Laois County Council
Comhairle Chontae Laoise

&

Offaly County Council
Comhairle Chontae Uibh Fhaili

DRAFT PORTARLINGTON JOINT LOCAL AREA PLAN

2018 – 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

The National Planning Framework (NPF) includes a National Policy Objective to prepare a joint local area plan where a town and environs lie within the combined functional area of more than one Local Authority. The Draft Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) has been prepared by Laois County Council and Offaly County Council in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (hereafter referred to as 'the Act'). The Draft Joint LAP sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Portarlington, in the context of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023, Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020 and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022. The Draft Joint LAP has also been informed by Ministerial Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Act together with EU requirements regarding Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

The Draft Joint Local Area Plan comprises a written statement with accompanying maps. The written statement shall take precedence over the map should any discrepancy arise. In the full interpretation of all objectives for Portarlington, it is essential that both County Development Plans (CDPs) and the Local Area Plan (LAP) are read together. Where conflicting objectives arise between the CDPs and the Draft Joint LAP, the objectives of the relevant CDP shall take precedence. It should be noted that the general development management standards applicable to the plan area are included in the relevant CDP, while policies and objectives that are specific to Portarlington are included in the Draft Joint LAP.

2 LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Sections 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that an LAP be prepared in respect of an area which –

(i) Is designated as a town in the most recent census of population, other than a town designated as a suburb or environs in that census,
(ii) Has a population in excess of 5,000, and
(iii) Is situated within the functional area of a Planning Authority which is a County Council.

The CSO Census 2016 confirmed that Portarlington has a total population of 8,368 persons. A LAP is therefore statutorily required for Portarlington.

Section 20 of the Act sets out the process for the making of a Local Area Plan as illustrated in the follow diagram:

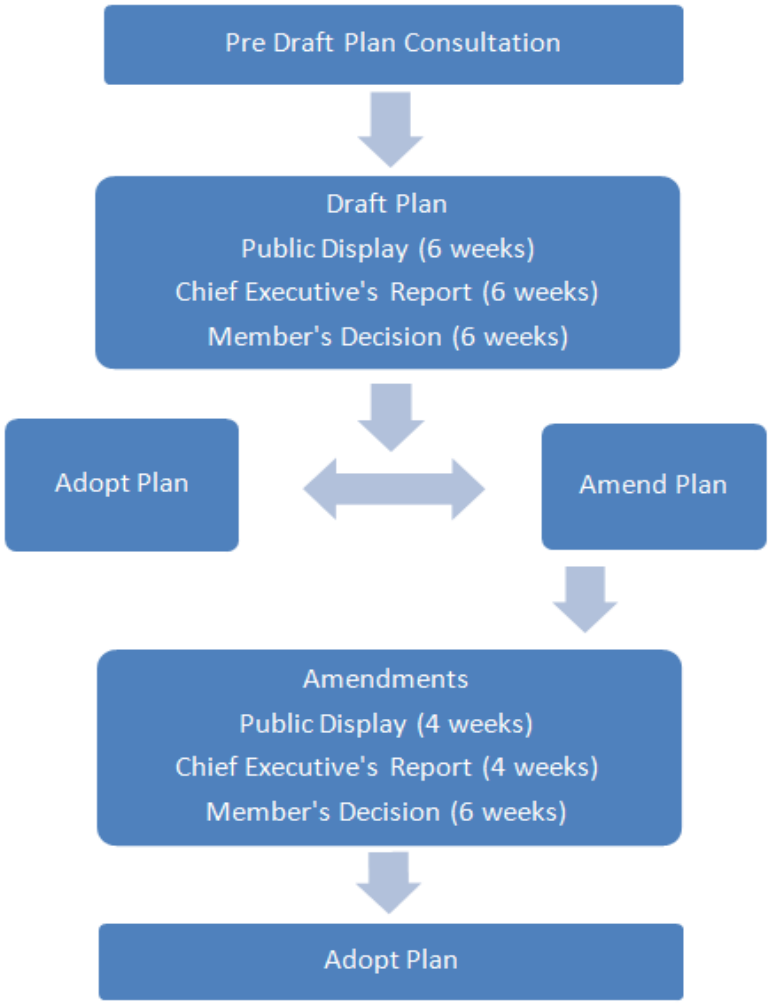

Figure 1: LAP Process

In accordance with Section 19 and 28 of the Act the Draft Joint LAP is subject to the following environmental considerations:

2.1 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required in accordance with the SEA Directive (DIR 2001/42/EC). SEA is a formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan, policy or programme. SEA is mandatory for plans for areas with a population of 5,000 or more and is therefore required for the Draft Portarlington Joint LAP.

Minogue and Associates, Environmental Consultants have been appointed by both Laois and Offaly County Councils to undertake the SEA as part of the preparation of the Draft Joint LAP. In this regard, an SEA Environmental Report has been prepared informing the likely environmental impacts of implementing the policies and objectives of the plan and integrating relevant environmental considerations into the plan. The SEA Environmental Report accompanies this Draft Joint LAP. This report sets out the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the location and type of developments within the Plan area, mitigation measures to offset potential adverse effects of the Plan and monitoring proposals.

2.2 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive (DIR 92/43/EEC). AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of the plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

Minogue and Associates, Environmental Consultants have been appointed by both Laois and Offaly County Councils to undertake Appropriate Assessment as part of the preparation of the Draft Joint LAP.

Following screening for AA, it was determined that the Draft Portarlington Joint LAP is likely to have a significant impact on areas designated as a Natura 2000 site, therefore a Natura Impact Report must be prepared. The mitigation measures identified in the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Report) have been incorporated into the Plan.

2.3 STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is required under Section 28 of the Act in accordance with *"The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities"* as amended by Circular PL2/2014. The primary purpose of the SFRA is to determine flood risk within a particular geographical area and to support planning decisions in relation to developing the plan.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) carried out for Portarlington is an assessment of flood risk in the town to inform strategic land-use decisions with the purpose of ensuring that flood risk management is fully integrated into the Draft Joint LAP. Arising from the results of the SFRA, a change in the zoning objectives of some sites is proposed. The SFRA recommends that development proposals for the areas identified as being at risk of flooding be subject to a site specific flood risk assessment.

3 OTHER PLANS & GUIDELINES

The Plan has been prepared having regard to national, regional and local policy documents, in addition to Guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended), including the following:

- Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (2018)
- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (NSS)
- Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022 (2010)
- Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023
- Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020
- Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2021
- Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2021
- Local Area Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2013)
- Manual for Local Area Plans (2013)
- Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)
- Our Sustainable Future, A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012)
- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 - 2020 (2009)
- Building on Recovery; Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 - 2021 (2014)
- Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing the Homelessness (2016)
- National Climate Change Adaptation Framework; Building Resilience to Climate Change (2012)
- National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009 - 2020 (2009)
- National Renewable Energy Action Plan (2010)
- Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure (2012)
- Portarlington Strategic Flood Risk Management Strategy 2007
- Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment Management Study (CFRAM)
- Draft Eastern Flood Risk Management Plans 2016;
- Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-21
- Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)
- National Cycle Policy Framework
- Water Services Strategic Plan, A Plan for the Future of Water Services
- Water Supply Project Eastern & Midlands Region
- Eastern and South Eastern River Basin Management Plan 2009 – 2015
- National Broadband Plan 2012
- Laois Heritage Plan 2014 - 2019
- Draft Offaly Heritage Plan 2017-2021
- Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999)
- Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)
- Actions for Biodiversity – Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan 2011-2016 (2011)

4 PORTARLINGTON IN CONTEXT

The town of Portarlington is situated on the Laois/Offaly county boundary equidistant from the county towns of Portlaoise and Tullamore. In terms of Local Government, the town has dual administration by Laois County Council and Offaly County Council. The majority of the urban area (approximately 75%) is located within the County of Laois (for CSO data purposes, this area is called Portarlington South) with the remaining portion (Portarlington North) in County Offaly. The River Barrow flows through the town in a west-east trajectory.

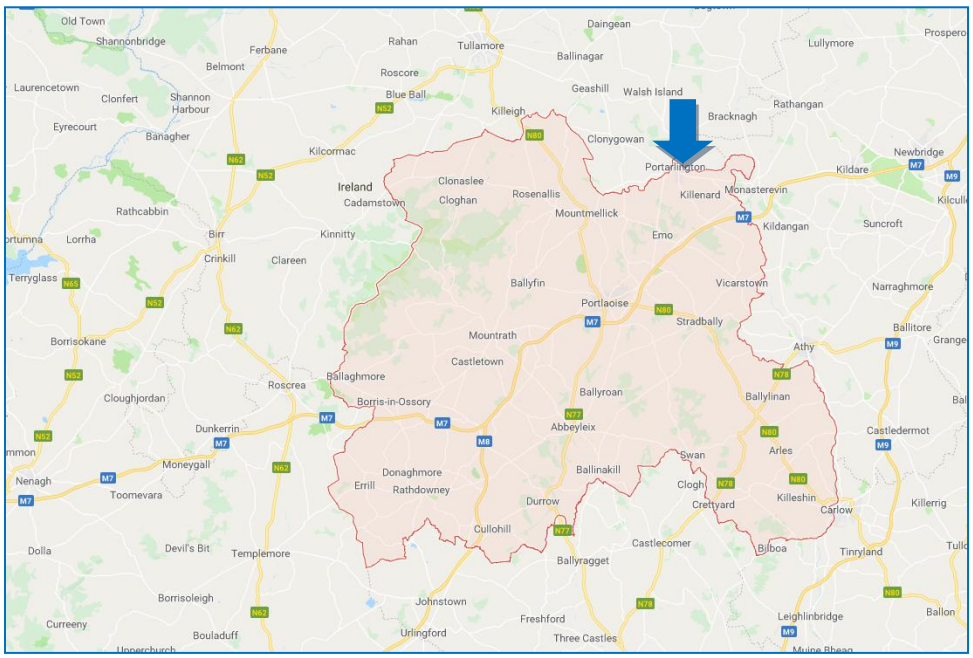

Figure 2: Portarlington in context

Portarlington is designated as a *"Key Service Town"* in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022 and the settlement hierarchies of both Counties Laois and Offaly. The Key Service Town functions as a support to the development of the county towns of Tullamore and Portlaoise.

Due to the town's proximity to the Greater Dublin Area and its location on the Dublin-Cork/ Dublin-Galway train line, Portarlington has experienced significant population growth since the beginning of the millennium. In this regard, the town's population increased from 4,001 persons in 2002 to 8,368 persons in 2016. Portarlington is ranked third in overall population size in County Laois and fourth in County Offaly behind the county towns of Portlaoise and Tullamore. While such population growth has created the critical mass to support the town's own services and industry, this growth has in turn placed an even greater demand on the town's infrastructure, in particular education, housing, recreational amenities and services.

5 HISTORY OF PORTARLINGTON

Portarlington was founded in 1666 by Henry Bennett, Lord Arlington on land located on a bend of the River Barrow. Following the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, the lands containing Portarlington were given to Marquis de Ruvigney, Earl of Galway who decided to offer the town as a refuge to the Huguenots, who fled France after the Edict of Nantes in 1685. About 500 Hugenots had arrived by 1702 and in the early 18th century, Portarlington was known as the *"Paris of the Midlands"* a place where French, rather than Irish or English, was spoken on its streets. These new settlers brought a very French style of architecture and life to the town, building their own church and schools. Some of these Huguenot houses are still to be seen in the town side by side with fine examples of Georgian, Victorian and modern houses.

Figure 3: Market Square

In the twentieth century, the Portarlington Power station to the north of the town, which opened in 1950, was Ireland's first turf fired electricity station using sod peat fuel sourced from the adjoining Clonasast Bog. At its peak, the station was a significant employer in the area, consuming approximately 195,000 tonnes of peat per annum, producing 150 million units of electricity.

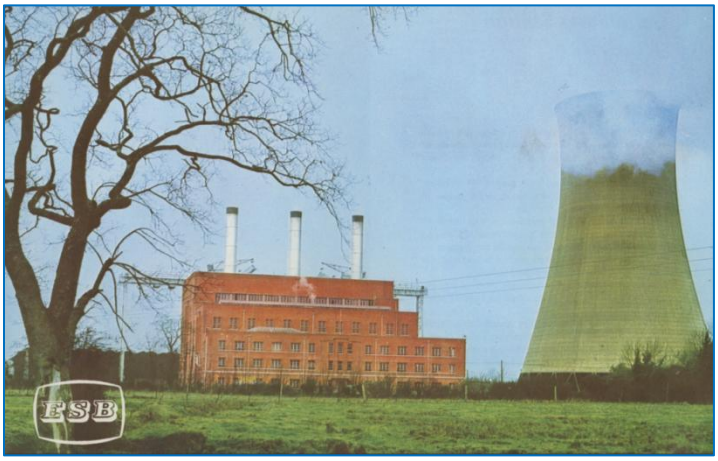

Figure 4: Portarlington Power Station 1970

6 URBAN FORM

The urban form of the town is dominated by a lengthy linear Main Street, terminated by a Market Square to the north. The development of the town extended in a southerly direction towards the railway station and the boundary presented by the railway line. Two inner relief roads from Market Square to Main Street and from Foxcroft Street to French Church Street removed through traffic from the centre of the town. Spa Street was previously upgraded to accommodate pedestrians and two-way traffic. Travel time to Dublin was reduced to less than an hour with the opening of the Heath Mayfield section of motorway in 2004. In this regard, Junction 15 Monasterevin is located approximately 10 kilometres from the town.

Figure 5: Google Earth Image 5/13/16

The historical core of the town is focused on a zone of archaeological interest centred around Market Square. The town centre area contains a number of Protected Structures and is proposed to be designated as an Architectural Conservation Area under the objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, reflecting its special architectural interest. The Built Heritage of the town is discussed in further detail in the Built Heritage chapter of this Draft Joint LAP.

The Dublin/Cork and Dublin/Galway Railway lines comprise the boundaries to the town to the southwest/west and south. Portarlington is also constrained by the Barrow River and associated flood plain which forms a loop around much of the town. The issue of flooding is discussed in further detail in the Flood Management chapter of this Draft Joint LAP.

7 SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY

The Irish spatial planning hierarchy is set out in the following diagram:

Figure 6: Planning Hierarchy

7.1 PROJECT IRELAND 2040 NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

"Project Ireland 2040" is the Government's overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all of us, a country that reflects the best of who we are and what we aspire to be. Project Ireland 2040 is informed by the Programme for a Partnership Government 2016 which recognizes that economic and social progress go hand in hand, and is made up of the *"Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework"* (NPF) and the *"National Development Plan 2018-2027"* (NPD).

The NPF replaces the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020. The NPF in conjunction with the NDP is the Government's plan to cater for the extra one million people that will be living in

Ireland, the additional two thirds of a million people working in Ireland and the half a million extra homes needed in Ireland by 2040.

