

**Proposed Variation to  
Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017**

**Under s.13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended**

**Accompanied by SEA and AA Screening Reports**

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**LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL**

(PLEASE NOTE: SUPPLEMENTARY TEXT IS WRITTEN IN BLACK; EXISTING TEXT IS WRITTEN IN GREY; NEW/ALTERED AIMS/OBJECTIVES/POLICIES ARE IN ITALICS)

### 3.2.2 Core Aim

- *Provide for active and efficient use of unused or underused zoned lands served by existing public infrastructure and facilities, with a particular focus on the larger towns of Portlaoise (Principal Town), Portarlinton (Key Service Town), Mountmellick (Service Town) and Graiguecullen (Service Town), through the preparation of local area plans, the development management process and other initiatives including the imposition of the vacant sites levy.*

## 4 Housing Strategy

### 4.8 VACANT SITES, URBAN REGENERATION AND HOUSING

The *Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015* provides for the imposition of the Vacant Site Levy within areas where housing is required and areas in need of renewal.

*HS 4/O01 Encourage and facilitate the appropriate development and renewal of areas that are in need of regeneration in order to prevent (i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land (ii) urban blight or decay (iii) anti-social behaviour, or (iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses;*

*HS 4/O02 Utilise the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act to (i) encourage the delivery of completed dwelling units in line with identified housing need (ii) support the local economy (iii) consolidate the urban form improving the quality of streetscapes and providing for efficient use of existing public infrastructure and facilities*

*HS 4/O03 Maintain the Laois Register of Vacant Sites, entering or deleting Sites from the Register in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 and related Departmental Guidance*

*HS 4/O04 Identify additional Regeneration Area(s) or make determinations that a need for housing exists in additional Laois Towns during the Plan period as appropriate*

#### 4.8.1 Vacant Housing Sites

By reference to criteria set out in the 2015 Act as they apply to Laois (set out below), Laois County Council has determined that a need for housing exists in the Towns of Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick and Graiguecullen. The Planning Authority may determine that a need for housing exists in additional Laois Towns during the Plan period.

- (a) The projected increase in the number of households as per Core Strategy and Housing Strategy during the period 2011-2017 is significant – Portlaoise (1563), Portarlington (181), Mountmellick (263), Graiguecullen (164)
- (b) The cost of house prices and the cost of renting are increasing indicating increased housing need

LAP Town	Rent (Source: average monthly rent prtb.ie)	Purchase (Source: Q3 2016 DAFT Report)
Portlaoise	€597.76 - 2015 €548.21 - 2014	Not disaggregated by town over time.  County figures per Daft Report (Q3 2016) Average Price: €152,362 Yr-on-Yr: +11.5% Quarter-on-Quarter: +3.6% From Trough: +46.9%
Portarlington	€537.23 – 2015 €482.28 - 2014	
Mountmellick	€499.20 – 2015 €468.67 - 2014	
Graiguecullen	€600.26 – 2015	
	€584.98 - 2014	

- (c) Cited area of choice on social housing waiting list (Housing Department, Laois County Council 30/09/16) indicates housing need in these Towns – Portlaoise (944), Portarlington (377), Mountmellick (322), Graiguecullen (63). Note: up to 3 choices of area per household relates.
- (d) The number of habitable houses available for purchase and for rent is less than 5% of the total number of habitable houses in the area, indicating housing need.

LAP Town	Source: daft.ie on 30/09/16 No. properties for sale + rent > or < 2011 Population / Household Size (2.87) / 20
Portlaoise	190 (sale) + 18 (rent) < 350 5% of 7019 - Pop: 20,145
Portarlington	48 (sale) + 4 (rent) < 136 5% of 2714 - Pop: 7,788
Mountmellick	32 (sale) + 1 (rent) < 82 5% of 1650 - Pop: 4735
Graiguecullen	3 (sale) + 1 (rent) < 69 5% of 1382 - Pop: 3,966

*HS 4/P42 Implement the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 by entering vacant housing sites on the Laois Register of Vacant Sites and thereafter imposing levies in accordance with the Act within lands zoned Residential 1 or Residential 2 in Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick, Graiguecullen and any other Laois towns with an identified housing need, as appropriate*

#### 4.8.2 Vacant Regeneration Sites

Laois County Council has identified the following Regeneration Area in Portlaoise as being in need of renewal. Additional Regeneration Areas may be identified in Portlaoise or in other Laois towns during the Plan period.



Most of the identified Regeneration Area in Portlaoise is zoned Town Centre Secondary. Due to its location, the area benefits from extensive existing public infrastructure including roads, water infrastructure, Portlaoise train station and schools (primary, secondary, further education), existing facilities include a running track, public park, family resource centre in the vicinity, as well as the commercial and civic services available in the Town Centre. Appropriate development has the potential to make efficient use of public infrastructure and facilities, deliver homes, enable smarter travel and sustainable communities as well as contribute to the implementation of the Council's Core Strategy, Housing Strategy and Retail Strategy in Portlaoise, as set out in the Plan.

The Regeneration Area currently includes disused lands in neglected condition; its streetscapes are marred by inactive gap sites or derelict buildings that detract from its character, appearance and amenity. There are indications of anti-social behaviour in the Area and its vicinity, especially along Harpur's Lane with a number of derelict houses along that Street. In the opinion of the Planning Authority the existence of vacant sites within the Regeneration Area exacerbates anti-social behaviour in the identified area. Appropriate development has the potential to provide passive surveillance and active land uses, enlivening and enhancing the character, appearance and amenity of the area.

*HS 4/P43 Implement the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 by entering vacant regeneration sites, located within the Portlaoise Regeneration Area identified herein, or within any other identified Regeneration Area, on the Laois Register of Vacant Sites and thereafter impose levies in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015*

*HS 4/P44 Facilitate the development of all classes of dwelling units within the Regeneration Area identified herein in Portlaoise notwithstanding zoning restrictions relating to some classes of dwelling units set out in the zoning matrix of the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2012-2018*

Within the identified Regeneration Area, the zoning matrix set out in the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2012-2018 indicates that dwelling houses and sheltered housing/nursing homes are not permitted in principle. Policy HS 4/P44 conflicts with this. According to s. 18(4)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, where any provision of a local area plan conflicts with the provisions of the development plan as varied, the provision of the local area plan shall cease to have any effect. As such, dwelling houses and sheltered housing/nursing homes as well as apartments are acceptable in principle within the identified Regeneration Area in Portlaoise. Aside from this widening of allowable classes of dwelling units that are acceptable in principle, the remainder of the zoning matrix remains unaltered in relation to the identified Regeneration Area.