning Matrix illustrates the acceptability or unacceptability of various uses for each of the zoning objectives. The land use zoning matrix is intended to provide guidance to potential developers. It is not intended to supplant the normal planning process. An indication that a proposal would be ‘permitted in principle’ from the matrix should not be taken to imply a granting of permission, or indeed that a planning application may be necessarily successful. Individual applications are a matter for the Planning Authority to decide and the final decision rests with them, taking into consideration the merits of individual cases and circumstances that may be relevant at a specific time or at a specific location. The matrix relates to land use only and important factors such as density, building height, design standards, traffic generation, etc., are also relevant in establishing whether or not a development proposal would be acceptable in a particular location.

<p>Y= Will Normally be Acceptable</p>	<p>A use, which will normally be acceptable, is one, which the Local Authority accepts in principle in the relevant zone. However, it is still subject to the normal planning process including policies and objectives outlined in the Plan.</p>
<p>O= Are Open for Consideration</p>	<p>A use, which is open for consideration, means that the use is generally acceptable except where indicated otherwise and where specific considerations associated with a given proposal (i.e. scale) would be unacceptable, or where the development would be contrary to the objective for a given area. Not a Material Contravention.</p>
<p>N= Will Not Normally be Acceptable</p>	<p>Development, which is classified as not normally being acceptable in a particular zone, is one, which will not be entertained by the Local Authority except in exceptional circumstances. This may be due to its perceived effect on existing and permitted uses, its incompatibility with the policies and objectives contained in this Plan or the fact that it may be inconsistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The expansion of established and approved uses not conforming to land use zone objectives will be considered on their merits.</p>

Table 11 General Zoning Matrix *Specific Zoning Objectives

Land Use	Village / Town Centre	Residential 1	Residential 2	Enterprise & Employment	General Business	Neigh Centre	Com/Education/ institutional	Open Space	Tourism	Horticulture	Industrial	Transport and Utilities
Apartment	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Car Park	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Animal Housing	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	y	N	O
Café	Y	O	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	O	O	O
Caravan Camping	N	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N	O
Cemetery	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	O
Cinema, Dancehall, Disco	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Community Hall	O	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Craft Industry	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Crèche/ Playschool	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O	N	Y	O	O	N
Cultural Uses/ Library	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	Y	N	N	O
Dwelling	O	Y	Y	N	N	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N
Funeral Home	O	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Garages, Panel Beating, Car Repairs	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Garden Centre	O	N	N	O	O	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Guest House/Hostel/Hotel	Y	O	O	O	O	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N
Halting Site	N	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N
Health Centre	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N
Heavy Commercial Vehicle Parks	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Hot Food Takeaway	O	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Industry	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Industry (Light)	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Medical and Related Consultants	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O	N	N	N	N	N
Motor Sales	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Nursing Home/ Sheltered Housing	O	O	O	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	O	N
Offices < 100 sq m	Y	O	O	Y	Y	O	O	N	N	Y	Y	N
Offices > 100 sq m	Y	N	N	Y	Y	O	O	N	N	N	O	N
Park Playground	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	O	O	N
Petrol Station	Y	N	N	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N	O	N

Land Use	Village / Town Centre	Residential 1	Residential 2	Enterprise & Employment	General Business	Neigh Centre	Com/Education/Institutional	Open Space	Tourism	Horticulture	Industrial	Transport and Utilities
Place of Worship	Y	O	O	N	N	O	Y	N	O	N	N	N
Playing Fields	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Pub	Y	N	N	N	O	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Recreational Building (Commercial)	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	N	N	N
Recreational Building (Community)	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	O	Y	O	N	O
Restaurant	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	N	O	O	O	N
Retail Warehouse	Y	N	N	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
School/Educational Facilities	Y	O	O	N	N	O	O	N	N	O	N	N
Scrap Yard	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	O	N
Retail < 100sqm (Comparison)	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	O	O	N	N
Retail > 100sqm (Comparison)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Retail < 100 sq m (Convenience)	Y	O	O	O	Y	Y	N	N	O	O	N	N
Retail > 100 sq m (Convenience)	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Sport/Leisure Complex	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	O	N	N
Utility structures	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	N	O	Y	Y	Y
Warehouse (Wholesale)	N	N	N	Y	O	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Workshops	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

Y Normally permitted

N Not Acceptable – Material Contravention

O Considered under certain circumstance (not a material contravention)

It is intended that the land-use zoning matrix will facilitate and afford sufficient flexibility to develop the land for a range of uses.

TC	Town Centre
Enter & Employ –	Enterprise and Employment
Neigh Centre –	Neighbourhood Centre
Res. 1 -	Residential 1 Established
Res. 2 –	Residential 2
Strat. Res.	Strategic Reserve
Comm/Ed/Instit –	Community, Educational, Institutional
GB –	General Business
Open Space –	Open Space/amenity
Industry –	Industry
Transport & Util -	Transport & Utilities