Project Ireland 2040 seeks to achieve ten strategic outcomes, building around the overarching themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity. The ten shared National Strategic Outcomes and Priorities of the National Development Plan will ensure a consistent approach between planning objectives under the NPF and investment commitments under the NDP. The Ten Strategic Outcomes and Priorities are:

Figure 7: National Strategic Outcomes

As a strategic development framework *"Project Ireland 2040"* sets the long-term context for our country's physical development and associated progress in economic, social and environmental terms and in an island, European and Global context. *"Project Ireland 2040"* will be followed and underpinned by supporting policies and actions at sectoral, regional and local levels. This Draft Joint LAP has been prepared with cognizance to these National Strategic Outcomes.

7.2 REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR MIDLAND REGION 2010 – 2022

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs) 2010-2022 were prepared under the National Spatial Strategy and designated Portarlington as a Key Service Town. The MRPGs identify five development areas, with Portarlington located within the Eastern Development

Area (EDA) of the Midlands Region which is situated on the border with the Greater Dublin Area. The role of Portarlington in the MRPGs correlates to the role designated to the town in the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020.

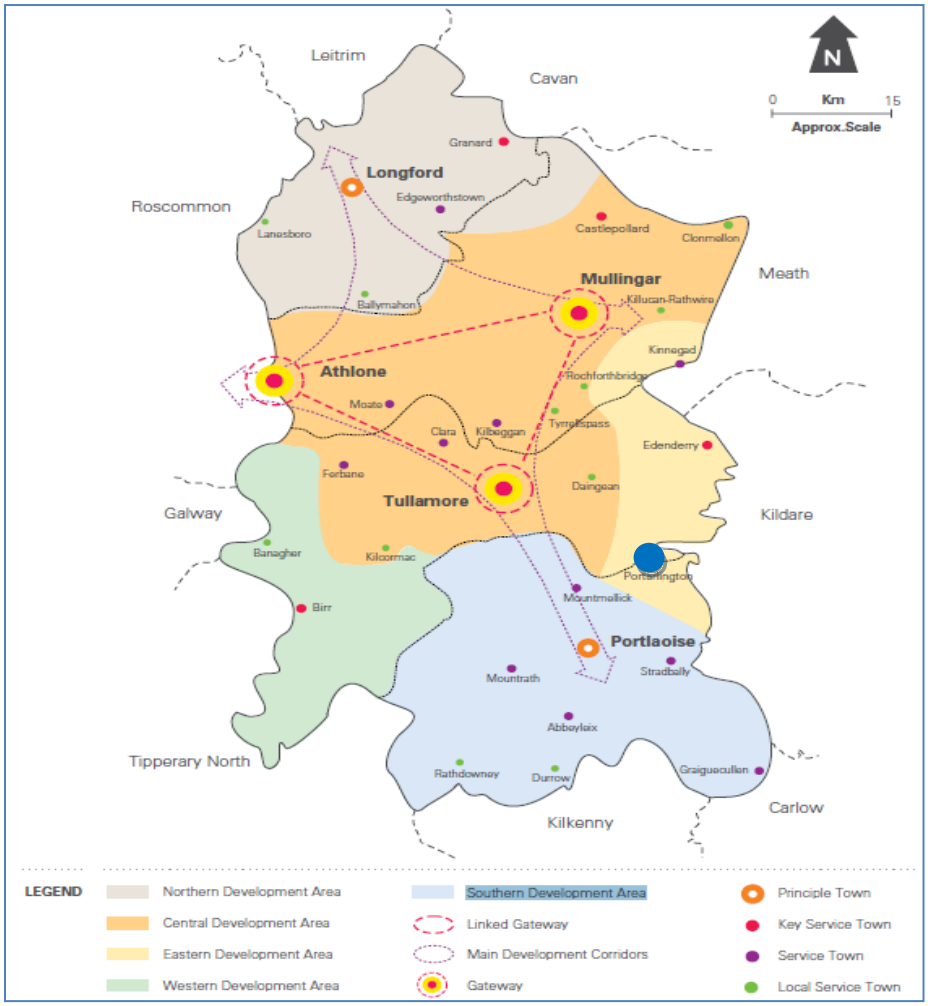

Figure 8: Portarlington in the context of the Midlands Region

Key service towns act as important drivers for local economies in areas that are comparatively more remote from the main population centres of the region. Well established economic, administrative, and social functions are provided in these settlements at levels commensurate with their position on the urban hierarchy. The MRPGs envisage that the development of these towns will be closely linked with the development of the principal towns.

The Core Strategy in accordance with the provisions of the Act requires the correlation of the population targets of the MRPGs with housing land requirements of the settlement hierarchy. The Core Strategy is set out under Section 2 of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 - 2023 and under Chapter 1 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 – 2020.

The MRPGs state that there is potential for growth in employment generation in this area due to the workforce availability. A key priority should be to resist any further large-scale residential development and to avoid over-development of these towns. The provision of necessary social and community infrastructure to serve resident populations should be a priority.

7.3 REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Since the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs) were published in 2010, a new administrative structure at regional level has been developed as directed by the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Reform Act included the abolition of eight Regional Authorities and the creation of three Regional Assemblies. County Laois now forms part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) along with eleven other counties. This area further comprises three Strategic Planning Areas with Offaly, Laois, Westmeath and Longford forming part of the Midland Strategic Planning Area. The EMRA will be responsible for the preparation of a new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) which will replace the RPGs.

The RSES will identify the Eastern and Midland region's key strategic assets, opportunities and challenges and set out policy responses to ensure that peoples' needs – such as access to housing, jobs, ease of travel and overall well-being are met, up to 2030 and beyond. In this regard, the RSES will set a new regional context to guide and control the development of Counties Laois and Offaly.

The RSES will include:

- A **Spatial Strategy** for the future location of employment, housing and retail development along with supporting infrastructure and services, in a way that enhances the potential of our cities and towns and best protects our environment and our people from the impacts of climate change;
- An **Economic Strategy** with strategic policies to boost competitiveness and support a strong future economy and the creation of high-quality jobs for sustained prosperity;
- A **Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan** (MASP) to plan for the future sustainable growth of the capital city region as set out in the National Planning Framework.

On publication of the RSES, both Laois County Council and Offaly County Council will undertake a review of the LAP, as necessary, in order to update and ensure compliance with the strategic approach adopted therein. In the interim the Draft Joint LAP has been prepared in consistency with the existing MRPGs as outlined above.

8 DEVELOPMENT VISION & STRATEGY

The Draft Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan is underpinned by a strategic vision which is intended to guide the future growth of the town. The objectives outlined below combine to form a coherent development strategy to 2024 and beyond. These goals cover economic, social and environmental dimensions. The strategic vision recognises the potential of Portarlington to align with the key growth objectives set out in higher order spatial plans and to take advantage of the strategic location of the town both regionally and nationally. Delivering on these objectives will result in an enhanced quality of life for all citizens.

The strategic vision is based on the role of Portarlington as defined in the settlement strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 and Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020 and the aspirations of the people and stakeholders in Portarlington. The vision statement reads as follows:

"To develop Portarlington as a sustainable low carbon settlement centred on a vibrant town centre, utilising the location strengths to attract employment and promote the unique settlement as an attractive town in which to work, live and play, while ensuring the protection of the unique built and natural heritage and managing flood risk".

Portarlington will become a place for its people, where residents, workers and visitors alike will come to enjoy a place that is inclusive, accessible and sustainable from a social, economic and environmental perspective. The Draft Joint LAP and overall vision for Portarlington is underpinned by a number of interlinked strategic aims as illustrated in the diagram below. These interlinked strategic aims will be realised through the chapters of the plan.

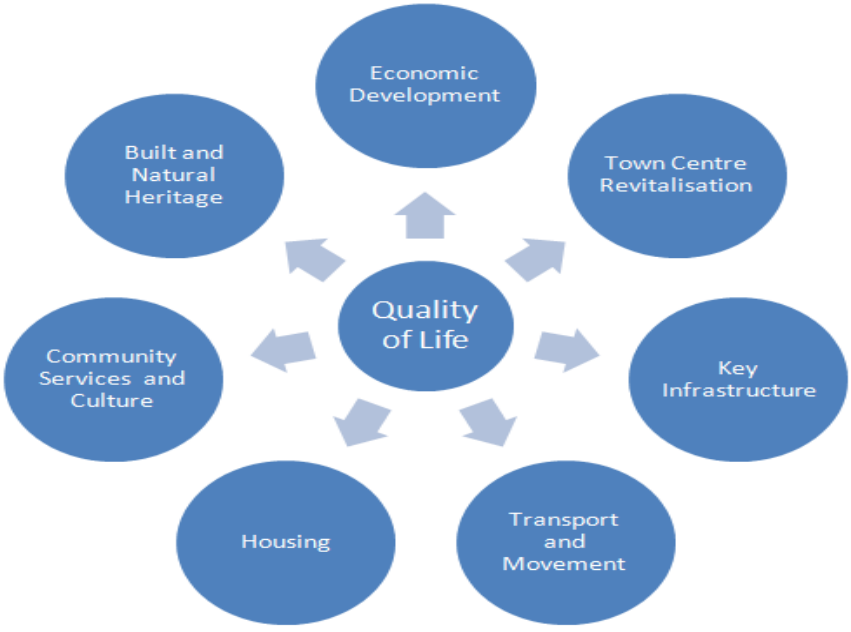

Figure 9: Strategic Aims

8.1 KEY PLAN OBJECTIVES

This Draft Joint Local Area Plan is based on a number of general goals which are designed to improve the quality of life of the citizens of the town and surrounding hinterland and which the council will endeavour to implement during the period of the Plan. The development of Portarlington over the lifetime of this plan shall be focused on **employment generation**, the **consolidation of the town centre** and the provision of **community and social services**.

The following are specific objectives in relation to the delivery of the Strategy:

1. To support and facilitate sustainable intensification and consolidation of the town centre and in established residential areas;
2. To promote and support balanced economic development and employment ensuring a diverse range of economic sectors are developed and supported;
3. To support and facilitate development on zoned land based on the policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023;
4. To focus new residential development primarily into brownfield, infill and backland sites;
5. To protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment, through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and promoting good quality urban design;
6. To develop and improve flood alleviation measures throughout the town and rural hinterland;
7. To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the plan area to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report that accompany this Draft Joint LAP;
8. To require projects to be fully informed by ecological and environmental constraints at the earliest stage of project planning and any necessary assessment to be undertaken, including assessments of disturbance to habitats and species, where required.

On the basis of the above it is the key policy of the Council to:

1. Implement the development strategies for Portarlington in order to be consistent with, and in accordance with policies of higher tier plans;

2. Support strategic enterprise and employment opportunities at appropriate locations in Portarlington, having regard to proper planning and sustainable development and relevant development control standards;

3. Facilitate and promote Portarlington's role as a *"Key Service Town"* as designated in the MRPGs, the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020;

4. Monitor and manage the delivery of population and housing in Portarlington, in line with national, regional and county level objectives, through the development strategy in this plan and also through the development management process;

5. Facilitate and support the provision of new, and expansion of existing, services, facilities and community infrastructure.

8.2 CORE STRATEGY

The Core Strategy for County Laois is set out under Section 2 of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 and for County Offaly under Chapter 1 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020. Section 19 (2) of the Act requires that:

"A Local Area Plan shall be consistent with the objectives of the Development Plan, its Core Strategy, and any Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy that apply to the area of the plan..."

8.3 FUNCTION, POPULATION AND SCALE OF PORTARLINGTON

The Midland Regional Planning Guidelines and the Core Strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020, designate Portarlington as a Key Service Town within the settlement hierarchy. These towns perform important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for local rural hinterlands and support the upper tiers of the urban hierarchy including the county towns.

	Persons 2002	Persons 2006	Persons 2011	Persons 2016	%Change 06-16
Co. Laois	58,774	67,059	80,559	84,697	26.3
Co. Offaly	63,663	70,868	76,687	77,868	9.9
Portarlington	4,001	6,004	7,788	8,368	39

Table 1: Population statistics for County Laois and Portarlington between 2002 and 2016 (Source: CSO)

As can be seen in the table above County Laois has experienced significant population growth in the past decade, growing by 26.3% over the ten year period between 2006 and 2016, while County Offaly experienced more modest population growth of 9.9%. In the same ten year period, Portarlington experienced a population growth rate of 39%.

The chart below presents a breakdown of the age of the population of Portarlington. Portarlington benefits from a young population, with 53% of the population below 35 years of age, compared to 47.1% elsewhere in the State. Portarlington has a lower proportion of middle-aged and older residents, with just 16% of the population aged 55 or older, compared to 24% elsewhere in the State.

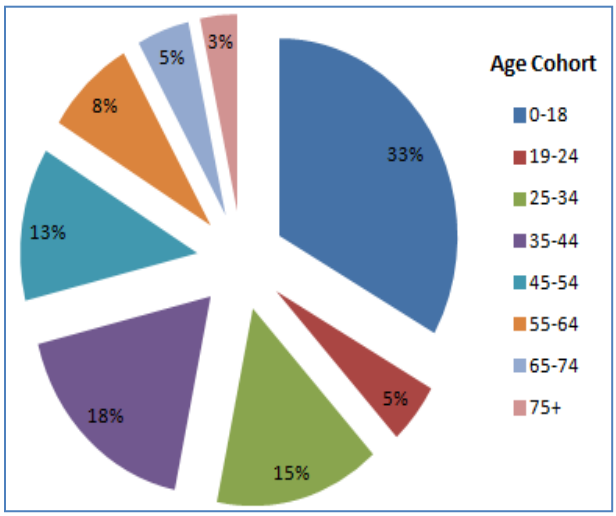

Table 2: Population by age cohort
(Source: CSO Census 2016)

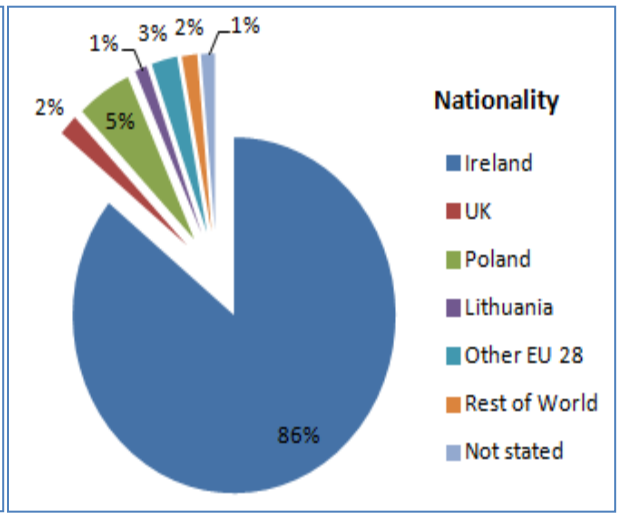

Table 3: Population by Nationality
(Source: CSO Census 2016)

Portarlington also benefits from ethnic diversity with 14% of its population being non-Irish. Of particular note, is that almost 12% of the population is made up of EU nationals excluding the UK.

Population targets for both Counties Laois and Offaly and for Portarlington for the period up to 2022 are set out within the MRPGs. Owing to significant and sustained population growth in County Laois, particularly in Portlaoise, these population targets have been exceeded and revised targets have been agreed as part of the CDP. These revised targets provide for growth to 89,790 persons in County Laois by 2023 and for growth to 8,567 persons in Portarlington South (Laois) over the same plan period. For Portarlington South (Laois), this equates to a projected requirement for an additional 271 households over the six-year period up to 2023. Meanwhile, 5 hectares of residential land has been allocated to facilitate the growth of Portarlington North in the Core Strategy of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 which equates to an additional 174 persons.

	County Laois	Portarlington
CSO Population 2011	80,559	7,788
Projected Population 2023	89,790	8,567
Projected Increase	9,231	779
Projected Increase in Households 2023	3,216	271
Density (Per ha.)		12
Housing Land Requirement to 2023 (Including 50% headroom)		34
Area (ha.) zoned for Residential		34

Table 4: Core Strategy Table of Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023

	County Offaly	Portarlington
CSO Population 2011	76,687	1,678
Population increase plan period	89,790	8,567
Housing land allocation to 2020[3] (inc. 50% head room)	9,231	5

Table 5: Core Strategy Table of Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020

[3]This figure was reached for each settlement by apportioning the projected population growth by applying a growth rate and density based on each settlements place on the hierarchy and an average household size of 2.9 people.

As can be seen from the Core Strategy Tables above, the CDPs identify an accumulative requirement for 39ha. of land in order to accommodate planned residential growth, with an average density of 12 units per hectare.

8.4 RESIDENTIAL LAND AVAILABILITY

The Draft Joint LAP identifies approximately 35.6 ha. of undeveloped residentially zoned land, located within and adjacent to established residential areas within the town. The housing capacity of these lands and infill sites within the built-up area is estimated to be approximately 427 (35.6 ha. x 12 units per ha.) residential units, based on a density of 12 units per hectare. Over the lifetime of the Draft Joint LAP, priority for residential development should be given to the development of these lands to consolidate the built up area of the town.

8.5 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

8.5.1 TOWN CENTRE CONSOLIDATION

The Draft Joint Local Area Plan has been prepared in the context of a longer term vision for Portarlington. The Draft Joint LAP identifies eight opportunity sites to accommodate growth during the plan period. Site specific details for each site are set out under the Town Centre Revitalisation chapter. A sequential approach will be taken to the development of the town, with lands closer to the town centre being developed prior to zoned lands on the periphery so

as to avoid *"leapfrogging"*. With this in mind, the zoning of the significant landbank to the north of Patrick's Street on the Offaly side of the town has changed from "Town Centre/Mixed" in the previous plan to "Residential 2" in this plan which encourages the consolidation of the existing town centre. Such an approach is essential to underpin the sustainable delivery of population and employment development and consolidation of the town centre over the plan period.

Consolidation, brownfield and infill development will also be promoted on appropriately zoned land within the plan area which accords with the policies and objectives set down in this plan.

8.5.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development underpins all chapters in this Draft Joint Local Area Plan. The aim of the plan is to capitalise on Portarlington's location on the regional road network, trainline and proximity to the motorway interchange at Monasterevin. The zoning and servicing of land for enterprise, employment and industrial uses and in particular the development at Portarlington Enterprise Centre and Botley Lane represent an important opportunity to develop a cluster of complementary enterprises and more generally a larger, more robust and diverse economic basis for the town.

8.5.3 KEY INFRASTRUCTURE

Future development proposals are contingent on key infrastructure. Currently capacity exists in the Foul Sewer Network, Waste Water Treatment Plant and Public Water Supply. In the long term it is an objective of the Council to facilitate public transport improvements and provide a town relief road to help alleviate traffic congestion in the town centre and at the pinch point on Barrow Bridge and at Kilmalogue Crossroads.

8.5.4 ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION

The environmental sensitivities of the county identified in the SEA process for the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 have informed the Core Strategy and the role it identifies for Portarlington. The Draft Joint LAP responds to environmental factors, including wastewater infrastructure constraints, areas at risk of flooding etc. It also acknowledges the importance of built and natural heritage, such as that at Derryounce as an environmental and economic (including tourism) resource and includes significant objectives for its conservation and enhancement.

8.5.5 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

There is an existing vibrant community and voluntary sector in Portarlington and the demand for community services, education and recreational amenities has increased with the growth in population. This plan will seek to facilitate, wherever possible, the provision of new, and expansion of existing, services, facilities and community infrastructure including extension of childcare facilities, the Community Centre car park and Leisure Centre.

9 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Portarlington is a busy Key Service Town with a retail area centred on the Main Street and enterprise and industrial uses located at more peripheral locations. Capacity exists within the town for a greater retail offering and to develop small and medium enterprises in existing enterprise estates/Business Parks. Both Councils are committed to facilitating the creation of employment within the town and this plan provides the appropriate framework for development through the provision of adequately zoned lands and policies which support economic development. The zoning objectives for each of the land-use zones provide agility to respond to the demands from those looking to invest in Portarlington. This plan sets the right conditions to secure inward investment and interest in Portarlington as a business location and firmly embeds an economic development agenda into all other goals making their successful delivery more achievable.

The Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 set out the strategic context for economic development of the Counties. The **Laois Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021** and **Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021** are statutory plans which aim to promote the economic and community development of the counties. Both LECPs should be read in tandem with this chapter.

The **Local Enterprise Offices** have been fully integrated into both the Local Authorities of Laois and Offaly. In addition to the LEO enterprise functions, the LEOs deliver the economic functions of the Councils and have a lead role in implementing the economic dimensions of the LECPs and delivering local and regional initiatives within the Midland Action Plan for Jobs. The LEOs provide a range of services for persons seeking to set up or grow a business. The LEOs work with a range of stakeholders to support employment opportunities including the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, local and regional development agencies, existing businesses and individuals.

The services provided by LEO allow for a broader and deeper approach to job creation through opportunities presented by the not so traditional sectors for example green economy, tourism, creative services /industries and cloud computing. Both LEOs contribute significantly to building pathways to employment and enterprise in Portarlington by:

- Facilitating client meetings through an Outreach Office (held in the Portarlington Enterprise Centre once a week);

- Providing high quality, integrated information and support to new and expanding businesses;
- Providing training, mentoring and support;
- Enabling access to start-up finance;
- Collation and quarterly update of a Property Database for all industrial, commercial and retail premises that are for sale or let in the town, enabling business owners to research and identify suitable property;
- Collaborating with Portarlington Library Services on Library Supports for business schemes;
- Working with schools to introduce young people to the potential of working in business and promoting an enterprise culture.

Laois Partnership Company was formed in 2008 to offer one unified structure for the delivery of economic, social and cultural services to small businesses, community groups and individuals. This work is largely delivered through initiatives including The Rural Development Programme (previously LEADER), Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), DSP Job Club, Community Employment Schemes, Tus Programme, Rural Social Scheme, Services to the Elderly Programme (LSTEP), National Childcare Schemes, Back to Education Initiative, the Local Community Development Programme (previously LDSIP) and other complementary programmes.

The **Portarlington Community Development Association (PCDA)** is a voluntary group which aims to develop all aspects of the town. The PCDA set up the Portarlington Enterprise Centre (PEC) which is a not for profit business with a key focus on fostering business and employment opportunities for the local community. The PEC provides a range of facilities including office and light industrial units, meeting/ training rooms, business mentoring, access to high speed broadband, training, advice and supports. An Art Technology and Design Hub including a FabLab and hot desking facilities will be opened in the PEC during 2018.

An established measure of the employment "health" of a settlement is a measure called the **"Jobs Ratio"**. This is the relationship between the number of people in the labour force and the number of jobs in any defined area. A healthy area is considered to be one where the jobs ratio is around 70%. While not all towns will be able to reach this level, it is considered reasonable that the plan should aim to increase the jobs ratio proportionately to accord with the town's characteristics and level in the County settlement and employment hierarchy.

As indicated in Census 2016 Portarlington has a **total labour force** of 3,798 persons.
The census also indicates that there are 1,349 **jobs** within the settlement of Portarlington.
Given an indicated resident worker population of 3,103, Portarlington has a jobs to resident workers ratio of 0.435.

The majority of persons commute to work, school or college by car (2,038 persons) and have a commute of under 15 minutes (1,809 persons), while 898 persons have a commute of over 1/1.5 hours.

According to the Census 2016, commerce, trade and professional services account for 46% of the overall employment in Portarlington, continuing the significant shift from the previous dependence on construction and manufacturing which were the pre-eminent sources of employment in the town in the late 1990s and early to mid-2000s.

The proportion of the population aged 15 years and over in Portarlington that described themselves as *"at work"* increased from 47.35% in the 2011 Census to 51.37% in the 2016 Census, reflecting somewhat the national economic recovery in recent years. However, employment levels in the Portarlington labour force are below that of the rest of the State, with 51% of residents in employment, compared to 54% nationally. However, the proportion of the labour force either unemployed or seeking their first regular job at 12% is significantly higher than the national rate of 8%. Live Register figures for the town show a consistent reduction in the number on the register from January 2013 to January 2018.

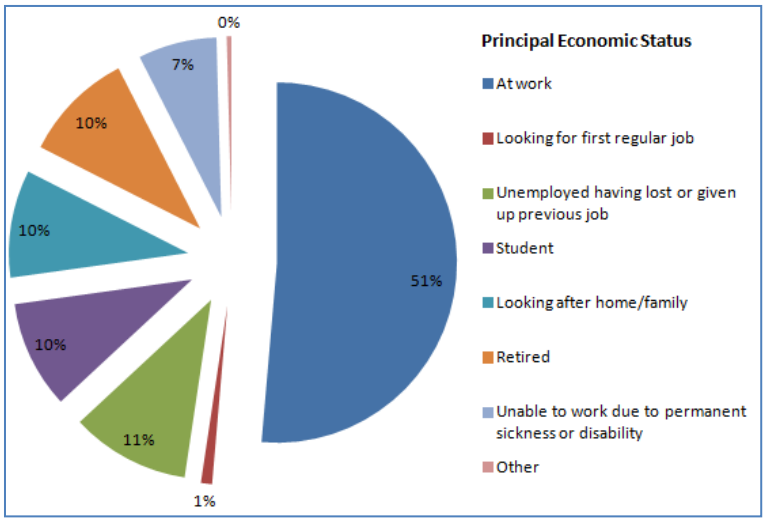

Figure 10: Labour Force by Principle Economic Status (Source: Census 2016)

January 2018	1,753
January 2017	1,971
January 2016	2,427
January 2015	2,865
January 2014	3,214
January 2013	3,373

Table 6: Live Register Figures, Portarlington, January 2013-18 (Source: CSO)

The creation of sufficient **employment opportunities** in Portarlington is fundamental to build a sustainable community and reduce the rate of outward commuting. Portarlington's unique location on the regional road network, intersection of the national train line and proximity to the Greater Dublin Area, in conjunction with the zoning and servicing of cost effective land and good quality high speed broadband is of major benefit to attracting economic development to the town.

This plan places a firm emphasis on maintaining and expanding existing businesses such as Odlums, Jamestown, Camsaw, Polar Ice etc., small businesses, entrepreneurial development and tourism, rather than a return to reliance on construction and industry as the drivers of the local economy. Additionally, building strong communities, improving the physical environments namely the town centre and developing or marketing a strong identity for the town can do much to attract new businesses and investment. In this respect, the Council will support local enterprise and employment generating opportunities, facilitate the up skilling and training of the labour force and the provision of key hard and soft infrastructure. Such measures aim to create an attractive base for employers and more self-sustaining development for the population, while providing an alternative to commuting to the GDA for employment.

Tourism in Portarlington has the potential to play a significant role in economic development. The Laois Tourism Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023 identifies Portarlington as one of four potential towns to pilot a *"Laois Towns Experience"* programme, based on the heritage and stories associated with the French Huguenots that settled in the town in the 17th Century. In addition, the town has a wide variety of attractions both within the town and environs which have the potential to be developed as tourist attractions in their own right, while providing additional spin off benefits to existing businesses in the town. Some of the attractions which provide a basis for a tourism industry include the development of walking, cycling and angling pursuits on the River Barrow, the Derryounce Experience comprising the recreational area at the Derryounce Lakes and Trails accessed directly from the town and the golf and leisure activities available at the nearby Heritage Resort at Killenard.

Economic Development: Strategic Aim:

To promote, facilitate and enable economic development and employment generating activities in appropriate locations and in a sustainable manner.

Objectives: It is an Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

EEO1: Support the work of the Local Enterprise Offices in performing their functions of facilitating enterprise and economic development, delivering local and regional initiatives through the Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021, Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and the Midland Action Plan for Jobs and working with key national, regional, local, public and private stakeholders to support employment opportunities in Portarlington;

EEO2: Co-operate with Portarlington Community Development Association, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the Laois Partnership Company and other agencies, organisation and individuals in promoting enterprise and employment in Portarlington;

EEO3: Identify infrastructural and service deficits experienced by existing businesses, and work towards addressing these deficits;

EEO4: Promote existing space available in the town for the establishment of incubator units and start-ups;

EE05: Facilitate the development of employment generating enterprises within existing employment areas such as the town centre, Botley Lane, Portarlington Enterprise Centre and vacant commercial premises such as Avon;

EE06: Promote and encourage cultural development and creative industries;

EE07: Promote and market Portarlington as a strong and competitive alternative location for business by highlighting distinctive attributes and characteristics;

EEO8: Ensure that buildings proposed in the Laois Business Park and Botley Lane in the future are of a high quality design;

EEO9: Facilitate the development of the Derryounce Experience Lakes and Trails;

EEO10: Facilitate development of an historical trail through Derryounce Bog and a Heritage Museum documenting the history of the bog, turf production in the area and the former location of the town's Power Station;

EEO11: Facilitate development of a green corridor connecting Derryounce Lakes and Trails, the River Barrow and The Peoples Park;

EEO12: Support the development of a cycleway from Derryounce Lakes and Trails to Mount Lucas;

EEO13: Support the provision of maps and signage for tourist facilities at locations at Portarlington Railway Station, Market Square, Main Street, Patrick Street, River Barrow, Peoples Park and Derryounce Lakes and Trails;

EEO14: Support the continued operation and reasonable development of existing non-conforming uses provided that such uses do not:

- Result in a loss of amenity to adjoining properties;
- Cause an adverse impact on the environment;
- Cause an adverse impact on the visual amenity or character of the area;
- Inhibit the development of adjoining land in conformance with the land's zoning objective.

Policies: It is the Policy of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

EEP1: Support sustainable employment and enterprise in Portarlington through the identification of appropriately located and adequately serviced lands for business/employment, industrial and commercial developments, the promotion of investment in transportation and other support infrastructure and the creation of a high quality environment to encourage economic investment;

EEP2: Protect employment zoned land from inappropriate development that would undermine future economic activity or the sustainable economic development and growth of the town;

EEP3: Facilitate employment and enterprise development in the context of the role of Portarlington as a Key Service Town consistent with objectives of the core strategy set out in the Laois County Development Plan 2017-23 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020;

EEP4: Encourage appropriate development, works and supporting infrastructure that would contribute to a high quality and attractive built and social environment in Portarlington to attract and sustain new business, residents and visitors;

EEP5: Encourage the establishment and expansion of services and facilities in the town at appropriate locations to facilitate the business needs of employment and enterprise developments and potential tourism needs like conference facilities, hotel, accommodation, eateries and other similar services;

EEP6: Work collaboratively and in partnership with other stakeholders in the pursuit of development that would contribute positively to the economic development of the town;

EEP7: Support and work with Bord Na Mona and other relevant agencies in the sustainable diversification of former industrial peatlands in the Garryhinch area to uses such as green energy, eco-tourism and water storage;

EEP8: Encourage the further development of the Portarlington third level institute as a centre of excellence for a range of education and research related uses;

EEP9: Work in conjunction with the town's third level institution and neighbouring institutions including NUI Maynooth and Athlone and Carlow ITs in the creation and fostering of enterprise and research and development;

EEP10: Facilitate office development in commercial and employment centres;

EEP11: Continue to work with key stakeholders in the tourism industry including Waterways

Ireland, Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, in order to develop the overall tourist and economic potential of the town, with particular emphasis on the cultural heritage, River Barrow and Derryounce Lakes and Trails;

EEP12: Encourage and facilitate the sustainable development of the tourism potential of Portarlington in a manner that respects, builds on, protects and enhances the cultural, built and natural heritage of the town;

EEP13: Secure connectivity between Portarlington with county, regional and national cycle networks via former Bord na Mona rail-lines and to capture positive economic, social and cultural benefits associated with this connection;

EEP14: Where commercial and industrial enterprises exist as nonconforming but long-established uses, to support their continued operation and reasonable expansion, in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

10 TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION

The town centre of Portarlington is the focus for retail/commercial and residential development. Market pressures have impacted on the town centre with retail and commercial leakage to Portlaoise and Tullamore. Vacancy rates in the core are an issue and require attention. The town centre has the capacity to stem this leakage through the development of key opportunity sites and by improving the attractiveness of the public realm. This plan seeks to redevelop the town centre as the focus of commercial, retail and residential development within the town while having cognisance to issues relating to flooding. Consolidating the town centre will help revitalise the town and provide the framework for channelling development into brownfield, infill and backland sites.

The Main Street along with Patrick Street, Bracklone Street and also French Church Street comprise the traditional retail core of Portarlington accommodating a diverse range of retail services mainly in the control of independent retailers. The town has a mix of convenience and comparison retailing, financial institutions and service providers. Despite market pressures for development at the periphery of the town and some retail schemes slightly removed from the historic core, the town centre remains at the heart of social and economic activity. The attractiveness of the town centre as a place to live, work and do business is a product of investment over generations. It is the strategy of the Councils to capitalise on this investment and ensure that the town centre continues to act as the economic and social hub for the settlement.

The **traditional Town Centre** presents an opportunity to create diversity and distinctiveness in Portarlington's retail offer and evening time uses as well as to provide an attractive and pedestrian friendly public realm. The traditional retail core should be retained as the centre of commercial activity that delivers a range of services and functions. The development strategy for the town centre as set out below recognizes the potential of the traditional core as a focus for employment generation, retail use and residential development where appropriate. The creation of an attractive urban environment is critical to attract new business to the town centre.

Improvements in the town centre **public realm**, specifically tree planting, pedestrian friendly measures, traditional shop fronts, street furniture and rearrangement of car parking provides an opportunity to create an attractive town centre that provide a better experience and diversity of retail, as well as high quality food and drink and other complementary uses.

The retail planning policy context for the Draft Joint LAP is informed by the Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Retail Planning (2012) and the retail hierarchy identified in the MRPGs. In this regard, Portarlington is identified as a Key Service Centre, for which it is an action to *"encourage retail development commensurate with existing and anticipated growth, with particular emphasis on traditional core"*.

Residential development will be encouraged in the town centre to contribute to the vitality of the core and to encourage economic development and further retail expansion. Existing brownfield, infill and backland sites will be prioritised to deliver dwellings in the town over more peripheral sites. Innovative design and layout and a mix of tenure will be encouraged in all residential developments.

Town Centre Revitalisation: Strategy Aim:

To support the sustainable long-term growth of Portarlington, in accordance with the Core and Retail Strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 – 2020.

Objectives: It is an Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

TCR O1: Improve the quality, vitality and vibrancy of the town centre through the implementation of public realm improvements;

TCR O2: Promote the town centre as a priority location for commercial, civic, social and cultural development and sustainable consolidation;

TCR O3: Promote the consolidation of the town centre through the use of brownfield, infill and backland sites without compromising streetscapes;

TCR O4: Encourage and facilitate the appropriate reuse and regeneration of derelict, disused and vacant sites and prominent buildings including the Market House, the old cinema and Arlington House;

TCR O5: Facilitate the redevelopment of strategic opportunity sites within the town centre for a mixture of uses that will contribute to vitality of the central core area;

TCR O6: Renew, consolidate and develop the existing fabric of the town by achieving a high quality of design in new development and refurbishments;

TCR O7: Ensure the type, quantum and location of future retail floor space is consistent with the requirements and recommendations of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020, relevant regional policy frameworks and national planning guidelines;

TCR O8: Guide retail development, in accordance with the sequential approach to sustain and strengthen the town centre;

TCR O9: Promote an appropriate mix of day and night time uses;

TCR O10: Create attractive and secure pedestrian and cycling links.

Policies: It is the Policy of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

TCR O1: Encourage retail development within the existing town centre. Proposals which would undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre will not be permitted. The sequential approach to retail development set out in the *"Retail Planning - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012"* will be strictly enforced;

TCR O2: Facilitate the revitalisation of and promote the appropriate reuse of existing town centre buildings, such as the Market Square and old cinema;

TCR O3: Prohibit the proliferation of uses in the town centre which would detract from the amenities of the area or the vitality and viability of the town centre;

TCR O4: Promote living over the shop and conversion of town centre buildings into housing units;

TCR O5: Encourage the maintenance of original shopfronts, or the reinstatement of traditional shopfronts where poor replacements have been installed;

TCR O6: Ensure new shopfronts have regard to existing shopfronts and complement the existing character;

TCR O7: Prohibit internally illuminated fascias or projecting box signs. Concealed strip or flood lighting of fascias and traditional hand painted signs lit by spotlight may be an acceptable alternative.

10.1 OPPORTUNITY SITES

Eight potential opportunity sites for re-development have been identified which would contribute to the renewal, enhancement and regeneration of the particular areas of the town in which they are located. These areas have been identified for various reasons such as dereliction, under utilisation of land and lands that would be readily adaptable for new uses.

The site areas or boundaries have not been identified definitively and can be modified to include other key sites. Additionally, other opportunity sites not listed can be presented for appraisal under similar criteria. Some of the sites may be owned by different parties and would require an element of site assembly for a coherent development strategy to progress. This approach to re-development will be encouraged over a piecemeal approach.

10.1.1 OPPORTUNITY SITE 1: FORMER TIMBER YARD, JUNCTION OF STATION RD/CANAL RD

Figure 11: Former Timber Yard

Zoning: Enterprise and Employment

Comments:

- Strategically located directly adjacent to Portarlington Railway Station and car park;
- A 1.56ha. brownfield site formerly used as timber and hardware retail outlet, the buildings have been cleared and the site is vacant;
- Fully serviced site;
- Outside of Flood Zones A and B;
- Extant permission for office and retail development over five storeys;
- Opportunity to intensify development to provide a key landmark or gateway building to signify the approach and entrance to the town from the south and railway station to create a sense of arrival;
- The building should address the extensive street frontage and be designed to an exceptional standard;
- A high quality public realm will be required in any development.

10.1.2 OPPORTUNITY SITE 2: LANDHOLDING OFF SANDY LANE/ BALLYMORRIS ROAD

Figure 12: Landholding Off Sandy Lane/ Ballymorris Road

Zoning: Neighbourhood Centre

Comments:

- Prime location in close proximity to the town centre;
- A 3.84ha. Greenfield site;
- Fully serviced site;
- Outside of Flood Zones A and B;
- Extant permission for retail development of 7,000m2;
- Suitable for a wide variety of uses subject to a Justification Test;
- Mixed use developments compliant with the zoning objective will be encouraged;
- The building should address the extensive street frontage and be designed to an exceptional standard;
- A high quality public realm will be required in any development including pocket parks and green links between Sandy Lane and Ballymorris Road.

10.1.3 OPPORTUNITY SITE 3: AVON FACTORY SITE, OFF CANAL ROAD

Figure 13: Avon Factory Site

Zoning: Enterprise and Employment

Comments:

- Prime location in close proximity to the train station;
- A 5.18ha. brownfield site currently vacant;
- Fully serviced site;
- Environmental considerations following previous uses of the site;
- Outside of Flood Zones A and B;
- Opportunity to provide a key landmark building/ enterprise campus;
- Suitable for a wide variety of enterprise and employment uses including low input and emission manufacturing, campus style offices, storage, wholesale and distribution etc.;
- A high quality public realm will be required in any development.

10.1.4 OPPORTUNITY SITE 4: LANDHOLDING OFF FOXCROFT STREET

Figure 14: Landholding off Foxcroft Street

Zoning: Town Centre

Comments:

- Prime location adjacent to the town centre with vehicular access from Foxcroft Street and potential pedestrian access from Main Street;
- A 4.08ha. greenfield, backland and infill site;
- Fully serviced site;
- Portion of the site is located within Flood Zone B;
- Opportunity to create a sustainable and compact urban quarter with a mix of uses;
- Pedestrian and cycle links and pocket parks between Main Street, Sandy Lane and Foxcroft Street should form key features to any proposal;
- Adjoining private amenity spaces of neighbouring residential properties should be protected through the design and layout of any proposal;
- A high quality public realm will be required in any development.

10.1.5 OPPORTUNITY SITE 5: ARLINGTON HOUSE, FOXCROFT STREET

Figure 15: Arlington House

Zoning: Residential 1

Comments:

- Prime location in close proximity to town centre;
- A 0.08ha. brownfield site;
- Fully serviced site;
- Protected Structure on site, architectural heritage impact assessment required;
- Extant permission for a major redevelopment comprising a licensed premises/cafe;
- Any proposal shall have cognisance to and incorporate the existing structure "Arlington House";
- A high quality public realm will be required in any development.

10.1.6 OPPORTUNITY SITE 6: LANDS AT JUNCTION OF BOTLEY LANE AND PATRICK STREET

Figure 16: Lands at Junction of Botley Lane and Patrick Street

Zoning: Town Centre

Comments:

- Prime location in close proximity to town centre;
- A 0.63ha. brownfield site containing an industrial garage, storage and parking areas;
- Fully serviced site;
- Located within Flood Zones A and B;
- Suitable for a wide variety of business and commercial uses subject to a Justification Test;
- Opportunity to intensify development to provide a key landmark or gateway building;
- Any new building should address both street frontages and should be designed to an exceptional standard;
- A high quality public realm will be required in any development.

10.1.7 OPPORTUNITY SITE 7: LANDS AT KILMALOGUE CROSS ROADS

Figure 17: Lands at Kilmalogue Cross Roads

Zoning: Neighbourhood Centre

Comments:

- Prime location in close proximity to town centre;
- A 0.54ha. brownfield site containing a convenience retail space;
- Fully serviced site;
- Located outside of Flood Zones A and B;
- Suitable for a wide variety of business, commercial and residential uses subject to a Justification Test;
- Opportunity to intensify development to provide a key landmark or gateway building;
- Development should comprise active frontages at ground floor level with commercial or residential uses above;
- Any new building should address both street frontages and should be designed to an exceptional standard;
- A high quality public realm will be required in any development.

10.1.8 OPPORTUNITY SITE 8: LANDS TO NORTH OF PATRICK STREET

Figure 18: Lands to North of Patrick Street

Zoning: Residential

Comments:

- Prime location in close proximity to town centre;
- A 4.73ha. brownfield site;
- Located outside of Flood Zones A and B;
- A masterplan will be required in any development;
- Incorporation of access points as detailed on Map 9 Objectives;
- Permeability which be an integral part of any development of site and should be provided for in detail in any masterplan for the site**;**
- The provision of new green infrastructure shall be integrated into any new developments;
- Any development must respect and be sensitive to existing character of the streetscape of St. Patricks Street and presence of Protected Structures on the street;
- Specially designed housing for the elderly will be considered by the Planning Authority.

11 KEY INFRASTRUCTURE

The sustainable social and economic growth of Portarlington is dependent on the satisfactory provision of key infrastructure associated with the provision of services for new developments both residential and commercial. Key infrastructural provision will support the economic development of the town and needs to be undertaken in a plan led manner.

Portarlington's infrastructure must keep pace with modern demands. In this regard, the provision of high quality infrastructure networks and environmental services is fundamental to ensuring the long term physical, environmental, social and economic development of the town.

Irish Water is responsible for the provision and operation of public water and wastewater services across the country. Laois County Council and Offaly County Council deliver water services in accordance with Service Level Agreements. The Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) was published in 2015 by Irish Water, which sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over a 25 year period and a context for investment and implementation plans. Irish Water, Laois County Council and Offaly County Council will work together to identify the water services required to support planned development in line with national and regional planning policies for inclusion in the Irish Water Capital Investment Plans.

Within the settlement of Portarlington 2,840 households are connected to the public mains water supply and 2,813 households are connected to the public sewer system.

The **Portarlington Wastewater Treatment Plant** has the capacity to cater for a population equivalent of 13,000. The River Barrow acts as the receiving waters for this plant. Currently there is capacity in the waste water treatment plant and **public water supply**. However, extra capacity is required to implement the policies and objectives of this plan.

Adequate storm water drainage and retention facilities are necessary to accommodate surface water run off from existing and proposed developments. **Sustainable Drainage Systems** can contribute to surface water retention and a reduction in the potential for flooding by acting as natural drainage.

Portarlington is served by a high capacity electricity system and gas network. Within the settlement 2,202 households have broadband internet services. The Local Authorities of Laois and Offaly will work with broadband providers to facilitate an upgrade of the network, which

will give significant economic and social advantage to Portarlington as a place to set up internet based businesses.

EU Directive 2009/29/EC on the Promotion of **Renewable Energy Sources**, establishes a binding target of 20% of overall EU energy production from renewable resources by 2020, as well as a binding 10% minimum target for energy from renewable resources to account for 16% of total energy consumption by 2020. In line with these commitments, Ireland's target for electricity from renewable energy sources is 40% by 2020. Low carbon technologies present an economic opportunity and green technology development is emerging as a major field of innovation and growth. Both Councils recognize the importance of developing renewable energy resources in the interest of delivering the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework.

Key Infrastructure: Strategic Aim:

To enable development in line with the capacity of supporting infrastructure and to require the timely provision of infrastructure needed for the planned development of lands.

Objectives: It is an Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

KI O1: Facilitate economic and social development through the provision of infrastructure and optimise the return of infrastructure investment;

KI O2: Phase growth in line with the capacity of supporting infrastructure;

KI O3: Facilitate Irish Water in the maintenance, expansion and upgrading of wastewater disposal and water supply infrastructure;

KI O4: Seek compliance with the standards and requirements of Irish Water in relation to water and wastewater infrastructure;

KI O5: Maintain a development free buffer around the existing Portarlington wastewater treatment plant of a minimum of 100 metres;

KI O6: Require all developments in Portarlington to seek a connection to the public water supply and/or public wastewater sewer where it is practical to do so;

KI O7: Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchments;

KI O8: Preserve free from development the wayleaves of all public sewers and all public water Mains;

KI O9: Require all new developments to include proposals for Sustainable Drainage Systems;

KI O10: Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater in accordance with the National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG) and associated Programme of Measures;

KI O11: Ensure developments will not adversely impact on the status of waterbodies in accordance with the Water Framework Directive and National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG);

KI O12: Facilitate, promote and encourage the expansion and improvement of telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas networks infrastructure.

Policies: It is the Policy of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

KI P1: Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment;

KI P2: Work with Irish Water on developing and upgrading the water supply schemes so as to ensure an adequate, resilient, sustainable and economic supply of piped water;

KI P3: Work with Irish Water on upgrading the wastewater treatment plant in line with the projected future growth of the settlement;

KI P4: Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the existing surface water drainage system throughout the plan area and ensure that new developments are adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in new developments;

KI P5: Promote and support the implementation of Irish Water's Eastern and Midlands Region Water Supply Project;

KI P6: Protect surface and ground water quality in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive and Groundwater Directive.

KI P7: Ensure that specific relevant objectives and measures from individual water bodies set out in the South Eastern River Basin Management Plan and associated Programme of Measures are implemented as relevant;

KI P8: Promote public awareness and involvement in water conservation measures by households, businesses and industries and supports the implementation of Energy Efficiency solutions in Water and Waste Water Systems;

KI P9: Promote and encourage the harvesting of rainwater to meet non-potable water needs;

KI P10: Co-operate with and facilitate the work of national telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas network providers in the improvement, expansion and provision of energy, renewable energy and communication infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development;

KI P11: Liaise with statutory bodies to investigate and encourage where possible the ducting and continued underground routing of overhead power lines in Portarlington in tandem with other work programs, such as road resurfacing and footpath construction works.

12 TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

While the overarching rationale for the making of a local area plan is to guide land-use, the integration of good land use planning with transportation is a key that can unlock significant improvements in the quality of life, in ways that are tangible to many in the town, who have long identified car dependency and commuting as being a major drawback to living in the area. Reducing the need to travel long distances by private car, and increasing the use of sustainable and healthy alternatives, can bring multiple benefits to both our environment and communities.

Portarlington is linked to key neighbouring towns by a series of **Regional Roads** including the R419 to Portlaoise, the R420 to Tullamore and New Inn Interchange, the R424 to Monasterevin and the R423 to Mountmellick and Rathangan. Junction 15 at Monasterevin which enables easy access to the M7 and M8 motorway network is located approximately 10kms from the town.

The town is also located on the **railway line** connecting the south and west of the country to Dublin. There are a number of **bus services** connecting Portarlington to Kildare, Monasterevin, Portlaoise, Tullamore and Dublin. Portarlington is therefore easily accessible to the Greater Dublin Area, Dublin City, the M50, national airports and ports. The accessibility of the town provides key advantages for the attraction of economic and residential development.

The Council will continue to provide for all components of the transportation system which are within its own remit and will encourage and facilitate the development of those other elements provided by external agencies, such as the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII, made up of the former NRA and RPA). In addition the strategy and objectives of this plan are required to be consistent with the transport strategy of the NTA.

The improvement of **transport infrastructure** in the town is a key element of sustainable development and achieving a low carbon economy. At present traffic congestion is an issue which needs to be addressed, particularly on Patrick Street. There are only two bridge crossings of the River Barrow in the town which exacerbates congestion. Spa Bridge and Barrow Bridge provide connections between the two counties of Laois and Offaly. Vehicles dominate many of Portarlington's streets and largely unrestricted vehicle movement is detrimental to a vibrant and livable environment. This impacts negatively on the quality and type of activities that can be accommodated in the town centre and the attractiveness to and safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

As indicated in Census 2016 as shown in the chart below, 3,510 persons (67.4%) use private transport as the mode of travel to work or school every day in the settlement. This compares to 774 persons (14.9%) for public transport and 632 persons (12.1%) for green modes. The key to getting people out of their cars and into public transport is to have a reliable, convenient, frequent and fast public transport service available and opportunities for pedestrian and cycle linkages, that bring people to the places they want to go.

While Laois and Offaly County Councils are not themselves public transport providers, and cannot force providers to deliver services in any particular area, this plan can put in place the necessary policy framework to encourage and facilitate the improvement of public transport. Limiting and/or removing vehicles at certain locations would benefit the public realm in terms of air quality and noise, and make the town centre a more attractive place to work, live and visit. In addition, there is an identified need for upgrades and new vehicular, pedestrian and cycle connections to improve the accessibility to existing residential estates, the town centre and educational facilities.

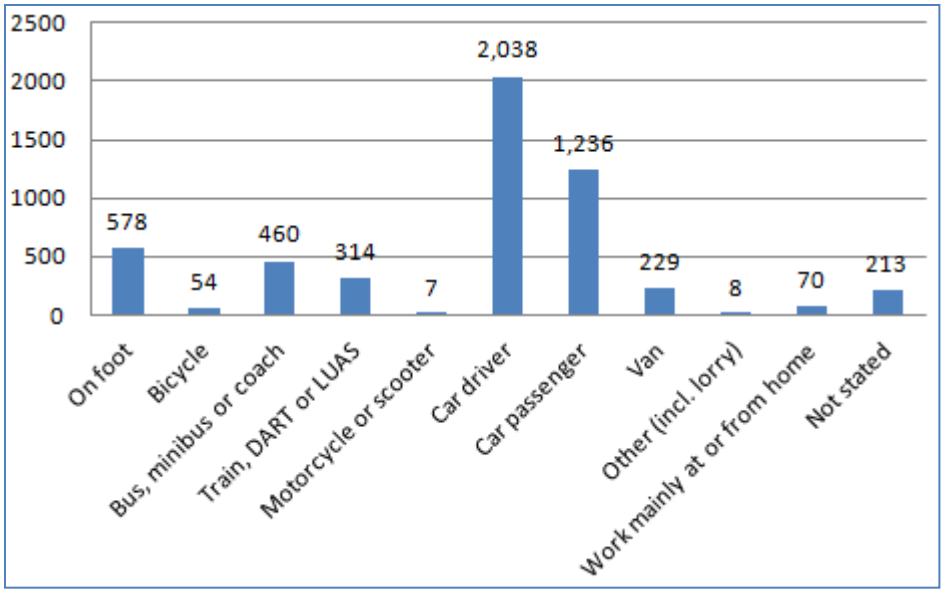

Figure 19: Commuting by means of travel to work, school or college (CSO 2016)

In order to achieve more sustainable travel patterns, a significant focus on reducing car dependency and increasing the permeability of the town is required. The benefits of reducing reliance on the car and improving the permeability of towns for cyclists and walkers, can be summarised as follows:

- Reduced dependency on fossil fuels, pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Increased levels of exercise with consequent health and fitness benefits;
- Builds social capital in neighbourhoods through increased social interaction;
- Higher numbers of pedestrians and cyclists increase levels of passive supervision making places safer;
- Reduced congestion on roads makes public transport more viable and;

- Reduced expenditure leakage to larger towns benefits local businesses.

Given that the majority of Portarlington's population are living within 1.5 km of the town centre, there is great potential for a modal shift from the private car towards walking and cycling as more attractive modes of transport in the town.

A key aim of this Draft Joint LAP is therefore to promote **compact, connected neighbourhoods** based on street patterns and forms of development that will make walking and cycling, especially for local trips, more attractive in line with national policy such as the *"Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future"* (2009) and *"Irelands First National Cycle Policy Framework"* (2009) which promotes sustainable travel movements and encourages people to find alternative ways to travel reducing car dependency.

In accordance with the "**Permeability** Best Practice Guide" (NTA, 2015), the key principles for maintaining and providing permeability within the plan area for the lifetime of the plan are as follows:

- Origins and destinations, such as schools and shops, should be linked in the most direct manner possible for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Greater priority should be given to pedestrians and cyclists;
- The physical design of links should be fit for purpose in terms of capacity and security;
- Junctions in urban and suburban areas should cater for pedestrians and cyclists safely and conveniently.

'Connecting People – Connecting Places' was launched in September 2015, and sets out an ambition and vision for County Offaly to be a major cycling destination, developing a major off road cycling network and loops which connects settlements, existing trails, canals and River Shannon in the Midlands Region. The development of an off road cycling network at Derryounce offers potential to connect Portarlington with the Grand Canal via Mount Lucas, forming a vital part of the "Core Network" of the cycling network. Both Local Authorities will work together to achieve such an objective.

Both Councils promote the provision of an enhanced pedestrian and cycle network and permeability in all new residential areas and in existing residential areas where possible that will provide more direct and safe access from residential areas to schools, town centre, community facilities and local amenity areas.

Transport and Movement: Strategic Aim:

To promote and facilitate a sustainable transport system that prioritises and provides for walking, cycling and public transport facilities while ensuring sufficient traffic management.

Objectives: It is an Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

TM O1: Identify and agree on a route for a future outer relief road with a view to constructing a northern by pass of Portarlington;

TM O2: Identify and agree a route for a southern relief road from the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Ballymorris;

TM O3: Reserve land for the delivery of an inner relief road connecting the R423 at Kilmalogue with the R419 at Cooltederry;

TM O4: Reserve land for the delivery of an inner relief road connecting the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Kilmalogue;

TM O5: Improve junction/road realignment at Kilmalogue Junction;

TM O6: Carry out necessary strengthening works to the Barrow Bridge;

TM O7: Ensure that adequate and safe bicycle and walking facilities are provided as part of any future educational, recreational and commercial developments in the town;

TM O8: Develop a cycle network throughout the town linking population, town centre, schools, community facilities, green infrastructure and the town's train station in accordance with the principles set out in Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) and the NTA National Cycling Manual principles and standards;

TM O9: Provide a permeable pedestrian network within the plan area which links residential areas, town centre, schools, community facilities, green infrastructure and the town's train station;

TM O10: Provide a high quality pedestrian network in the town centre area through the appropriate refurbishment of existing and the construction of new footpaths, incorporating the provision of safe crossing points and public lighting as required;

TM O11: Seek funding through development contributions and/or the relevant bodies in order to finance the delivery of safe, high quality cycle and pedestrian routes and greenways throughout the town;

TM O12: Investigate the feasibility and promote the provision of a recreational pedestrian/ cycle route from the Peoples Park, along the River Barrow to Derryounce Lakes and Trails;

TM O13: Facilitate the development of the Derryounce Lakes and Trails as an integrated walking, cycling and recreational amenity trail.

Policies: It is the Policy of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

TM P1: Ensure that the planning, design and implementation of all road and street networks in Portarlington accord with the principles set out in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) published by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport along with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government;

TM P2: Monitor traffic movement within the town and to provide passive traffic calming measures at appropriate locations as the need arises;

TM P3: Extend/upgrade public lighting throughout the town as the need arises;

TM P4: Ensure insofar as possible that all transport facilities and car parking within the town are accessible to people with mobility needs;

TM P5: Ensure all footpaths provide access for disabled and mobility impaired persons;

TM P6: Ensure that the design and layout of new developments enables, facilitates and encourages the use of sustainable travel modes;

TM P7: Work with all relevant public transport providers including Bus Eireann and Iarnrod Eireann to improve and expand public transport facilities and services in Portarlington and to link such facilities with the town centre and other nearby settlements;

TM P8: Continue to maintain and improve as required the local roads network to ensure a high standard of road quality and safety;

TM P9: Implement and support measures to alleviate traffic congestion within the town;

TMP10: Ensure that land uses within Portarlington are compatible with the safe and efficient operation of roads and associated junctions serving the immediate area;

TMP11: Ensure that all new development contains an adequate level of vehicular and bicycle provision in accordance with the policies and standards outlined in the Development Management Standards of both the Laois and Offaly County Development Plans;

TMP12: Ensure adequate access points are reserved and provided to open up areas (including backland areas) for development purposes;

TMP13: Provide an enhanced pedestrian and cycle network in Portarlington and secure full permeability in all new housing areas and in existing areas where possible;

TMP14: Promote, develop and upgrade a series of cycle lanes throughout the town for amenity and transport purposes.

13 HOUSING

This Draft Joint LAP aims to balance the provision of good quality housing that meets the needs of a diverse population, in a way that makes Portarlington a good place to live now and in the future. To meet the housing needs of Portarlington to 2024 and beyond is an important element of this plan. Adequate housing provision is essential for the creation of an environment to attract business and enterprise to the town and this plan provides the quantum of zoned lands to meet this demand. The quantum of zoned lands is in compliance with the Core Strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020.

The Draft Joint LAP aims to enhance the quality of life of residents and the ability of the town centre to attract occupiers and investment. There is a need to create a high quality public realm that connects to a network of open spaces, parks and squares and makes the town an attractive place to live. Suitable locations for housing must offer a critical mass of development capable of creating the capacity to provide the improvement in amenity and setting that will make town living more attractive to young and old alike.

As a Key Service Town, Portarlington is required to cater for new housing to serve population growth and new household formation, in accordance with the population targets of the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines and the **Core Strategies** of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 and Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020. In accordance with the Core Strategies, the town of Portarlington has a projected requirement for an additional 271 households on the Laois side of the town over the six-year period up to 2023 and an additional 174 households on the Offaly side of the town up to 2020. The Core Strategies identify a requirement for 39ha. of land in order to accommodate planned growth, equating to an average density of 12 units per hectare.

Type of accommodation	Households	Percentage
House/Bungalow	2,726	90.81%
Flat/Apartment	228	7.59%
Bed-sit	2	0.07%
Caravan/Mobile Home	3	0.10%
Not stated	43	1.43%
Total	3,002	

Table 7: Households by accommodation type (CSO Census 2016)

As set out in the table above the Census of 2016 recorded a total of 3,002 households in Portarlington, with the majority of households accommodated in houses built since 2001

(1,588). There are 1,928 owner occupied households within the settlement. The majority of these households (40%) comprise couples with children.

Type of Household	Households	Percentage
One Person	742	25%
Couples without children	523	17%
Couples with children	1208	40%
Single parent families	411	14%
Other	118	4%
Total	3,002	

Table 8: Households by composition (CSO Census 2016)

To cater for the projected population growth of the County, the **Housing Strategy** is set out under the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020, and should be read in tandem with this chapter. It is the policy of the Councils to implement the provisions of the Housing Strategy in accordance with Section 95 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Housing Strategies have identified a housing need in Portarlington. Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, the Planning Authorities will employ Site Activation Measures including the **Vacant Site Levy** to bring forward vacant and/or underutilised sites in Portarlington for the supply of housing.

The previous Joint LAP period (2012-2018) identified **unfinished housing developments** as a legacy issue including estates such as Corrig Glen, Kilnacourt etc.. The Planning Authorities will aim to resolve these estates through collaboration and cooperation with a number of key stakeholders.

Following economic recovery **new residential development** will become a key issue for the growth of Portarlington during this plan period. This plan places a strong emphasis on providing quality residential developments in the existing built envelope of the town. The Town Centre zone presents significant housing opportunities through redevelopment of brownfield, infill and backland type developments. A number of key opportunity sites have been identified within/ adjacent to the town centre which is in close proximity to public transport infrastructure and are suitable for higher density developments. However, these areas are insufficient in size to accommodate the total projected population growth. Therefore, greenfield sites have also been identified which are suitable for new high quality residential developments.

In order to ensure the delivery of high quality housing in a sustainable manner residential development will be required to:

- Be located in places that can support sustainable development, places which support growth, innovation and the efficient provision of infrastructure, are accessible to a range

of local services, can encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling, and help tackle climate change;
- Increase residential density through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights;
- Be delivered where homes and the appropriate supporting services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively at least cost to the State in the long-run;
- Have an excellent standard of design, layout and finish;
- Provide an appropriate mix of tenure types;
- Compliment the character of Portarlington.

Portarlington may be suitable for **apartment development** subject to local determination, having regard to the following broad proximity and accessibility considerations:

1) Town Centre:

Generally suitable for small to medium scale (will vary subject to location) and higher density development (will also vary), that may wholly comprise apartments, and includes:

- Sites within walking distance (i.e. up to 15 minutes or 1,000-1,500m) of the town centre;
- Sites within reasonable walking distance (i.e. up to 10 minutes or 800- 1,000m) to or from high capacity urban public transport stops;
- Sites within easy walking distance (i.e. up to 5 minutes or 400-500m) to or from high frequency bus services or where such services can be provided.

This range of locations is not exhaustive and will require local assessment that further considers these and other relevant planning factors.

2) Remainder of the town:

Generally suitable for limited, small-scale (will vary subject to location), higher density development that may wholly comprise apartments, or residential development of any scale that will include a minority of apartments at low medium densities and includes:

- Sites in suburban development areas that do not meet proximity or accessibility criteria.

These areas require local assessment that further considers these and other relevant planning factors.

The provision of apartments may be considered in order to achieve higher densities at appropriate locations to allow for greater diversity and flexibility in a housing scheme. Accordingly, apartments may be considered as part of a mix of housing types in a given housing development at any urban location.

In accordance with the specific planning policy of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (March 2018) the quantum of **car parking** or the requirement for any such provision for apartment developments will vary and may be subject to relaxation, having regard to the location in the town which may be suitable for apartment development, broadly based on proximity and accessibility criteria as set out in the Guidelines.

The need for **Nursing Homes** and residential care homes in the town is anticipated to grow into the future and these facilities should be integrated wherever possible into the established or planned residential areas where residents can avail of reasonable access to local services. In determining planning applications for a change of use from a residential dwelling or other building to a nursing home the following will be considered:

- Whether such a use would not give rise to a traffic hazard and off-street car parking;
- The proximity to local services and facilities;
- Whether the size and scale is appropriate to the area.

Housing: Strategy Aim:

To deliver new residential development, to support the existing community infrastructure, recreation and amenity facilities and provide new facilities in tandem with new housing.

Objectives: It is an Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

H O1: Ensure that sufficient zoned land is available at appropriate locations to cater for the envisaged population growth of the Core Strategies;

H O2: Promote and encourage the development of the critical mass of Portarlington and to enhance its strategic location on the National and Regional road and rail network;

H O3: Facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations to meet the needs of the population, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs, in a sustainable manner;

H O4: To ensure compliance with the provisions of Part V of the Act (as amended) and to integrate such housing so as to prevent social segregation within residential developments;

H O5: To utilise the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (Vacant Site Levy) to facilitate the appropriate development of vacant sites (residential zoned) that are in need of renewal or regeneration;

H O6: To encourage the sequential development of sustainable serviced residentially zoned lands in a sustainable manner subject to compliance with relevant Department Guidelines and Development Management Standards of the Laois County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 and Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020;

H O7: To promote a higher density at appropriate locations, particularly close to the town centre and public transport facilities;

H O8: To encourage appropriate housing development on infill and brownfield sites subject to preservation of existing residential amenity, the provision of a high quality design respecting the established character, density and layout, compliance with all traffic safety, quantitative and qualitative standards of the Laois County Development 2017 – 2023 and Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020;

H O9: To promote the reoccupation of vacant residential stock within Portarlington Town Centre, including 'Living Above the Shop' units;

H O10: To ensure an appropriate and sustainable mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures to cater for all members of society, including homeless persons, the elderly, disabled and travellers;

H O11: To ensure provision of lifetime adaptable homes that can accommodate the changing needs of a household over time;

H O12: To identify, acquire and provide suitable sites, accommodation and facilities for the housing and resettlement of travelling families;

H O13: To secure the provision of social infrastructure, community and recreational facilities in tandem with residential development.

Policies: It is a Policy of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

H P1: Ensure that sufficient zoned land is available at appropriate locations to cater for the envisaged population growth of the Core Strategies;

H P2: Require all new residential developments to be consistent with the Core Strategies of the Laois County Development Plan 2107 - 2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 - 2020;

H P3: Promote and encourage the development of the critical mass of Portarlington and to enhance its strategic location on the Regional road and National rail network;

H P4: Facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations to meet the needs of the population, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs, in a sustainable manner;

H P5: To require the creation of sustainable communities and high quality residential areas at appropriate locations with a mix tenure and adequate amenities and facilities and to meet the standards and guidance of:

- Sustainable Residential Development In Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHG (2009);
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018);
- The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DTTS and DECLG (2013);
- The development management standards of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023;
- Technical Guidance Document L – Conservation of Fuel and Energy – Dwellings.

14 COMMUNITY SERVICES & CULTURE

Community services and facilities of a social, sporting, educational, and amenity value are crucially important to provide opportunities for participation, for health and to attract inward investment. This plan provides for the expansion of existing community services and facilities and development of new services. This plan also puts an emphasis on promoting and developing a stronger cultural dimension in the town. Culture plays a key role in ensuring that communities are mixed, sustainable and dynamic. Developing and promoting culture in Portarlington will maximise the physical, social and economic benefits of the cultural offer. Promoting cultural development shapes the identity of the town and helps set it apart in terms of its distinctiveness.

The creation of sustainable and vibrant communities requires the provision of and access to education, childcare, health and support services, recreation and leisure facilities and a good quality built environment to create a sense of place. The Council is committed to the provision, upgrade and expansion of community facilities and social infrastructure in conjunction with private, public and voluntary organisations.

The **Local Community Development Committees** (LCDC) of Laois County Council and Offaly County Council were established in 2014. The LCDCs perform a role in developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development through the Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2021 (LECP) and Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 - 2021. The LECPs are central to promoting economic and local community development in the counties over a six year period.

The provision of good quality **childcare and educational facilities** is important to support the development of sustainable communities and to support economic development. There are approximately 13 no. preschool facilities in Portarlington, including a variety of full day care facilities, sessional services, preschool, crèche facilities, Montessori and after school facilities. The requirement for additional preschool facilities will be based on the capacity of existing facilities and additional requirements arising from new residential development.

There are 5 no. primary schools and 1 no. secondary school in Portarlington. The Council has sought and will continue to work with the Department of Education and Skills to identify and develop sites for new schools as necessary. In this regard, the plan includes for the zoning of land for new schools and expansion of existing educational facilities. Portarlington Further Education and Training Centre provides further education and training courses. The requirement for additional primary and secondary educational facilities will be monitored

having regard to the development of residential land during the lifetime of the Draft Joint LAP. The Council will facilitate and promote the development of third level educational facilities in the town.

Laois County Council adopted the **"Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2016-2021"** in 2016. The strategy sets out a number of aims and actions so that the county will be where older people are supported to live independently in safe and secure homes and communities, suitable for their physical and social needs, with improved health and quality of life, where older people are enabled to participate in economic, social, political and community life and continue to grow, develop and contribute to society and build upon existing services and supports. The **"Offaly Age Friendly County Strategy 2018-2023"** is due to be adopted in mid 2018.

Portarlington library was opened in 2016 incorporating the original library premises and the courthouse on Main Street. The library is a state of the art facility with a significant range of services available to serve the education and recreational needs of the town and surrounding hinterland.

Figure 20 Portarlington Library

Portlaoise is the main centre of **health care** in the county. However, Portarlington is served by a Primary Care Centre at Kilnacourt and several private medical clinics. In this regard, there are a number of public, voluntary and private agencies responsible for the provision of healthcare facilities in the town.

Portlaoise and Tullamore are served by **emergency services** including An Garda Siochana, the Ambulance Service, the Fire Service and Civil Defence etc.

Community Services & Culture: Strategic Aim:

To deliver, facilitate and support the provision of a broad range of high quality community, educational and cultural facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the population.

Objectives: It is an Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

CSC O1: Facilitate the provision of social infrastructure and to provide access to new and existing community and social facilities;

CSC O2: Facilitate the improvement and provision of community facilities and emergency services in appropriate locations;

CSC O3: Facilitate the improvement and provision of educational, childcare and healthcare facilities in appropriate and accessible locations;

CSC O4: Facilitate implementation of the Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2016-2021;

CSC O5: Promote the amenities and ensure the accessibility of arts and cultural facilities within the ownership of Laois and Offaly County Councils;

CSC O6: Facilitate the roll out of community policing and neighbourhood watch schemes.

Policies: It is a Policy of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

CSC P1: Ensure provision of sufficient zoned lands to allow for expansion of existing and provision of new community facilities;

CSC P2: Facilitate the development of and expansion of services, amenities and facilities to cater for all society members, ages and community groups;

CSC P3: Facilitate the development of primary, second-level, third-level outreach, vocational and lifelong learning facilities and digital capacity for distance learning including fourth level education, lifelong learning and up-skilling generally;

CSC P4: Ensure the provision and implementation of primary and secondary education facilities in concert with the planning and sustainable development of residential areas in order to maximise the opportunities for use of walking, cycling and use of public transport.

15 BUILT HERITAGE

Portarlington's built heritage is a key and distinctive asset which can be used to promote a positive image of the town. The built heritage is a unique resource and represents an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of the town's past. The vernacular architecture makes a strong contribution to the character of the town. This plan seeks to protect, preserve and enhance the built heritage for the benefit of future generations.

The built heritage of Portarlington is fundamental to the cultural identity of the town and the quality of life of its citizens. This includes 18th and 19th century two, three and four storey town houses, walled gardens and burgages, vernacular structures, industrial heritage, Huguenot artefacts, ecclesiastical architecture and a considerable amount of features of interest including stone walls and street furniture.

Having regard to the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 it is an objective of the Council to designate an **Architectural Conservation Area** (ACA) in the town centre. An ACA is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. The designation is a driver for sustainable and sensitive development, the aim of which is not *'preservation'* but managed development that enhances the character and heritage of the town. Contemporary design should reinforce the historic character within the ACA, and should take its cues from the historic setting in terms of scale and design. High quality architectural design will add to the built heritage and complement the receiving historic environment.

Figure 21: Portarlington Railway Station 1950

The **Record of Protected Structures** (RPS) is set out under the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020. The RPSs should be read in conjunction with this plan. The RPSs include structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. There are approximately 96 no. Protected Structures within the development boundary of Portarlington. A zone of archaeological significance is also situated within the town centre.

Lea Castle is a medieval castle on the banks of the River Barrow outside of the settlement of Portarlington. Although outside of the town boundary, the castle is of significant historical and architectural importance. Unfortunately the castle has been disappearing into the landscape. The Portarlington Arts and Heritage Committee have prepared a conservation report following funding from the Heritage Council and some initial works to facilitate the long term conservation of the structure. The project has potential for tourism development and the uncovering of the rich history of the site and local area. A walk along the River Barrow to the Castle is part of the long term proposals for the site.

Built Heritage: Strategic Aim:

To protect, conserve and manage the built heritage of the town and to encourage sensitive and sustainable development to ensure its preservation for future generations.

Objectives: It is the Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

BH O1: Protect, conserve and enhance the built environment, through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and promoting good quality urban design;

BH O2: Conserve, protect and enhance the built heritage of Portarlington, including all Protected Structures and attendant grounds, Recorded Monuments and Places in accordance with best conservation practice;

BH O3: Positively consider proposals to improve, alter, extend or change the use of protected structures so as to render them viable for modern use, subject to consultation with suitably qualified Conservation Architects and / or other relevant experts, suitable design, materials and construction methods;

BH O4: Ensure all development works on or at the sites of protected structures, including any site works necessary, shall be carried out using best heritage practice for the protection and preservation of those aspects or features of the structures / site that render it worthy of protection;

BH O5: Support the re-introduction of traditional features on protected structures where there is evidence that such features (e.g. window styles, finishes etc.) previously existed;

BH O6: Strongly resist the demolition of protected structures, unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist;

BH O7: Consider the change of use of protected structures, provided that it can be shown that the structure, character, appearance and setting will not be adversely affected or where it can be shown it is necessary to have an economic use to enable its upkeep;

BH O8: Designate an Architectural Conservation Area in Portarlington to ensure the protection within the traditional core of the town, of all those buildings, spaces, archaeological sites, trees, street furniture, views and other aspects of the environment which form an essential part of their character, as set out in their character appraisals;

BH O9: Ensure the design of any development in the traditional core of the town, including any changes of use of an existing building, should preserve and / or enhance the character and appearance of the traditional core as a whole;

BH O10: Promote schemes for the conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the traditional core of the town;

BH O11: No development in the vicinity of a feature included in the Record of Monuments & Places (RMP) will be permitted which seriously detracts from the setting of the feature or which is seriously injurious to its cultural or educational value;

BH O12: Ensure archaeological assessment is carried out as required and promote 'preservation in situ' of archaeological remains and settings in developments that would impact upon archaeological sites and/or features;

BH O13: Protect previously unknown archaeological sites and features, including underwater sites, where they are discovered during development works;

BH O14: Facilitate public access to National Monuments in State or Local Authority care.

Policies: It is the Policy of both Laois County Council and Offaly County Council to:

BH P1: Ensure heritage assets that are the focus for tourism development are appropriately managed and their special interest conserved from potential adverse effects from visitors or development in general and that best practice standards in relation for the environmental management of tourism enterprises are adhered to;

BH P2: Support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners, public access to heritage sites and features at appropriate locations whilst ensuring heritage related development does not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of Laois's and Offaly's heritage assets;

BH P3: Support the implementation of Ireland's Ancient East by facilitating the provision of visitor information in line with the policies and objectives with respect to heritage sites; and integrating the objectives of Ireland's Ancient East with transport programmes in the counties.

16 NATURAL HERITAGE

This chapter considers the natural heritage of Portarlington which includes the Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure. Similar to Built Heritage the Natural Heritage is a key and distinctive asset which can also be used to promote a positive image of the town. The natural heritage of Portarlington is a material asset which should be protected and enhanced.

With respect to the **Natural Environment** of Portarlington a European designated (EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC) Special Areas of Conservation comprising the River Barrow, which forms part of the River Barrow and Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC), runs west to east through the centre of the town interacting with both the natural and built heritage to give a unique and distinct character. There are no Special Protection Areas or Natural Heritage Areas located within the plan boundary.

Green Infrastructure is the physical environment within and between our towns and villages, comprising a network of multi functional open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, trees and open space. Green Infrastructure includes all environmental resources such as air and water quality and provides vital amenity and recreational spaces for communities, thus contributing to the health and quality of life of residents and visitors to the town.

Figure 22: Derryounce & The Barrow

Connected green spaces provide the greatest benefit to biodiversity in an urban context. The River Barrow provides a nature corridor extending through the centre of the town. The Peoples Park, the woodland area at the rear of Kilnacourt House (Formerly Odlums Wood) and the Derryounce Lakes and Trails recreation area provide important green infrastructure in the town.

While **Derryounce Lakes and Trails**, on the outskirts of Portarlington has the potential to offer extensive and interesting walking and cycling routes for visitors and the local population, there also exists a unique opportunity to connect Derryounce to the town via existing tracks and the River Barrow. This plan identifies a potential recreational pedestrian/cycle route from the Peoples Park, along the River Barrow to Derryounce Lakes and Trails as indicated below.

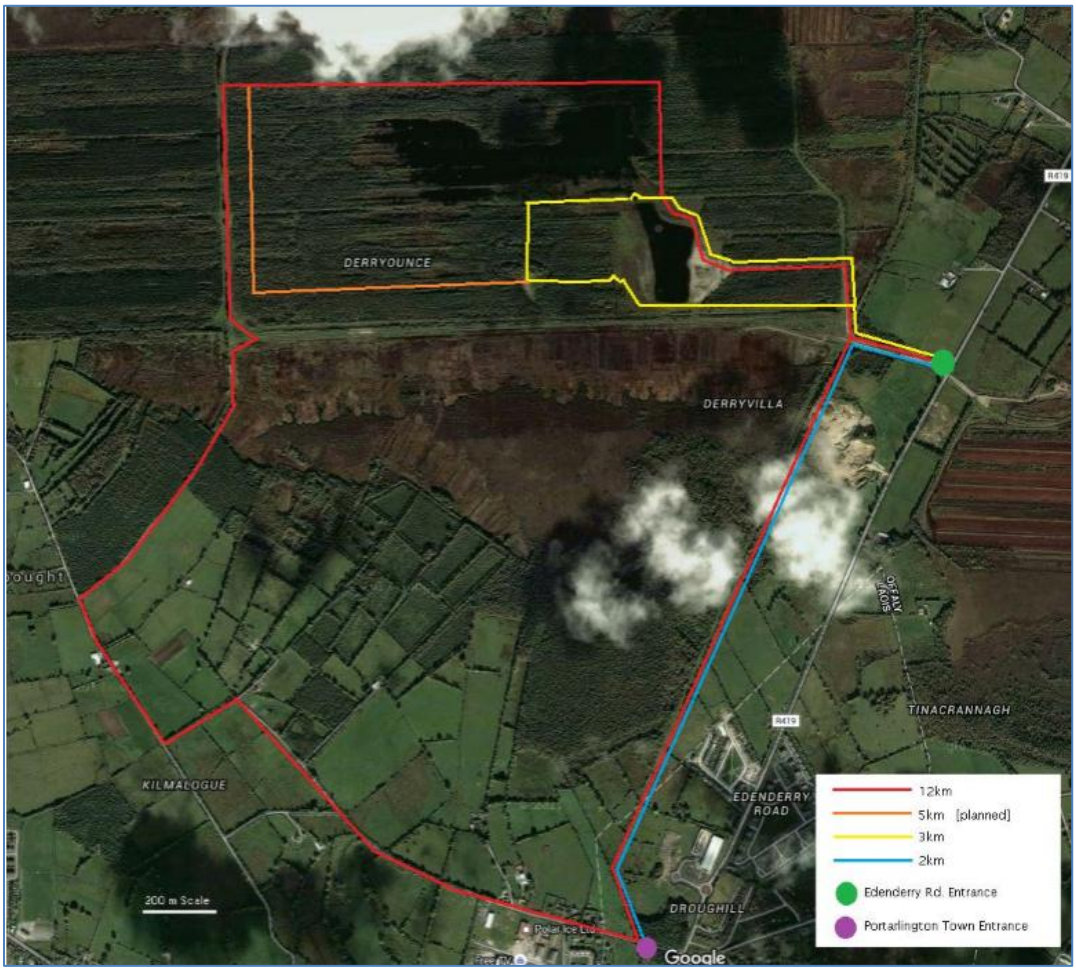

Figure 23: Derryounce Trails

In addition to ecological benefits, the existing parks and amenity open spaces in Portarlington provide a focal point for active and passive recreation. A playground is located at People's Park. There are also a number of gyms, sports grounds and clubs located in the town. The recreational amenities of the town also add to the quality of life of the local community. The benefits include:

- The creation of a community spirit and sense of place;
- Encouraging physical activity, health and fitness;
- Access to nature and the environment;
- The creation of a pleasant environment to attract business and inward investment;
- Climate Change adaption.

A wide diversity of species, habitats, ecosystems and landscapes make up the **biodiversity** of Portarlington. The Portarlington Local Biodiversity Action Plan was published by Laois County Council in 2015.

Biodiversity is the diversity of life, the diversity of all the organisms that occur on Earth – everything from birds to bugs to mammals to trees to reptiles to lichens to fish to mosses to amphibians to algae and everything in between! The term biodiversity includes genetic diversity i.e. the differences within species e.g. the differences from one person to the next.

Figure 24: Portarlington Habitat Map (Biodiversity Plan)

Humans are an integral part of the Biodiversity of Earth and our actions can affect it in both a positive and negative way. Ecology deals with the inter-relations between organisms and the places in which they live. This can refer to human beings' dealings and interactions with both the habitats and species around them. A habitat is the type of area where an organism or a number of organisms are at home.

There is potential to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Portarlington through the planning system. Individual planning applications can provide or retain hedgerows, landscaped areas, retention or planting of trees and preservation of trees etc.

Natural Heritage: Strategic Aim:

To protect, enhance, create and connect natural heritage, green spaces and high quality amenity areas throughout Portarlington for biodiversity and recreation.

Objectives: It is the Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

NH O1: Ensure an Appropriate Assessment, in accordance with Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and with DEHLG guidance (2009), is carried out in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site to determine the likelihood of the plan or project having a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects and to ensure that projects which may give rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites will not be permitted (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) unless for reasons of overriding public interest;

NH O2: Identify, protect and conserve natural heritage sites, nationally designated conservation sites and non designated sites in co-operation and consultation with the relevant statutory authorities;

NH O3: Seek integration of all elements of existing green infrastructure into new developments, prevent fragmentation and mitigate potential impacts on the existing green infrastructure network;

NH O4: Identify, protect, conserve and enhance wherever possible, wildlife habitats, stepping stones, corridors and features;

NH O5: Seek to preserve, protect and maintain trees of special amenity, conservation or landscape value;

NH O6: Carry out and require the planting of native trees, hedgerows and vegetation in all new developments;

NH O7: Promote a network of paths and cycle tracks to enhance accessibility to the Green Infrastructure network, while ensuring that the design and operation of the routes responds to the ecological protection needs of each site;

NH O8: Support the upgrading of walking and cycling trails along the River Barrow and around Derryounce Bog and existing lakes;

NH O9: Support the development of an historical trail through Derryounce Bog and the creation of a Heritage Museum to document the history of the bog and turf production in the area;

NH O10: Provide a riparian corridor of between 30 and 50 metres along the bank of the River Barrow for its ecological value and potential and to maintain it free from inappropriate Development;

NH O11: Provide recreational amenities such as playgrounds and outdoor gym equipment;

NH O12: Protect environmental quality and implement site appropriate mitigation measures with respect to air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change, light pollution, noise pollution and waste management;

NH O13: Facilitate the work of agencies redressing the issue of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.

Policies: It is the Policy of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

NH P1: Prohibit any development that would be harmful to or that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats and/or disturbance of species in any Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA);

NH P2: Support and co-operate with statutory authorities and others in support of measures taken to manage proposed or designated sites in order to achieve their conservation objectives;

NH P3: Protect, enhance and further develop the Green Infrastructure network in Portarlington and to strengthen links to the wider regional network;

NH P4: Support the development of a green corridor connecting the recreation areas of Derryounce Lakes and Trails, the River Barrow and the Peoples Park;

NH P5: Ensure heritage assets that are the focus for tourism development are appropriately managed and their special interest conserved from potential adverse effects from visitors or development in general and that best practice standards in relation for the environmental management of tourism enterprises are adhered to;

NH P6: Support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners, public access to heritage

sites and features at appropriate locations whilst ensuring heritage related development does not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of the town's heritage assets;

NH P7: Support the implementation of Ireland's Ancient East by facilitating the provision of visitor information in line with the policies and objectives with respect to heritage sites; and integrating the objectives of Ireland's Ancient East with transport programmes in the County;

NH P8: Protect environmental quality in Portarlington through the implementation of European, National and Regional policy and legislation relating to air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change, light pollution, noise pollution and waste management.

17 FLOOD MANAGEMENT

Flooding is a natural process that can happen at any time in a wide variety of locations and the severity of which is set to increase due to climate change. Flooding from rivers and prolonged, intense and localised rainfall can also cause sewer flooding, overland flow and groundwater flooding. Flooding has significant impacts on human activities as it can threaten lives, livelihoods, housing, transport, and public service infrastructure and commercial/industrial enterprises. The impacts of flooding can be significant and wide reaching and include health, social, economic and environmental effects. Developments in inappropriate locations can exacerbate the problems of flooding by accelerating and increasing surface water runoff, altering watercourses and removing floodplain storage.

In accordance with the **Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities** (2009), a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has informed the preparation of the Draft Joint LAP. There is a history of flooding of the River Barrow and its tributary the Blackstick Drain in Portarlington. The Council recognizes that flooding or the risk of flooding constrains development potential in Portarlington. The Council 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. Flood hazard maps for the Portarlington area indicate that there is a considerable flood risk with the town and environs.

The Barrow Drainage Board was dissolved in 2014. The Board comprised the Local Authorities of Laois, Kildare and Offaly and was responsible for maintaining the Barrow and its tributaries from its source in the Slieve Bloom mountains to the Horse Bridge in Athy. The responsibilities of the Board were subsumed into the County Councils.

The **Portarlington Strategic Flood Risk and Management Strategy** was commissioned by Laois and Offaly County Councils in association with the OPW to evaluate and quantify flood risk in Portarlington. The study recommends a series of mitigation measures in the form of flood walls, levees, embankments and attenuation areas provided at various locations through the centre of Portarlington along the banks of the River Barrow and the Blackstick Drain. The Strategy sets out three phases of works to address flood risk in the town:

- **Phase 1**: Will reduce the risk of flooding to existing properties, primarily the town centre area including Spa Street and Patrick Street. This phase will also reduce the flood risk to a

section of undeveloped land to the rear of Patrick Street, representing a key opportunity for Town Centre development;

- **Phase 2:** Will improve the growth potential of the town between the Railway Bridge and Rosecourt, and will require a partnership approach between both Laois and Offaly County Councils. This phase cannot be carried out until Phase 1 is implemented;

- **Phase 3:** Will also improve the growth potential of the town in the area south of Marian Hill, on the Laois side of the town. This phase cannot be carried out until Phase 1 is implemented.

No element of the potential flood relief phased scheme has commenced to date.

As the frequency, pattern and severity of flooding are expected to increase as a result of climate change, it is vitally important to take account of flood risk in the preparation of development plans such as this Draft Joint LAP and ensure that any development does not individually or cumulatively give rise to flood risk. The Draft Joint LAP avoids development in areas at risk of flooding and has substituted vulnerable land uses with less vulnerable uses where this is not possible. Where neither is possible, mitigation and management of risks must be proposed. Justification tests were carried out on a number of sites and are detailed in the SFRA report accompanying this Draft Joint LAP. The SFRA has recommended that development proposals for a number of areas within the plan boundary should be the subject of site-specific flood risk assessment appropriate to the nature and scale of the development being proposed.

The **Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management** (CFRAM) programme is a medium to long term strategy for the reduction and management of flood risk in Ireland covering seven river basin districts in Ireland. Portarlington and its environs lie within the South Eastern River Basin District and were identified as an "Area for Further Assessment" (AFA) through CFRAM. A Hydraulics Report and Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) mapping has been completed as part of the CFRAM study which provides the complete assessment of flood risk in the town.

In accordance with "*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities*" as amended by Circular PL2/2014, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is required to be undertaken during the development of this Joint Local Area Plan. The SFRA is an assessment of flood risk within Portarlington and includes mapped boundaries for indicative Flood Risk Zones, taking into account various factors including local knowledge, photography, site walkovers and published data sources indicative of flood risk. The SFRA should be read in conjunction with this Joint Draft Local Area Plan.

The landuse zoning map for Portarlington has been developed taking into consideration the areas identified as being at risk of flooding as per the indicative flood risk map. Largely a precautionary approach has been taken to landuse zoning and this provides for the avoidance or minimization of development in areas at risk of flooding.

A number of approaches to managing flood risk in Portarlington have and will be employed during the making of this Joint Local Area Plan and also in dealing with planning applications for particular developments. These include:

1. Areas at risk of flooding have been identified;
2. A precautionary approach has largely been employed to landuse zoning to avoid directing development towards areas at risk of flooding;
3. Areas at risk of flooding as identified which are being put forward for landuse zoning have been subject to assessment through the justification test;
4. Where particular areas were examined as being strategically important for the consolidated and coherent growth of the town and zoned accordingly, area specific flood risk assessment will be required and mitigation measures for site and building works will be required to be integrated.

Flood Management: Strategic Aim:

To develop and improve flood alleviation measures throughout the town and rural hinterland so as to compliment the overall strategy for economic and population growth and to achieve improved physical and environmental protection

Objectives: It is an Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

FM O1: Manage flood risk in accordance with the requirements of *"The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities"*, DECLG and OPW (2009) and Circular PL02/2014 (August 2014);

FM O2: Support and co-operate with the OPW in delivering the South Eastern CFRAM Programme;

FM O3: To carry out infrastructural works in the Bog Road and Botley Lane areas of the town to alleviate flooding from the Blackstick Drain, a tributary of the River Barrow:

(i) Raise public road levels and improve road drainage infrastructure;
(ii) Improve drainage channels in Blackstick Drain and contributing drains;
(iii) Refurbish all culverts to the Blackstick Drain and contributing drains;

FM O4: To carry out a programme of dredging surface water drains and to continue to ensure that the drains are regularly maintained to minimise the risk of flooding.

Policies: It is the Policy of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

FM P1: In conjunction with OPW implement a program of flood defense works for the

town;

FM P2: Comply with DoEHLG Guidelines *"The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)"* and any future Guidelines in relation to flood risk;

FM P3: Ensure development proposals within the areas outlined on Flood Risk Map are the subject of Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment as outlined in *"The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines"* 2009;

FM P4: Ensure all development on lands identified as being at risk of flooding must demonstrate, through the carrying out of a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment and the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, that any flood risk can be adequately managed and the use or development of the lands will not cause unacceptable adverse impacts elsewhere;

FM P5: Co-operate with the OPW in relation to the development of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment (CFRAM) South Eastern River Basin and for the River Barrow and its tributaries in particular and to comply with any guidance and recommendations of this flood risk management plan;

FM P6: Incorporate the recommendations of the South Eastern CFRAM into any site specific flood risk assessment undertaken for individual sites/areas;

FM P7: Provide an appropriate set back from the edge of the watercourse and proposed developments to allow access for channel clearing/maintenance;

FM P8: Adhere to the requirements of the Inland Fisheries and National Parks and Wildlife Service in the construction of any flood alleviation measures;

FM P9: Comply with relevant provisions of the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945 and the Arterial Drainage (Amendment) Act 1995;

FM P10: 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.

18 IMPLEMENTATION

This Draft Joint LAP outlines specific policies and objectives for the development of Portarlington. The overarching policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 also apply.

The applicable Development Management Standards are set out under Section 8 of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and Chapter 8 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020. All proposed developments will be screened on a case by case basis for Environmental Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment.

18.1 LAND USE ZONING

The purpose of zoning is to indicate to property owners and the general public the types of development which the Planning Authority considers most appropriate in each land use category. Zoning is designed to reduce conflicting uses within areas, to protect resources and, in association with phasing, to ensure that land suitable for development is used to the best advantage of the community as a whole.

The Land Use Zoning Map shows the land use zoning objectives for Portarlington. The Land Use Zoning Map should be read in conjunction with the Land Use Zoning Objectives and Land Use Zoning Matrix set out below. The land uses are differentiated by the relevant Local Authority, either Laois County Council (LCC) or Offaly County Council (OCC).

Council Land Use Zoning	Objective & Purpose
LCC **Town Centre** **(Primary / Core Retail Area)**	**Objective:** *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.* **Purpose:** To enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre through the promotion of retail, residential, commercial, office, cultural, public facilities and other uses appropriate in the urban core. To prioritise the development of town centre lands in order to consolidate the development of the town. To encourage the use of buildings and backlands, in

	particular the full use of upper floors, preferably for residential purposes.
OCC **Mixed Use**	The use of land as Town Centre Mixed Use shall be taken to include the use of land for a mix of uses, making provisions, where appropriate for "primary" uses i.e. primarily commercial/retail and combined with other compatible uses e.g. residential as "secondary". These secondary uses will be considered by the Local Authority, having regard to the particular character of the area. A diversity of uses for both day and evening is encouraged. These areas require high levels of accessibility, including pedestrian, cyclists and public transport (where feasible). Compatible uses within this zoning objective include: - banks and other financial institutions, cafes, community buildings, civic buildings, entertainment, hotels, leisure and recreation, offices, professional/ specialist services, restaurants etc. The Council will continue to ensure that any development proposed is in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development, and serves to reinforce the vitality and viability of town centres, whilst meeting the needs of its community and surrounding hinterland. Development proposals should be of a use, scale, form and design that accords with the role, function and size of the location in both the Settlement Hierarchy and the Retail Hierarchy of the plan i.e. town centre setting.
LCC **Residential 1** **Existing Residential**	**Objective:** *To protect and improve the amenity of developed residential communities.* **Purpose:** This zone is intended primarily for established housing development. It is an objective on land zoned for Residential 1 to protect established residential amenity and enhance the quality 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, such as schools, crèches, small shops, doctor's surgeries, playing fields etc.

LCC **Residential 2 – New Proposed Residential**	**Objective:** *To provide for new residential development, residential services and community facilities.* **Purpose:** This zone is intended primarily for housing development but may include a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to facilitate the development of new residential communities such as open space, schools, crèches, small shops, doctor's surgeries, playing fields etc. The improved quality of residential areas and the servicing of orderly development will be priority. New housing and infill developments should be of sensitive design, which are complimentary to their surroundings and do not adversely impact on the amenity of adjoining residents. No piecemeal development can take place unless it does not conflict with the possible future development of the reserved development areas of the town.
OCC **Residential**	The use 'Residential' shall be taken to primarily include the use of land for domestic dwellings (including group housing for members of the travelling community), convents and civic institutions. It may also provide for a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to foster the development of new residential communities for example, schools, crèches, local convenience store, doctor/dental surgeries, open space (formal and informal) etc.
LCC **Strategic Residential Reserve**	**Objective:** *To provide lands for future development in line with national and regional targets.* **Purpose:** 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 2024-2030. 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.
LCC **Community, Educational & Institutional Services/Facilities**	**Objective:** *To protect and provide for local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities.* **Purpose:** To protect and improve existing community, educational and institutional facilities and to safeguard their future provision. The land use will provide for local civic, religious, community, educational and other facilities ancillary to neighbourhood uses and services.
OCC **Public/Community/Educational**	The use of land as 'Public/ Community/ Education' shall be taken to include the use of land for the above stated uses, which generally include community related development (including the provision of schools, community halls, health care institutions, utilities, libraries and development for other community uses). Ancillary facilities such as dedicated open space or sports facilities will normally be facilitated within this zoning objective.
LCC **Open Space & Amenity**	**Objective:** *To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational open space.* **Purpose:** The Council will not normally permit development that would result in a loss of open space.
OCC **Open Space**	The use of land as 'Open Space' shall be taken to include the use of land for: afforestation, playgrounds, housing estate open spaces, parks and development incidental to the enjoyment of open space including sports centres, outdoor recreation centres and landscaped areas, the provision of shelters, walks, walls, sanitary conveniences, play equipment, dressing rooms and similar facilities. It also provides for the use of such land or such facilities for games, educational and recreational purposes. High standards of accessibility are essential.

LCC **Industrial & Warehousing**	**Objective:** *To provide for and improve industrial and warehousing development.* **Purpose:** To provide for industrial development, including heavy industry with environmental emissions, including noise and odour and with intensive or hazardous processing. To also provide for light industry, technology related office development and general office development that exceed 400 square metres. Other uses, ancillary or similar to industry and warehousing will be considered on the merits of each planning application and may be acceptable. 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 shall have regard to alternative sustainable modes of transport. Any proposed 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 and warehousing land adjoins other land uses, a landscaped buffer zone will be required.
OCC **Industry**	The use of land as 'Industry' shall be taken to include the use of land for industry/manufacturing, repairs, warehousing, distribution, open-storage, waste materials treatment and recovery and transport operating centres. The development of inappropriate mixes of uses, such as 'office-based development' and 'retailing' will not normally be encouraged.
LCC **General Business**	**Objective:** *To provide for and improve commercial activities.*

	Purpose: To provide for commercial activities and acknowledge 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.
LCC **Neighbourhood Centres**	**Objective:** *To serve the needs of new/existing residential areas.* **Purpose:** 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. A mix of appropriate retail, community and recreational development will be permitted. Only limited residential development will be considered in new developments sufficient to ensure the satisfactory working of the neighbourhood centre. The retail element will be controlled so as not to negatively impact on the existing town centre. The largest size of a new convenience store shall be restricted to no more than 300 sq.m in a Neighbourhood Centre.
LCC **Enterprise & Employment**	**Objective:** *To provide for enterprise and employment activities.* **Purpose:** To accommodate commercial and enterprise uses that are incapable of being situated in a town centre location, including low input and emission manufacturing, campus style offices, storage uses, wholesaling and distribution, commercial services with high space and parking requirements. Business Park type development shall be provided in high quality landscaped campus style environments, incorporating a range of amenities. 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 be required to provide important means of managing accessibility to these sites.
OCC **Business/Employment**	The use of land as 'Business/ Employment' shall be taken to include the use of land for primarily commercial and business use, including light industry/ warehousing and the facilitation of enterprise park/ office park type use, as appropriate. It is important to reserve these lands for possible commercial/ business uses and therefore, to re-direct other uses where it is considered that such uses would be more appropriately sited within other land zoning categories for example 'town/village centre mixed use' and 'industry'. This will provide for uses that are compatible with, or reinforce, the commercial/business function of the subject area as a whole. Retailing is open to consideration within this zoning objective, subject to appropriateness in applying the sequential test on identifying the optimum location, in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development. The development of inappropriate uses, such as heavy industry and retailing which would be more appropriately located in 'industrial zoned lands' and 'town/village centre mixed use' in particular will not normally be permitted. Proposals, particularly those involving retail uses, will need to be assessed in relation to a number of considerations and their impact on the vibrancy and importance of town and village centres. By their nature, proposals for these areas involve large-scale buildings and require a high degree of accessibility and parking space for car users and delivery vehicles.
LCC & OCC **Tourism & Leisure**	**Objective:** *To provide for and improve tourist amenities.* **Purpose:** To meet with the needs of tourists and visitors to the town. Uses such as tourist accommodation of all types and ancillary services associated with the Derryounce Lakes and Trails and the River Barrow, such as a trailhead building,

	heritage museum, food and beverage establishments and increase parking will be encouraged within this land use zone.
LCC **Transport & Utilities**	**Objective:** *To provide for the needs of all transport users and other utility providers.* **Purpose:** 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 for the provision of services such as electricity, telecommunications, water, wastewater etc. to the town.

18.2 LAND USE ZONING MATRIX

There are ten different land use zones within the plan area of Portlaoise. The Zoning Matrix set out below provides an indication of the acceptability or otherwise of particular uses in the individual land use zones. The land use zoning matrix is intended to provide general guidance to potential developers and is not an exhaustive list. The reader is advised that an indication that a proposal is *"permitted in principle"* does not imply a grant of planning permission. In this regard, all planning applications for development will be assessed on their merits by the Planning Authority in accordance with the relevant Development Management Standards and Planning Guidelines.

Acceptability	
Y Will Normally Be Acceptable	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.
O Open for Consideration	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.
N Will Not Normally Be Acceptable	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 zoning objectives will be considered on their merits.

Zoning	Town Centre	Existing Residential (R2)	New/ Proposed Residential (R1)	Community Services/ Facilitates	Open Space & Amenity	General Industry & Warehousing	General Business	Neighbourhood Centres	Enterprise & Employment	Transport & Utilities

Land Use	Acceptability of Land Use									
Apartment	Y	Y	Y	O	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Car Park	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Café	Y	O	O	N	N	O	Y	Y	Y	N
Cemetery	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	O
Cinema	O	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Community Hall	O	Y	Y	Y	N	N	O	Y	O	N
Craft Industry	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	O	O	Y	N
Crèche/ Playschool	Y	Y	Y	O	N	O	O	Y	O	N
Cultural Uses/ Library	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	Y	O	O
Dancehall/Disco	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Dwelling	O	Y	Y	O	N	N	N	N	N	N
Funeral Home	O	N	N	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Garages, Panel Beating, Car Repairs	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	O	N
Garden Centre	O	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	O	N
General Public Administration	Y	N	N	O	N	N	Y	O	Y	O
Guest House/Hostel/Hotel	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	N	O	N
Halting Site	N	O	O	O	N	N	N	N	N	N
Health Centre	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	Y	O	N
Heavy Commercial Vehicle Parks	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	O	N
Hot Food Takeaway	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Industry	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	O	N
Industry (Light)	O	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
Medical and Related Consultants	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	O	O	N
Motor Sales	O	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	Y	N
Nursing Home/ Sheltered Housing	O	O	O	O	N	O	N	N	N	N
Offices < 100 sq m	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	Y	O	Y	N

Offices > 100 sq m	Y	N	N	O	N	O	Y	O	Y	N
Park Playground	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	O	Y	N
Petrol Station	Y	N	N	N	N	O	Y	N	O	N
Place of Worship	Y	O	O	Y	N	N	N	O	N	N
Playing Fields	N	Y	Y	O	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Public House	Y	N	N	N	N	N	O	O	N	N
Recreational Building (Commercial)	O	O	O	O	N	N	O	O	O	N
Recreational Building (Community)	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	N	O	Y	O	O
Restaurant	Y	O	O	O	N	O	O	Y	O	N
Retail Warehouse	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	O	N
School/Educational Facilities	Y	O	O	O	N	N	Y	O	N	N
Scrap Yard	N	N	N	N	N	O	N	N	N	N
Retail < 100sqm (Comparison)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Retail > 100sqm (Comparison)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Retail < 100 sq m (Convenience)	Y	O	O	N	N	N	Y	Y	O	N
Retail > 100 sq m (Convenience)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Sport/Leisure Complex	Y	O	O	O	N	N	O	O	Y	N
Utility structures	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	O	O	Y	Y
Warehouse (Wholesale)	N	N	N	N	N	Y	O	N	Y	N
Workshops	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N